

PRESIDENT BIDEN SIGNS POSTAL REFORM INTO LAW

Prefunding Mandate Scrapped, Landmark Bill Provides Billions in Relief to USPS

On Wednesday, April 6, President Joe Biden signed the Postal Service Reform Act into law at a White House ceremony. President Mark Dimondstein and Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard were invited to witness the signing ceremony and represent the APWU.

"This is a historic achievement for

our union," said President Dimondstein. "Congratulations to every postal worker who has organized for over a decade to ensure this long-needed postal reform legislation became law. The Postal Service Reform Act marks a tremendous victory for our union, for all postal workers, our families, and for the people of the country who depend

on robust, reliable and sustainable universal postal services."

The Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA) contains many key elements that have long been a priority for the APWU. First is the elimination of the congressional mandate that USPS prefund future retiree health benefits.

continued on page 3



The Pacer is the official publication of the Central Michigan Area Local APWU and is published quarterly as a means of communication with the membership. Any and all communications concerning the paper should be addressed to:

> Editor P.O. Box 21154 Lansing, MI 48909 the.pacer@yahoo.com

The editor reserves the right to determine whether the material submitted for *The Pacer* shall be printed and reserves the right to edit as needed for space, libelous statements or personal attacks. All articles must be signed and a contact phone number included with the submission. Names will be withheld upon request. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the editor or officers to the Central Michigan Area Local APWU.

OFFICERS

President	Maceo Cosper
Executive Vice President	Dionne Davis
Secretary	Brandi Feldpausch
Treasurer	Janel Rambo
Editor	John D. Greathouse
Human Resources Director.	Dustin Hume
Clerk Craft Director	Tammy Corkwell
Maintenance Craft Director	Jessica Kimble
Motor Vehicle Craft Directo	r Shav Berning

INSTALLATION DIRECTORS

Alma	Vacant
DeWitt	
East Lansing	Chris Dennis
Eaton Rapids	Vacant
Fowlerville	Vacant
Grand Ledge	Vacant
Greenville	Vacant
Haslett	Vacant
Holt	Vacant
Howell	Dan McCasey
Ionia	Vacant
Ithaca	Vacant
Lansing	John Juel
Mason	
Mt. Pleasant	Sheila Williams
Okemos	Barry McGuire
Owosso	Vacant
Portland	Vacant
Potterville	Vacant
St. Johns	Vacant
Webberville	Vacant
Williamston	Vacant

TRUSTEES

Denise Fuller Asha Brown

MPWU

John D. GreathouseEditor

JANSING INSTALLATION STEWARDS

Clerks, Tour 1 Steward / Alternate Steward(s)

1. MANUAL

2. AUTOMATION

3. AI/FAR SIDE MANUAL

Michele Porter / John Greathouse / Lisa Hauser Michele Porter / John Greathouse / Lisa Hauser Michele Porter / John Greathouse / Lisa Hauser

Clerks, Tour 2

1. MANUAL

2. AUTOMATION

Clerks, Tour 3

MANUAL

2. AUTOMATION

3. AI

Customer Service

MAIN OFFICE / BMEU / ADMIN DELTA ANNEX / RETAIL DOWNTOWN SWCA MERRILL STREET NWCA

Maintenance

1. Tour 1

2. Tour 2

3. Tour 3

Motor Vehicle

Chief Steward

OWCP, FMLA & Limited Duty Issues

Dustin Hume / Dionne Davis / Geoff Szilagyi Dustin Hume / Dionne Davis / Geoff Szilagyi

Lisa Hauser / Dustin Hume / John Greathouse Lisa Hauser / Dustin Hume / John Greathouse Lisa Hauser / Dustin Hume / John Greathouse

Dionne Davis / Shay Berning Dionne Davis / Shay Berning Dionne Davis / Shay Berning Eric Monaghan / Dionne Davis / Shay Berning Dionne Davis / Shay Berning Dionne Davis / Shay Berning

Jim Steel / Janel Rambo Jessica Kimble / Maceo Cosper Janel Rambo / Jim Steel

Shay Berning
John Juel
Dustin Hume

FACEBOOK

Central Michigan Area
Postal Workers

ARTICLES DEADLINE JUNE 18, 2022

Members who wish to send articles to me via email are encouraged to do at this address:

the.pacer@yahoo.com

Remember to include your name and a telephone number so I can check with you if I need to make revisions. It couldn't hurt to ask for an email receipt just to be certain I received your submission

John Greathouse, Editor

Union Meetings for 2022

May 18 ~ Jun 15 ~ Aug 17 Sept 21 ~ Oct 19 ~ Nov 16

Executive Board ~ 5:30 p.m. General Membership ~ 7:00 p.m.

