



**LEGISLATIVE
UPDATE**



What the 117th Congress Means for NATCA

**By Richard Kennington, Chair, National Legislative Committee and
Trisha Pesiri-Dybvik, Vice Chair, National Legislative Committee**



A new Congress begins every two years on Capitol Hill which coincides with the elections in the House of Representatives (this is known as a congressional cycle). The 116th Congress of the great United States of America ended at noon on Jan. 3. They made things exciting. With one week left, an appropriations bill was finally passed and signed which prevented a shutdown and will fund the government through Sept. 30, 2021. With two days left, Congress also overrode President Trump's veto of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – the first veto override of the Trump presidency. This means that the NDAA is law. This bill was a priority for NATCA because it codifies in law that FAA employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave.

All legislation that has not completed its way through the legislative process by the end of the Congress dies when that Congress ends. Therefore, we have work to do over the next cycle to protect and advance our legislative priorities. One such bill that is important to NATCA was H.R.1108, the Aviation Funding and Stability Act of 2019, which guaranteed that the FAA could continue to operate,

using funds from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, in the event of a government shutdown. That legislation remains a priority for NATCA, and we are working to reintroduce similar legislation in the 117th Congress.

We are constantly striving to build relationships with members of Congress – regardless of party – to increase our NATCA Majority on Capitol Hill. One of the ways we do that is by working hard to reelect those members of Congress with whom NATCA has built solid relationships. NATCA's Campaign 2020 efforts included work on over 100 campaigns to support members on both sides of the aisle. NATCA members put in 10,700 hours of volunteer time and saw incredible success. Eighty three percent of the candidates on whose campaigns NATCA worked won their election. The NATCA members that volunteered were highly effective. Senators and representatives reached out to our leadership to express their gratitude and to let us know that we generated records when it came to campaign volunteering numbers. We are in a great place as we head into the 117th Congress, but there is still plenty of work ahead to further these relationships and educate our lawmakers.

The 117th Congress convened at 12:01 p.m. on Jan. 3 and will conclude on Jan. 3, 2023. As of Jan. 8, 70 new members had been elected to Congress, nine to the Senate and 61 to the House. As with the start of every new Congress, this year it will be important for us to ensure members of Congress are educated on the issues that impact our members, our careers, and the National Airspace System. We will continue to advance the status, professionalism, benefits, and working conditions of all bargaining unit members through political and legislative activism.

We look forward to working with our legislative activists from across the country and we invite you to participate. To learn more, [contact a member of your National Legislative Committee](#).

NATCA Members Hit the Ground Running in Georgia Senate Elections



After the 2020 elections concluded in November, all eyes were refocused to the U.S. Senate elections in Georgia. NATCA members were an important part of the excitement, joining the broader labor movement, in helping to decide whether there would be a pro-worker or anti-union majority in the U.S. Senate. Active NATCA members and Boots On The Ground (BOTG) and Retired NATCA Active Volunteers (RNAV) members pounded the pavement, attending outdoor events, handwriting postcards, doing literature drops, making phone calls, and sending text messages to Georgia residents.



"There is a lot to be proud of for our Boots On The Ground program this cycle," said BOTG Program Manager Tom Thompson. "The results of our efforts undoubtedly helped make the difference for many of our labor-endorsed candidates."

BOTG members perfected the ability to maintain a safe environment during the

campaigning season. Many of the traditional BOTG program methods were adjusted due to the pandemic, and in many instances, BOTG members were instrumental in formulating what those adjustments looked like nationwide. Through a continuous exchange of updates between states early on, BOTG members were able to help the AFL-CIO formulate new program guidelines for the unique conditions presented this campaign season.

An emphasis was placed on remote phone banking and text messaging. Door-to-door interaction also changed. Instead of knocking and talking with constituents, a no-contact literature drop method was initiated and was then followed up with a phone call referencing the material that was dropped off. BOTG members mastered the ability to use Zoom for providing instruction to union volunteers and various program meetings. Applications like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and phone calls provided a safe alternative to meeting in person.

“It is with great pride that I report the 27 full-time BOTG members that campaigned July-November, and then the seven that continued November-January for the Georgia runoff, all completed the cycle safely,” said Thompson. “Their ability to accomplish program goals while working remotely or by strictly adhering to safety procedures when in-person allowed for the successes that were realized during this campaign cycle.”

To put the numbers into perspective, five BOTG members literature-dropped 12,183 union member doors in Georgia, or approximately 18% of the program total statewide. Two BOTG members sent 33,500 texts, or 35% of the program total text messages sent to union members statewide. “This was pretty amazing work, especially considering much of this activity was done in a previously untouched portion of the state,” said Thompson.



