

UPDATE

NAPS Leg/Reg Update - December 1, 2014

Mail Processing Consolidations Loom as Congress Begins Final Days of Lame Duck Session

Lawmakers returned to Washington on Monday for the final two weeks of the 113th Congress, with little likelihood of taking action on comprehensive postal reform legislation, but with the possibility of ordering the Postal Service to delay the consolidation of the 82 mail processing facilities slated to begin in January 2015.

A one-year moratorium on the mail processing facility consolidation -- backed by a bipartisan group of 178 House Members and 51 Senators -- could be added to a government funding measure being crafted this week by House and Senate appropriators. However, key House and Senate leaders, along with the Postal Service, remain opposed to the moratorium.

The so-called omnibus appropriations measure could combine all 12 annual spending bills in one comprehensive package to keep the government funded through the remainder of the fiscal year, lasting until September 30, 2014. The appropriators face a December 11 deadline, when a short-term funding measure expires.

Whether House and Senate appropriators agree to include the processing facility moratorium in the government funding measure remains up in the air. Last week, the chairs of the House and Senate postal oversight committees wrote to appropriations leaders urging them to refrain from including the moratorium in the funding bill.

But other lawmakers are insistent over a delay because the consolidations are expected which are expected to slow down delivery of much of the nation's mail, especially in rural and small town America, and virtually eliminate overnight single-piece First Class mail service. Those concerns prompted 30 Senators today to urge the Postmaster General to refrain from pushing ahead with the consolidations.

In a bipartisan [letter](#) to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, anchored by Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), the Senators wrote: "We strongly urge the USPS to delay implementation of any mail processing consolidations until feasibility studies are completed and there has been adequate time for public comment and consideration of those comments. Completed feasibility studies should include service standard impacts worksheets based on the revised service standards expected to be published on January 5, 2015. There is no reason that the USPS cannot delay its consolidations to provide time for the public to see and comment on the service standard worksheets. It is only fair to allow the process to unfold in this way, and the USPS gains little by deciding to continue the consolidation process on its current, arbitrary timeline."

Last week, the National Association of Postal Supervisors [requested](#) the Postal Regulatory Commission to update its two-year-old assessment of the impact of the consolidations. NAPS pointed to procedural failures by the Postal Service, as documented by the Office of Inspector General of the Postal Service, to adequately study the impact of the consolidations on mail service in affected areas.

"It is imperative that more analysis be undertaken, both by the Postal Service and the Postal Regulatory Commission, in order to ensure the most efficient approach toward assuring the viability of America's mail system," NAPS President Atkins said, in requesting the Commission to reopen its earlier inquiry to assess the full impact of the Postal Service's consolidation actions.

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