



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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UNIONS DEALT BLOWS FROM WHITE HOUSE, CONGRESS, AND SUPREME COURT

It has been a tumultuous couple of months. In recent days, labor organizations have been negatively impacted by actions of the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court. It should be crystal clear to you by now that elections have consequences.

In March, a bipartisan collection of U.S. Senators introduced the Postal Service Reform Act of 2018 (S. 2629) that, if enacted, could stabilize postal operations and turn around postal finances for years to come. Unfortunately, in the current political environment there is little appetite on Capitol Hill for common-sense solutions to assist the Postal Service.

In April, based in part on his antagonism toward Amazon and its chief executive Jeff Bezos, who also happens to own the *Washington Post*, President Trump issued an Executive Order forming a Task Force charged with evaluating the finances of the U.S. Postal Service, including pricing, policies, and workforce costs. The White House reported that the Task Force will be comprised of multiple agency heads including the Secretary of the Treasury as Chair; the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management. The Executive Order goes on to highlight consultation with the Postmaster General, the Chair of the Postal Regulatory Commission, and the Secretary of Labor.

With a mid-August 2018 deadline for issuing its report, this Presidential Task Force wasted no time getting started. On May 15, 2018, National President Paul Hogrogian and National Secretary-Treasurer Tim Dwyer walked over to the Treasury Building to meet with representatives of the Task Force. In attendance were a host of government officials designated not only by the Treasury Department, but also by OMB and OPM. The Task Force described the meeting as a listening session.

As the first outside stakeholder to meet with the Task Force, Hogrogian and Dwyer led the conversation discussing a plethora of subjects including craft history, postal finances, and network operations since enactment of the PAEA in 2006, through the Great Recession of 2008, and in relation to the recent electronic diversion of mail volume. There also were discussions relating to ongoing legislative efforts at postal reform, pre-funding obligations for retiree health or pension costs, the use of USPS assumptions in calculating unfunded liabilities, USPS service monopolies, the postal network infrastructure, and the need for continuing universal service.

In the following weeks, the other major Postal Unions – the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA), and the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) – also were afforded an opportunity to address the Task Force. Additionally, all four Postal Unions collaborated on a workforce submission to the Task Force entitled *Making the Postal Service Great Again*.

On May 23, 2018, the Trump Administration released its budget for Fiscal Year 2018. Called “*A New Foundation for American Greatness*,” the budget proposes what can only be called catastrophic reductions in spending in dozens of important federal programs such as the pension benefits currently enjoyed by all federal and postal employees, including career mail handlers. Notably, the budget supports cuts to Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) benefits, and the elimination of cost of living allowances (COLAs) for retirees.

Days later, on May 25, 2018, the White House continued its attack on union workers by issuing three Executive Orders entitled: (1) *Promoting Accountability and Streamlining Removal Procedures Consistent with Merit System Principles*; (2) *Ensuring Transparency, Accountability, and Effi-*

ciency in Taxpayer Funded Union Time Use; and (3) *Developing Efficient, Effective, and Cost-Reducing Approaches to Federal Sector Collective Bargaining*. You should not let the shrewdly worded titles fool you, as these Executive Orders will greatly impede each federal union’s ability to represent and defend its members. The Executive Orders seek to restrict and reduce the use of official time for union representational activities, to constrain Merit System Protection Board defenses by limiting the amount of time an employee under investigation for misconduct could spend on probation whereby encouraging terminations, and to interfere with future bargaining by placing control of negotiations at the feet of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

On June 21, 2018, the Trump Administration released its so-called Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations – formally entitled the OMB’s *Report on Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century*. The plan includes various Trump proposals for reorganizing the federal government. Buried deep in the Report is the President’s plan to restructure the Postal Service into a “sustainable business model” and thereby “prepare it for future conversion . . . into a privately held corporation.” This document from the Trump Administration goes on to recommend a USPS business model that delivers mail fewer days per week and to more central locations, thereby eliminating most door delivery.

“The plan itself is unsustainable,” said NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian after reading through the 128-page report. “It starts by noting that public trust in the federal government has declined over the last decade, but then proposes to dismantle the most trusted component of that government – the Postal Service – and move it into the private sector.” “The inevitable result of such privatization,” said Hogrogian, “would be to destroy universal postal services for every American,” which has been a mainstay of the nation’s systems for communications and commerce ever since the Founding Fathers put the Post Office into the U.S. Constitution. If postal services were privatized, as the Trump Administration envisions, many Americans would lose their daily access to postal services, and the cost of those services for other Americans would increase greatly.

Finally, on June 27, 2017, the Supreme Court by a vote of 5-4 issued a ruling in the case of *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* that will undermine the collective power of labor organizations. The decision effectively enables non-members of state and local public-sector unions to enjoy the benefits of a negotiated and enforced contract without contributing to the costs thereof. “This is a direct blow to the financial stability and strength, not just to public employee unions, but to all unions,” said LIUNA General

President Terry O’Sullivan. And, with the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy, also announced on June 27, 2017, and with his likely replacement to be picked by the President and a Republican-led Senate, the Court is expected to remain extremely anti-worker and anti-union for many decades.

The NPMHU recognizes that the Postal Service and postal employees are not directly or immediately affected by Trump’s Executive Orders or the *Janus* decision. The ramifications of these harmful actions, however, will negatively affect much of organized labor for years to come. Moreover, these actions could have a negative impact on future collective bargaining in the Postal Service.

So now is the time to act, to register and vote, and to join with your NPMHU and your brothers and sisters in the labor movement to oppose these recent proposals and actions. The 2018 midterm elections in November 2018 are just four months away.



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