NATCA's BOTG members and Campaign 2020 volunteers made a significant

impact throughout the country, and especially in Georgia. Thank you BOTG members for your extraordinary efforts this election cycle: Tom Thompson, Jim Barnes, Craig Boehne, Bob Butterworth, Valerie Butterworth, Jill Carr, John Carr, Allen Fritz, Ronald Geoffroy, Brad Grant, James "Dave" Johnson, Kyle Johnson, Noel Kingston, Todd Laveen, Penny Lloyd, Chuck Muñoz, George Petrovich, Yvonne Pino, Thomas Rubrecht, Rick Schmidt, Maurice Scoville, Rosa Serai, Craig Smith, Margaret Summers, Chris Trudeau, George Wiewiora, Michelle Wroblewski, and Robert Zabel.

NATCA's Campaign 2020 Coordinator Steve Weidner also expressed how proud he was of NATCA's active members who volunteered. "I want to express my sincere thanks to members for all of the work they put in on the Georgia Senate races. It was another tremendous team effort!"

Weidner reported that during their off-duty time 174 active NATCA members volunteered a total of almost 4,000 hours in campaign activities. During this time, these NATCA volunteers made nearly 4,000 calls via the AFL-CIO's calling platform, participated in 50 organized phone banking sessions through the Georgia Democratic Party, sent more than 300,000 text messages, and sent more than 7,000 postcards to Georgia voters. About these activities, Weidner stated, "The numbers are truly impressive when you consider the vast majority of this work was done over a four-and-a-half-week period by a fraction of the volunteers who participated in the overall 2020 Campaign."

Aviation Labor News

How Unions Helped Georgia Flip the Senate

In the Georgia Senate runoff elections on Jan. 5, Democrats Jon Ossoff and the Reverend Raphael Warnock unseated Trump-supporting incumbents Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue by margins of less than 80,000 votes – abetted by what a UNITE HERE! leader calls an “unprecedented ground game” by labor unions. “Demographics is not destiny. Demographics is opportunity,” says Gwen Mills, the secretary-treasurer of the 300,000-member hotel and food-service workers union. “Talking to people at their doorsteps is necessary to get them to vote.”

“In the last couple weeks, we were talking to 15,000 people a day,” Mills added. During the six-week runoff campaign, according to her, UNITE HERE! had more than 1,000 members knocking on people’s doors in the Atlanta and Columbus areas a total of 1.5 million times.

Overall, the Service Employees International Union, with nearly two million members in health care and public service jobs, estimates that it and the other unions involved in canvassing, such as the Georgia Federation of Teachers (GFT) and the Communications Workers of America, made more than 10 million visits to voters.

“I went door to door every single day, six days a week,” says UNITE HERE! member Theresa Cross, a hotel worker from Atlanta who was laid off last March. [Read more.](#)

Government Affairs Update

The following is an update from NATCA's Government Affairs Department:

117th Congress Convenes

The 117th Congress convened on Sunday, Jan. 3. The House elected Representative Nancy Pelosi for what many believe will be her fourth and final term as Speaker of the House. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., will remain in that role. On the Senate side, following the runoff election in Georgia on Tuesday, Jan. 5, Democrats will now control that chamber, in addition to the House and White House. The balance of power in the Senate will be 50-50, with Vice President-elect Kamala Harris's ability to cast tie-breaking votes. Senator Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., will become the majority leader, relegating current Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to the minority after six years in charge of the Senate.

12 Weeks Paid Parental Leave Enacted into Law for FAA Employees

The benefits of the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, providing 12 weeks of paid parental leave, are now codified into law for employees at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The path to enactment was not easy. More than a year of effort by NATCA staff and member activists led to this important legislative victory. A variety of legislative avenues with Democrats and Republicans in both the House and Senate to secure this technical correction were explored. Each attempt faced many hurdles and roadblocks and included extensive outreach to members of Congress and their staffs.

The paid parental leave provision was secured in the bicameral, bipartisan FY 2021 NDAA passed in Congress in December. President Trump vetoed the legislation due to issues unrelated to our parental leave provision, but NATCA continued its efforts to advance this provision and advocated for an override of the President's veto. Ultimately, Congress successfully voted to override President Trump's veto on Jan. 1, 2021, and the legislation is now law.

FAA Funded Through Sept. 30, 2021

On Dec. 27, legislation was enacted into law to provide funding for the federal government through the end of the current fiscal year, Sept. 30, 2021. The funding bill, known as an "omnibus," passed Congress on Dec. 21, and was signed into law by President Trump on Dec. 27. There will be no more immediate threats of a government shutdown and the FAA will continue to function as normal through Sept. 30, 2021.