At the AFL-CIO Building meeting room, on the northeast corner of Washington and Lenawee in Lansing.

Due to Covid-19, meetings are held on both Zoom & In Person at the AFL/CIO Bldg.

Links are published on the "Central Michigan Area Postal Workers" Webpage & Facebook.

Affiliated with: American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO; APWU National Postal Press Association, Michigan State AFL-CIO & Michigan Labor Press.









PRESIDENT BIDEN SIGNS POSTAL REFORM INTO LAW

continued from page 1

This mandate required the Postal Service to set billions of dollars aside each year to prefund retiree health benefits 75 years into the future. The prefunding mandate alone is responsible for 84% of USPS's losses since 2007. Lifting of the mandate is expected to save the USPS roughly \$27 billion over the next 10 years and immediately eliminates \$53 billion of past due prepayments on the USPS books.

Three important service-related features are included in the new law. The PSRA increases transparency of USPS management, allowing the public, Congress and regulators better insight into USPS service issues. It also mandates that USPS continue to provide a six-day-per-week, integrated delivery network – packages and letter mail moving together – long into the future. Finally, the PSRA allows USPS to enter into agreements with State, local and tribal governments to provide a whole range of new products and services.

Another major element of the bill is in the integration of future postal retirees into the Medicare system. While USPS and postal employees have contributed to Medicare for decades, roughly a quarter of retirees do not fully enroll in Medicare. Starting in 2025, all postal retirees will have Medicare as their primary payer and a postal-only FEHBP plan as a secondary payer. These changes are expected to save postal retirees money by eliminating out-of-pocket medical expenses and by mitigating future premium increases, while saving USPS \$22 billion over the next ten years.

The PSRA passed both chambers of Congress earlier this year after more than a decade of debate and consensus-building among the postal unions, congressional leaders, mailers

and postal management. It garnered broad, bipartisan support, passing the House in February by a vote of 342-92 and passing the Senate in March with a vote of 79-19.

"APWU applauds every member of Congress who has worked alongside our union to achieve this critical legislation," said Legislative and Political Director Beard. "We especially recognize the leadership of Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Comer in the House and Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman in the Senate for their steadfast, biparti-

san resolve in crafting this bill. Postal workers fought hard for this bill and Congress heard our voices loud and clear."

"The path to winning this legislation was long and hard-fought," said Dimondstein. "We should all take heart in this tremendous victory and remember that together, our union is a force to be reckoned with. Now, the struggle continues to defend the public Postal Service, to protect good jobs, and to win improved and expanded postal services and justice for all workers."

7 THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE

This month I resigned as your local Secretary. I want to thank you for allowing me to serve as your secretary for what has been the last 10 years and 1 month. It has been my honor.

I felt hand-picked when the previous Secretary, Fritz Schlicker was retiring and chose me to ask to step up and run for the position. When I first began being Secretary, I never thought i would keep the position for 10 years but here i am. Oh, and 1 month! It has been an interesting job i really never planned on but as with most things in life, I learned some things along the way. I do not regret my 3 terms as Secretary.

I hope someone will consider stepping up and continuing the job. I wish that person nothing but Luck and encouragement. It is an important position and a necessary one.

SINCERELY,
JISA HAUSER



WHAT IS ICOP? ASK DEJOY.

BY (HUCK ZLATKIN

Postmaster Louis DeJoy's detrimental influence is everywhere. Jana Winter of *Yahoo News* reported last April that the Postal Service has been running a program of surveillance on American citizens called iCOP, the

Internet Covert Operations Program that the public had not heard about. The Postal Inspection Service under the direction of PMG DeJoy was using iCOP as the motivation for tracking and collecting Americans' social media posts, focusing on those involving protests. "Analysts with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Internet Covert Operations Program (iCOP) monitored

significant activity regarding planned protests occurring internationally and domestically on March 20, 2021," says the March 16th government bulletin, marked as "law enforcement sensitive." People had no idea that the Postal Service was involved in such activity until Yahoo broke the story.

