

S 2051

Improving Postal Operations, Service, and Transparency Act of 2015

Congress: 114 (2015–2017, Ended)

Chamber: Senate

Policy Area: Government Operations and Politics

Introduced: Sep 17, 2015

Current Status: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114

Latest Action: Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114-579. (Jan 21, 2016)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/2051>

Sponsor

Name: Sen. Carper, Thomas R. [D-DE]

Party: Democratic • **State:** DE • **Chamber:** Senate

Cosponsors (5 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Sen. Blunt, Roy [R-MO]	R · MO		Dec 2, 2015
Sen. McCaskill, Claire [D-MO]	D · MO		Dec 2, 2015
Sen. Moran, Jerry [R-KS]	R · KS		Dec 2, 2015
Sen. Collins, Susan M. [R-ME]	R · ME		Jan 21, 2016
Sen. Warner, Mark R. [D-VA]	D · VA		May 16, 2016

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee	Senate	Hearings By (full committee)	Jan 21, 2016

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Government Operations and Politics

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Improving Postal Operations, Service, and Transparency Act of 2015

This bill directs the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) to submit a report on the universal service obligation of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) that takes into account the changing nature of communications and includes recommendations on better defining such obligation to help keep the USPS relevant in the digital age.

TITLE I--POSTAL SERVICE WORKFORCE

Federal agencies must use criteria specific to USPS employees in calculating any liability of the USPS, including retiree health benefits, retirement annuities, and workers' compensation liabilities.

This title: (1) creates a new Postal Service Health Benefits Program (PSHBP) within the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, to be implemented and administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), for all USPS employees and annuitants; (2) requires all Medicare-eligible postal employees and annuitants enrolled in PSHBP to also enroll in Medicare; (3) restructures the pre-funding requirements for USPS retiree health benefits by replacing the current schedule of annual payments to the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund with a schedule of annual installment payments that will liquidate pension liabilities by September 30, 2056, as recomputed by June 30 of each year beginning in 2017; (4) reduces the pre-funding requirement for retiree health benefits to 80% of projected liability (currently, 100%); (5) permits refunds to the USPS for overpayments of unfunded pension obligations; and (6) extends the USPS payment schedule for unfunded Civil Service Retirement System liabilities from 25 years to 40 years.

A right to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board is granted to any USPS officer or employer who: (1) is not represented by a recognized bargaining representative; and (2) is in a supervisory, professional, technical, clerical, administrative, or managerial position covered by the Executive and Administrative Schedule.

Any arbitration board deciding a USPS contract dispute must render a decision within 45 days after its appointment and consider the financial condition of the USPS in deciding such disputes.

The USPS must designate a USPS employee as the Workforce Development Officer to assume primary responsibility for issues relating to the morale of USPS employees.

TITLE II--POSTAL OPERATIONS

The USPS must submit to the Board of Governors of the PRC: (1) a plan describing the actions the USPS intends to take to achieve long-term solvency, and (2) a financial plan and budget. The PRC must contract with an independent agency to complete a study that analyzes USPS finances, the overall mailing industry, the demand for market-dominant and competitive products, and changes in overall USPS revenue and costs savings.

The USPS is prohibited from: (1) closing or consolidating any postal facility for two years after enactment of this Act; and (2) closing or consolidating any post office, or reducing the hours of certain post offices, for five years after enactment of this Act.

The USPS must: (1) submit to appropriate congressional committees a comprehensive strategic plan for reducing the number of area and district offices; (2) establish and regularly revise a uniform set of national service standards; (3) convert door delivery to other delivery modes, including centralized delivery or curbside delivery; and (4) implement a pilot program to assess the feasibility of integrating alternative fuel vehicles into the postal fleet.

The USPS may not maintain or operate more than one post office in a House or Senate Office Building.

TITLE III--POSTAL SERVICE REVENUE AND INNOVATION

This title freezes the rates for market-dominant products in effect on September 30, 2015, until January 1, 2018. By January 1, 2018, the PRC must establish a new system for regulating rates and classes for market-dominant products.

This title authorizes the USPS to provide new nonpostal services and to ship wine, beer, and distilled spirits.

This title establishes: (1) the position of a Chief Innovation Officer who shall lead the development and implementation of innovative postal products and services and nonpostal services that have the potential to improve the net financial position of the USPS; and (2) a Strategic Advisory Commission on Postal Service Solvency, Service, and Innovation to provide strategic guidance and foster innovative thinking to address challenges facing the USPS without unfairly competing with the private sector. The Commission must develop a strategic blueprint for the long-term solvency of the USPS.

TITLE IV--POSTAL SERVICE CUSTOMER SERVICE, TRANSPARENCY, AND REGULATION

The Board of Governors of the USPS shall conduct a study on USPS customer service, including the training of employees that serve the public. The PRC shall submit an annual report to specified congressional committees on the fiscal stability of the U.S. mailing industry.

The USPS must: (1) develop and regularly update a more customer-friendly publication of USPS terms, abbreviations, and acronyms, which shall be made publicly available on the USPS website; and (2) develop and promote adequate and efficient postal services with respect to its market-dominant products.

This title: (1) establishes an Advocate for Competition and requires the USPS and the PRC to publicly post justifications for noncompetitive contracts, and (2) requires a USPS contracting officer who identifies an ethical issue involving a proposed contract to submit such contract to a designated ethics official prior to awarding it.

TITLE V--FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT

Workers' Compensation Reform Act of 2015

This Act amends the the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) to revise benefit payments for FECA enrollees. Under the provisions of this title:

- FECA benefits for totally disabled enrollees are reduced, with certain exceptions, to 50% of their pre-disability pay upon reaching full retirement age, as defined in the Social Security Act;
- augmented compensation for dependents of postal employees who have a work-related injury is eliminated, except for employees who are totally disabled and for partially-disabled employees for three years after the enactment of this Act;
- injured workers may receive schedule compensation payments (i.e., specific payments for certain injuries) if their FECA benefits are reduced by this Act;
- vocational rehabilitation provisions for injured workers (except workers who have attained retirement age) are modified to require such workers to develop a comprehensive return to work plan and undergo vocational rehabilitation, authorize the Department of Labor to enter into an assisted reemployment agreement with public or private employers for hiring individuals eligible for wage-loss compensation for up to three years, and extend vocational rehabilitation opportunities under FECA to partially disabled workers;

a disability management review process must certify and monitor the disability status and extent of injury of each FECA recipient;

- employees who receive worker compensation benefits must report their earnings from employment or self-employment;
- a disability management review process must certify and monitor the disability status and injuries of employees receiving compensation;
- benefits for a severe disfigurement of the face, head, or neck are increased to \$50,000 and the maximum benefit for the reimbursement for funeral expenses for an employee who dies due to a work-related injury is increased to \$6,000; and
- compensation for the disability or death of a federal employee shall include injuries sustained in an attack by a terrorist or terrorist organization.

Actions Timeline

- **Jan 21, 2016:** Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S.Hrg. 114-579.
- **Sep 17, 2015:** Introduced in Senate
- **Sep 17, 2015:** Read twice and referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. (Sponsor introductory remarks on measure: CR S6811-6815)