



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



The National League of Postmasters is The Education Organization. That education must include Legislative awareness. Our Legislative Forum was a great success and hundreds of Postmasters gain knowledge and passed on that education to their Congressmen and Senators. Of the utmost importance is a current bill in the House HR 22. Since League's visits and follow up there was an almost 900% increase in co-sponsorship of this bill. Below is a transcript from a follow up video alert that was sent to all our members and is also posted on the Legislative section of our national website postmasters.org The purpose of this weekly column is to bring that awareness to all our members on a diversity of topics. An INFORMED Memberships is a more effective membership!

“Call to Follow up on HR 22”

If you recall right after the elections last year I made an urgent call to all League members to attend the upcoming Forum. I wish to thank those hundreds of Postmasters who came from across this entire country to Washington DC to learn about our issues and take them first hand to our Congressmen and Senators. As a matter of fact we were the first employee group to bring Postal issues on the Hill and we have already begun to see the results of our presentations. More about that in a moment. Because I am coming to you today to request everyone's follow up on what is considered the most important current Legislative issue for YOU and the Postal Service. I am speaking of the refinancing of the USPS escrow payments.

To provide some background this began when the Postal Service discovered it was overpaying into the Civil Service Retirement System. An escrow account was set up to deposit these over payments until Congress could decide where this money should go. A portion was used to pay down the USPS debt and through The Postal Reform act the remaining escrow payments then were designated to pay for future retiree health benefits. These yearly payments came in two installments one for 2.3 billion and the second for about 5.4 billion. Well as everyone knows our country is in a economic crisis and the Postal Service is feeling the effects as well. A current bill in the house HR 22 would provide relief for the Postal Service during this economic down turn. It would curtail the first payment of 2.3 billion but still make 2nd payment using it to cover both current and future retiree benefits thus spreading the payments out to a more manageable level. No current retirees would be affected and new retirees would still be covered. In fact had this been in effect last year the Postal Service would have shown a surplus instead of the \$2 billion loss. This first quarter the Postal Service has already shown a 700 million loss and is project to hit it's debt ceiling by Sept 2009 even with a rate increase this May. It is absolutely imperative that every Postal employee support HR22.

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As the first Postal employee group to present this issue on the Hill HR 22 went from 3 Co-Sponsors to over 26 the following week. This is a good start but we still have a long way to go. The alert has been sounded and the bell is tolling for every League Postmaster, their colleagues, co-workers, family and friends to contact their district Congressman and either urge co-sponsorship or thank them for cosponsoring HR 22.

This is NOT a bailout. The escrow account is all POSTAL money and does NOT affect the budget. While everyone from Auto companies to banks are asking for tax money the Postal Service wants to remain self sufficient and that can be achieved through HR22. Once it has passed the House we will need continued support in the Senate, but this needs to be done as soon as possible.

You can view the League Positions papers including the HR 22 Refinancing bill by going to Postmasters.org then on the left column clicking on Legislation Another list will appear where you can scroll down to Position Papers When the next window opens click on the Retirees Health benefits This will open up the paper that details the refinancing position. You can study the details I gave in summary and then contact your Congressman.

For the most effective results we ask that you call your representatives office. Due to the Anthrax attacks in 2001 the written letter is still delayed before reaching Congress but the second most effective alternative is via fax. To contact your Congressman go to house.gov In the upper left hand corner you will find Write Your Congressman. Click on this and in the next window you can choose by your state and zip code your representative. The next window will show all the contact information for your Congressman including phone, fax and district office contact. If you wish to send an email you can click on the Message to...your Congressman on that same page and it will take you to his or her web site. Once there click on the word CONTACT which will open up an email form you can fill out. Be sure to check the Government reform button and fill in your own personal information in the blanks provided. Then in your own words state your request for his or her co-sponsorship of HR 22 or just as importantly thank them if they have already cosponsored this bill. Then of course don't forget to send your message.

In order of importance generally a personal visit, then a phone call, then either a written or faxed letter and lastly an email has been considered the order of effectiveness for contacting your representatives. Mainly due to the effort involved being proportionate to the value of the message sent.

While there may be Auto email systems available from some organizations their effectiveness and hence value is not as strong as a message directly from that representatives own website. Yes the incoming email sources can be detected and therefore the effort involved to send one would equate it's value as well.

As I mentioned earlier as of this date there are 26 co-sponsors on HR 22. If one of these Congressmen are yours be sure to thank them for their support. If your congressman is NOT listed here contact him immediately. To see updated co-sponsorship on this or any other congressional bill go to Thomas.gov and enter in the bill number search. Click on the Co-sponsor link there to see the representatives name and date of their signing on to that bill.

The time to rally around the flag of HR 22 is NOW and we are counting on YOU - Our Grass roots - The future of the Postal Service may well depend upon it.