The iCOP program was started originally to help find the movement of illegal firearms and opioids through the mail. It makes sense that the Postal Inspection Service would be concerned with the mail being used for criminal enterprises. The American Spectator reported that "the US-PIS is not authorized to surveil the 'Net for threats to public order generally. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies have that responsibility. The fine print on the Situational Awareness Bulletin claims the surveillance was based upon authority granted by 18 U.S. Code 3061. That is curious because that portion of federal law only empowers postal inspectors to "investigate criminal

matters related to the Postal Service and the mails."

But that's before DeJoy. In the *Yahoo* article, Rachael LevinsonWaldman, Deputy Director for the Brennan Center for Justice said, "Based on the very minimal information that's available online, it appears that [iCOP]

SHOW DEJOY THE DOOR -EXPOSEDBYCMD

is meant to root out misuse of the postal system by online actors, which doesn't seem to encompass what's going on here. It's not at all clear why their mandate would include monitoring of social media that's unrelated to use of the postal system."

Looking at DeJoy's history, we can conclude that DeJoy probably saw iCOP as a handy means of detecting any threats against him or his cronies that might be emanating from protesting groups or individuals. Chief Postal Inspector Gary R. Barksdale met with members of Congress behind closed doors to answer their questions about iCOP after the Yahoo story broke. He told them that threats against the PMG increase whenever he appeared in the news.

CALLS CONTINUE TO FIRE DEJOY

It is clear through the reign of Louis DeJoy as Postmaster General of the United States (PMG), he has not delivered to the American people the "prompt, reliable and efficient service" that the mission of the Postal Service promises. His failure has not been ignored by the growing chorus of members of Congress calling for the firing of Louis DeJoy or the many editorial writers at national and local publications also calling for DeJoy to be fired. Back on August 19, 2020, only a couple of months after he began

as PMG, 86 national organizations wrote a joint-letter to the Postal Board of Governors demanding that DeJoy "must immediately resign or be dismissed." But, sadly, in 2022, DeJoy is still the PMG! Part of the explanation may come from the fact that a good number of Republican federal elected officials received ample donations from multimillionaire Louis DeJoy and his wife prior to his becoming PMG. These

Republican members continue to sing the praises of DeJoy stating how good it was to finally have a "businessman" in charge of the Postal Service.

They are not alone. All four national postal unions have refused to call for DeJoy to resign or be fired, as well. Three of the four have successfully negotiated collective bargaining agreements with DeJoy, with the fourth beginning negotiations later this year. What remains to be seen, is now that that the unions have their new contracts, whether they will begin to oppose DeJoy's Delivering For America ten-year plan as it delays the mail, raises prices, cuts hours at post offices, and closes processing plants. Many rankand-file postal workers feel threatened by his ten-year plan's apparent aim to eliminate their jobs in the long term. It is a major mistake to underestimate DeJoy. His history as a "businessman" shows that he is no friend to workers and shouldn't be trusted with the future of a public Postal Service.

—The Union Mail

LOTS OF GOOD NEWS IS GOING ON!

BY JOHN GREATHOUSE, &DITOR

Greetings Brothers and Sisters, Well, a lot of things have happened over the past few months, so let's get started!

NEW CONTRACT

We got a new contract that was ratified by the membership. This contract has a lot of what looks to be good stuff if you are a PSE but not so much for folks who have been here for a while.

A good way to look at it, it was a contract that did not get take out of our hands and into an arbitrator. I will not debate the issue here on this subject as there is more things that pages in this paper!

240B GRIEVANCE SETTLEMENT

In the Lansing Plant and part of the Customer Service section, there was a large payout to the affected employees. As a result of this, a lot of folks are wondering why they did not get a piece of the pie!

In order to be a part of this settlement, you had to be in the following position:

- 1. In the bargaining unit (You are a Clerk)
- 2. You had to work in the following areas:
 - a. Be a Clerk in the Plant
- b. Be a Clerk in Customer Service in:
 - i. Main Office Windows
 - ii. Merrill Street Station
 - iii. Postage Due Section
 - iv. Firm Call
 - v. 12/15 Zone Clerks
- 3. You could not be on a detail to an EAS position (204b, Administrative Assistant, etc.)

