



815 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

RICHARD L. TRUMKA
PRESIDENT

ELIZABETH H. SHULER
SECRETARY-TREASURER

ARLENE HOLT BAKER
EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

LEGISLATIVE ALERT!

(202) 637-5057



January 26, 2012

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I urge you to oppose provisions in S. 1789, the “21st Century Postal Act,” that would create severe damage to the U.S. Postal Service (“USPS”) and its workforce. The AFL-CIO believes that the language proposed by Senators Coburn and McCain would obstruct free collective bargaining. We urge you to support efforts by Senator Mark Begich and others to modify this language so that it does not adversely affect the collective bargaining rights of the 450,000 current US Postal Service workers.

The Coburn-McCain language has been controversial from its inception. It purports to be unbiased, yet it would elevate management’s interests above those of postal workers by mandating a statutory set of instructions for arbitrations. For the past forty years, the collective bargaining process has been effective without outside interference. It is exceedingly fair and impartial; postal wages have tracked inflation and there have been no work stoppages. There is no evidence that collective bargaining between the Postal Service and its unions is tilted in favor of the unions or that the Postal Service is victimized by a rigged system. There is, in sum, no sound justification for Congress to step in and dictate the scope of negotiations.

Under current law, if there is an impasse in face-to-face negotiations and the dispute winds up in binding arbitration, both parties can present whatever evidence they deem appropriate and necessary to make their best case before a tripartite arbitration board. Such items may include, and have historically included, the financial condition of the USPS and the practical effect of bargained work rules.

Current law also requires that each of the parties appoint one of the arbitrators to the board who then join with one neutral arbitrator. Thus, the arbitrator appointed by the USPS to the arbitration board is one who presumably will try to sway the neutral arbitrator in favor of the USPS position. By law, the arbitrators must take into account all the evidence presented by both parties in the decision-making process.

The Postal Service has the ability to freely make its case through its member on the panel and through the introduction of evidence. Both sides have an equal say in the naming of the neutral arbitrator. That is a fair system. Through the changes proposed by S. 1789, Congress is inserting itself into this system and dramatically changing the weight of evidence in favor of management. We consider this change to be not only unfair to the employees, but also unnecessary and unwise as a matter of public policy.

We urge you to support efforts by Senator Begich to modify this language.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Samuel', written in a cursive style.

William Samuel, Director
Government Affairs Department