Should you manage to be able to check off all of these boxes, you

would have received a payout.

On that note, there was a couple of errors made and a group was over looked. On a good note, we are addressing that and they will be paid when the 2nd settlement is paid out. As is stand right now, the first grievance was around \$185,000! There are 2 additional grievances pending at Step 2 and the 4th one should be on it was to Step 2 by the time your read this which should bring the total to well over \$250,000!

The meter is still ticking as management has taken little to no action to correct the situation!

Should your office have a 204b that is working, on a continues basis (5 days a week), and has been doing so for a long period of time, please request a steward from your supervisor so that your steward can review the situation and see if management is in violation of the contract.

POSTAL LEGISLATION

On April 6th, President Biden signed the Postal Reform Bill. This new law will fix a lot of things that were wrong with the USPS and no it will not get rid of DeJoy but it does reverse the 2006 PAEA that has dragged the Post Office down!

HEALTH PLAN

In the new Postal Reform Bill, there are changes to employee and retiree healthcare. Rather than writing you a new story do discuss this, there is another article in this paper that has all of the answers.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

April 28th is the National Workers Memorial Day where we honor and remember workers who have been injured or have lost their life due to unsafe working conditions across the country. And yet again, there is more information on this in this edition in the related article.

APWU NATIONAL ELECTIONS

It is that time again, and I strongly encourage each and everyone of you to be sure to vote when the APWU Ballots come out.

I know that during the vote for the contract, there were several members, who have not moved in several year or changed their address, did not get a ballot. And to make matters worse, when you called to get a replacement, it arrived one to two days before it was due back to be counted! This is wrong and needs to addressed so it does not happen again!

THE PACER

If you have read this far, I hope you have noticed that The Pacer has had a major change. With the support of our printer, Stacy Publishing, we have changed the size and format of The Pacer in an effort to save our member money. This paper, in the years I have been the editor, has made numerous changes and improvements that has resulted in reducing the cost of the paper by approximately 35% while increasing the quality of the paper.

I hope everyone enjoys reading this new format of paper.

In closing, The Pacer is the Members paper and as such, each and every one of you has a voice, should you choose to share it with your fellow brothers and sisters by writing an article. It does not need to be anything large, one or two paragraphs is great! You can write about things in your office, events in your community or even a co-worker who has done something to help you, the office or the community. This is your chance to join in and be a part of the Union!

Take care, stay safe and in Solidarity.

ORGANIZE! Safe Jobs NOW

More than 50 years ago on April 28, Workers Memorial Day, the Occupational Safety and Health Act went into effect, promising every worker the right to a safe job—a fundamental right. The law was won because of the tireless efforts of the labor movement, which organized for safer working conditions and demanded action from the government. Since then, unions and our allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have made jobs safer and saved lives. But our work is not done. Each year, thousands of workers are killed and millions more suffer injury and illness because of dangerous working conditions that are preventable.

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated working families and highlighted the fundamental right to and importance of a safe job for every worker. Immediately and throughout this crisis, unions and our allies have stepped into action to demand and win protections on the job from this highly contagious virus. We organized for safe jobs and the right to speak out against unsafe working conditions. We won emergency safety protections for health care workers against COVID-19, and are continuing the fight for all. Without federal action to require prevention measures in all workplaces, unions demanded access to the ventilation, personal protective equipment and other measures that protect workers from inhaling the virus at work. The central involvement of organized labor and our allies was the key factor that improved working conditions to save lives.

But our work organizing for safe jobs has not ended. The pandemic exposed our weak laws that have prevented workers from organizing in their workplaces to demand safer working conditions. It also exposed weak job safety laws and a lack of resources that would ensure the

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) can protect workers. Many employers and workers never see OSHA in their workplace. Penalties are still too low to be a deterrent. Workers are not adequately protected to speak out against unsafe working conditions and to freely join a union without retaliation. As we look to the next 50 years of worker protections under OSHA and MSHA, we must demand Congress strengthen the agencies' authorities and provide them the resources necessary to ensure working people have safe jobs now. There must be action on critical safety and health protections against preventable hazards: infectious diseases, heat illness, workplace violence and silica in mining, and exposure to toxic chemicals that kills tens of thousands of workers each year.

Together, we are raising our collective voices to win stronger safety and health protections in our workplaces and stronger job safety and health laws. We are standing strong to hold workplace safety agencies accountable to create and enforce laws that protect workers, and to hold employers accountable to keep workers safe. We are organizing to raise the baseline level of safety protections for everyone, including those disproportionately impacted by dangerous working conditions.

On April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO will observe Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died on the job, and to organize the fight for safe jobs. We will come together this year to call for action on hazards that cause unnecessary injury, illness and death. We will stand united to strengthen workers' rights and protections, and demand resources and actions needed for job safety enforcement. We will fight for the fundamental right of every worker to a safe job until that promise is fulfilled.

OBSERVE WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY - APRIL 28

AFL-CIO



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT AFL-CIO SAFETY AND HEALTH 815 BLACK LIVES MATTER PLAZA NW WASHINGTON, DC 20006

WEB AFLCIO.ORG/ WORKERSMEMORIALDAY

E-MAIL OSHMAIL@AFLCIO.ORG

PHONE 202-637-5341

#1USAFETY

#WORKERSMEMORIALDAY

#IWMD2022

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY APRIL 28, 2022

Decades of struggle by working people and our unions have improved working conditions and made jobs safer, but it has not been enough. This year we are coming together to strengthen our rights and protections to ensure everyone can come home safely at the end of a work shift—and without chronic illnesses from toxic exposures at work.

As we grieve those we have lost from workplace hazards, including COVID-19, we must continue to push forward. We must:

- Ensure all workers have the necessary protections from COVID-19 at work.
- Guarantee all workers have a safety voice on the job and the right to freely form a union without employer interference or intimidation.
- Pass the Protecting America's Workers Act (PAWA) to provide OSHA protection to the millions of workers without it, stronger criminal and civil penalties for companies that violate job safety laws, and improved anti-retaliation protections.
- Increase efforts to protect the safety and health of Black, Latino and immigrant workers who are disproportionately affected by and especially targeted for speaking up against unsafe working conditions.
- Increase the job safety budgets and improve job safety enforcement.
- Win new protections on infectious diseases, workplace violence, silica exposure in mining, heat illness, exposure to asbestos and other toxic chemicals, and other hazards.
- Defend hard-won safety and health protections and workers' rights from attacks.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ON WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

There are many ways to recognize Workers Memorial Day:

- Organize an online campaign to call for stronger safety and health protections using our digital toolkit. Demand that elected officials put workers' well-being over corporate interests.
- Organize an outdoor, socially distanced event at your workplace to stand together
 to protect the fundamental right to a safe job for every worker and hold your
 employer accountable for keeping you safe.
- Hold a candlelight vigil, memorial service or moment of silence to remember those who have died on the job, and highlight job safety problems in your community.
- Host an event with members of Congress in their districts. Involve injured workers
 and family members who can talk firsthand about the need for strong safety and
 health protections, the ability to speak up against unsafe working conditions,
 and joining together in union to keep workplaces safe. Invite local religious and
 community leaders and other allies to participate in the event.
- Conduct workshops to train and empower workers to report job safety hazards and exercise workplace rights. Invite union members, nonunion workers and community allies to participate.
- Create a new memorial site at a workplace or in a community where workers have been killed on the job.
- Create and share an online photo and storyboard campaign on social media to remember workers who have been killed on the job.
- Invite the press to your Workers Memorial Day events to increase public awareness of the dangers working people face on the job.
- Continue to hold our leaders and employers accountable to provide safe working conditions. As a labor movement, we Mourn for the Dead and Fight for the Living on April 28, and every day of the year.

PROPOSED (HANGES TO USPS HEALTH BENEFIT

February 11, 2022

The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 (PSRA; H.R. 3076) includes a number of provisions that would alter the authority and operations of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and the Postal Regulatory Commission. Section 101 of the PSRA includes reforms intended to reduce USPS's future retiree health liability by requiring eligible postal retirees to enroll in Medicare Part B and by providing retiree drug coverage through Medicare Part D. This Insight provides an overview of how Section 101 of the PSRA would change USPS worker and retiree health benefits.

USPS HEALTH BENEFITS

Similar to most other federal agencies, the USPS offers health care benefits to its employees, retirees, and their dependents through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB), which is administered by the Office of Personnel Management

(OPM). Although USPS health benefits are provided through FEHB, the USPS is governed by arrangements that are unique within the federal government in regard to its funding of these benefits.

For non-postal federal employees, the amount the federal government contributes to premiums is determined according to a statutory formula and is paid out of the employing agencies' appropriations for salaries. For USPS employees, the USPS contribution to premiums is determined through collective bargaining agreements and is paid out of USPS revenues. Although different methods are used to determine federal government/USPS premium contribution amounts, contributions are generally the same in 2022.

The amount of government contribution for postal and non-postal retirees is determined using the same formula as for non-postal employees. In most federal agencies, the govern-

ment contribution to retiree health benefits is paid by OPM through an appropriated entitlement. The USPS pays the government share of USPS retiree health benefits and, since 2017, has done so using the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund (PSRHBF). (The PSRHBF is related to the USPS prefunding obligation for retiree health care costs, which is addressed by Section 102 of the PSRA.)

MEDICARE

Medicare is comprised of four parts. Part A (Hospital Insurance) covers inpatient hospital, skilled nursing, hospice, and some home health services; Part B (Supplementary Medical Insurance) covers a range of medical services, including physician and outpatient hospital services; and, Part D, which is provided through private insurance plans, covers outpatient prescription drugs. (Medicare beneficiaries enrolled in both Part A and Part B may elect to receive their coverage



TS IN THE POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT OF 2022

through a private Medicare Advantage [Part C] plan.)

Most Medicare beneficiaries do not pay a premium for Part A and enroll when first eligible. Because Parts B and D carry premiums, enrollment in these parts is optional, but the majority of beneficiaries choose to enroll. The various parts of Medicare have different funding sources—Part A is primarily funded through dedicated payroll taxes, while Parts B and D are primarily funded through beneficiary premiums and federal general revenues.

When a retiree enrolled in Medicare also has FEHB coverage, Medicare pays claims for services first and FEHB pays second. Federal retirees, including postal retirees, may continue their FEHB coverage into retirement and pay the same FEHB premium amounts as current employees. Some federal retirees with FEHB, including about 24% of postal retirees, choose not to enroll in Medicare Part B, because it can duplicate some FEHB benefits and requires paying an additional premium. Because FEHB drug coverage is considered creditable, federal retirees with FEHB do not need to enroll in Medicare Part D.

POSTAL SERVICE HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM

The PSRA Section 101 would require the establishment of the Postal Service Health Benefits Program (PSHB), which would be administered by OPM and would provide health insurance to USPS employees, retirees, and their dependents instead of FEHB starting in 2025.

Under the PSHB, USPS employees and retirees would be able to enroll in self-only, self-plus-one, or family coverage. If a USPS employee/retiree were enrolled in FEHB in 2024 and did not select a PSHB plan in 2025, OPM

would automatically enroll the individual in a plan offered by the individual's FEHB insurer or, if not available, in the lowest-cost, non-high deductible, nationwide PSHB plan that does not charge a membership fee.

The PSHB would generally be structured similarly to FEHB. OPM would contract with insurers to offer plans, and the plans would need to meet specified statutory FEHB requirements. To the greatest extent practicable, the PSHB would also be required to include plans offered by each FEHB insurer that had a plan that enrolled at least 1,500 USPS employees or retirees in January 2023. (It also would include plans offered by other insurers determined appropriate by OPM.) In 2025, insurers with plans in PSHB and FEHB would be required to ensure that their PSHB and FEHB plans have equivalent benefits and cost-sharing requirements, with certain exceptions, including the drug coverage of Medicare-eligible retirees (see below).

PSHB premiums would be determined separately from FEHB premiums. As such, PSHB insurers would determine premiums based on the amount of health care expected to be used by USPS employees, retirees, and their dependents. The USPS contribution toward annuitant premiums would be calculated using the same statutory formula currently used under FEHB but would be based solely on PSHB plan premiums.

The PSRA would require all Medicare-eligible USPS annuitants and their Medicare-eligible covered family members to enroll in Medicare Part B in order to maintain their USPS health coverage. Those who, as of January 1, 2025, are current annuitants and current employees aged 64 and over, those with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or Indian Health Service

(IHS) coverage, or those residing abroad would not be subject to this requirement. The bill would provide for a six-month special enrollment period, starting April 2024, during which Medicare-eligible postal annuitants or family members could enroll in Part B; any late-enrollment penalties incurred by individuals enrolling during this period would be paid for by the USPS. Prescription drug coverage for all Medicare-eligible annuitants (both current and future) would be provided through a Medicare Part D Employer-Group Waiver Plan (EGWP).

Author Information

Ryan J. Rosso

Analyst in Health Care Financing Patricia A. Davis

Specialist in Health Care Financing

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

> — Congressional Research Service Insight



FDA Advisors Weigh COVID Booster Shots for Fall

THURSDAY, April 7, 2022 (HealthDay News) – Outlining a daunting timeline for development of any updated coronavirus vaccine for next fall, federal health officials told an expert advisory panel on Wednesday that clinical trials of potential candidates would have to begin by next month, and a final formula chosen by June, to meet that tight deadline.

The assessment came during a daylong meeting of outside advisers to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, who met to discuss what the nation's COVID vaccine policy should look like moving forward.

But time is of the essence.

While numerous clinical studies of retooled shots are ongoing from vaccine manufacturers and the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), they are too small to provide the kind of efficacy data that were produced for earlier vaccines, The New York Times reported.

Once larger trials are completed, vaccine manufacturers would need several months to produce hundreds of millions of doses of a reconfigured vaccine, Robert Johnson, director of an infectious disease division within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, told the panel.

"If you're not on your way to that clinical trial by the beginning of May, it is very difficult to have collectively across manufacturers enough product to meet that demand," Johnson said, the Times reported.

Dr. Peter Marks, who oversees vaccine regulation for the FDA, agreed that decision on a fall vaccine was needed by May or June.

But vaccine experts are still guessing at what the ever-changing pandemic will bring.

Questions include whether new variants will emerge and, if so, whether they will change the virus substantially. Many experts think another surge is likely this fall. Another question is how to modify existing vaccines so they work better.

Trevor Bedford, a biostatistician at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, said during the meeting that the coronavirus has been mutating far faster than the flu virus, which has a redesigned vaccine every year, the Times reported.

Booster shots were also discussed during the gathering: Sharon Alroy-Preis, director of public health services for Israel's Health Ministry, described Israel's experience with a second booster shot for people ages 60 and older.

Last week, the United States followed suit and authorized a second booster for Americans ages 50 and older. The CDC recommended the second booster for anyone 65 and older and people ages 50 to 64 with underlying health conditions.



While Marks said the FDA did not consider the second booster to "be a major expansion or change," Dr. James Hildreth, president of the Meharry Medical College in Tennessee, asked why the FDA did not seek the advice of a panel it had convened to discuss future vaccine policy, the Times reported.

Jerry Weir, a senior FDA official, said the agency expects to ask the advisory panel to review any reconfiguration of existing vaccines before a future emergency authorization.

The meeting also included Dr. John Beigel, a clinical research director at the NIH, who described a new study designed to compare how well Moderna's existing vaccine works when stacked against modified versions meant to target known variants, either on their own or in combination, the Times reported.

The study will include enrolling 600 volunteers who have received their vaccines and a booster. Some will be given a dose of the existing vaccine. Others will get experimental vaccines that target the Omicron variant, Omicron plus the Beta variant, the Delta variant and a prototype virus that emerged first in the pandemic. Results may be ready by mid-summer, Beigel said.

More information:

The U.S. COVID website has more on COVID-19.

SOURCE: The New York Times

THE PACER

Central Michigan Area Local 300 APWU PO Box 21154 Lansing, MI 48909-1154



Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Permit No. 188 Sparta, WI 54656





Manage Your Health From Your Computer Or Mobile Device

The member portal features resources to keep you healthy and tools to help you get the most from your APWU Health Plan. As a member, you can log in to your portal to:

- √ Access deductibles, copays and maximums
- ✓ Find network doctors and healthcare providers
- ✓ Get estimates for treatments and procedures
- ✓ Price your medications and explore lower cost options

FOR OUR HIGH OPTION MEMBERS

Member portal: myapwuhp.com

- √ Find what services are covered
- √ View or print claims and authorizations
- ✓ See benefit and eligibility information
- ✓ Print or request an ID card



FOR OUR CONSUMER DRIVEN MEMBERS

Member website: myuhc.com®







TOGETHER. BETTER HEALTH.

www.apwuhp.com (800) 222-2798