Attached to the omnibus was a large coronavirus relief package and, due to the size of the legislation, the processing was expected to take several days before it could be signed into law. As such, Congress also passed a seven-day continuing resolution (CR) to ensure there was no lapse in government funding when the previous CR expired at midnight on Dec. 21.

The omnibus, combined with coronavirus relief, is one of the longest bills in history. NATCA is still in the process of reviewing the legislation to ensure we know how it will affect NATCA members and aviation more broadly.

1% Pay Raise for Federal Employees Effective January 2021

On New Year's Eve, the President issued an Executive Order (EO) adjusting the pay rates and pay bands for employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) and other statutory pay systems. The general increase is 1.0% with no adjustment to locality rates. These increases are based upon the alternative pay plan the President submitted to Congress in February, in accordance with the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990. Congress did not address federal employee pay in the funding bill that was recently enacted into law, which meant that the President's alternative plan would be implemented. For additional information on the 2021 pay raise, [please refer to the NATCA News Alert dated Jan. 1.](#)

Payroll Support Secured for Airline Workers

Throughout the duration of the coronavirus pandemic, NATCA has stood in solidarity with our aviation union sisters and brothers as thousands of furloughs and layoffs went into effect earlier this month in the absence of a coronavirus relief deal. We are pleased to share that the coronavirus relief package, mentioned above, will assist our brothers and sisters who work for U.S. airlines and the contractors who support the airline industry. The bill provides a four-month extension of a government assistance program to fund payroll costs. Airline workers would be paid retroactive to Dec. 1 and could not be furloughed through March 31, 2021, as a condition of the assistance.

Aircraft Certification Reform and Accountability Act Enacted

The omnibus appropriations bill that funds the government through September 2021, also contained important bipartisan legislation, titled "The Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act." NATCA representatives and staff, as well as NATCA subject matter experts within the Aircraft Certification Service (AIR), worked closely with committee leadership in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to ensure that this bill improved aviation safety and resolved concerns specific to aircraft certification, while also protecting the rights and interests of employees that NATCA represents. NATCA strongly supported both versions of the legislation that were drafted separately in the House and the Senate and, as a result, we are very happy with this version in the omnibus, which included provisions from each chamber's version.

The Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act makes several critical improvements to the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) program. It also strengthens the aviation safety culture within the FAA and throughout the aircraft manufacturing industry, particularly in the area of aircraft certification and safety oversight.

NATCA ensured that it would be involved in collaboration with the FAA to improve recruitment and retention of AIR personnel and ensure our members receive recurrent training related to aircraft certification. Specifically, the bill appropriates

\$27 million to improve recruitment and retention incentives for engineers and other aviation safety professionals who oversee and certify transport aircraft and engines, prioritizes professional development of skills required to perform AIR's functions, and requires the FAA to collaborate with NATCA in developing future recruitment and retention programs. The bill also appropriates \$10 million for the continuing education and recurrent training of AIR personnel.

NATCA also wanted to ensure more communication and transparency between ODA holders' frontline workers and the AIR frontline workforce. This bill accomplishes this by prohibiting the FAA or an ODA holder from restricting the communication between FAA AIR employees and ODA unit members within industry.

Additionally, the bill directs the FAA to finalize a new confidential Voluntary Safety Reporting Program (VSRP), which will enhance the current safety reporting program that is jointly administered by the FAA and NATCA. Recently retired NATCA Safety Committee Chairman Steve Hansen, who has been one of the leading developers and proponents of the successful ATSAP program for controllers as well other VSRPs for NATCA's other represented professions, was instrumental in educating congressional staff on what makes a VSRP effective.

There are a host of industry reforms that NATCA subject matter experts provided feedback on, helping to craft the final legislative language.

Transportation Secretary nominee Pete Buttigieg was asked about the legislation on Thursday, Jan. 21, by Senator Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., during his confirmation hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Cantwell stressed the need to make the safety reforms at the FAA a priority, and Buttigieg said he was committed to doing that. "We need to make sure that engineers and the FAA are in the driver's seat when it comes to safety," he said. "We'll be working right away to implement the legislation that you've advanced with regard to ensuring that we have every confidence in safety at the FAA." Buttigieg also confirmed he is willing to make changes in personnel if necessary.

New England Region Presents Jay Bowers Activism Award to Deserving NATCAvists



In 2019, NATCA's New England Region (NNE) created the Jay Bowers Activism award, named after a hard-working legislative activist and NNE Rep on the National Legislative Committee (NLC). Bowers immersed himself in his role and spent countless hours forging relationships with congressional members and their staff. He also worked with the NLC to revamp and rebrand NATCA in Washington into a premier national conference.

Congratulations to two dedicated NATCAvists, NLC NNE Rep Andre Jean, Boston TRACON (A90), and Alternate NNE Rep Jamie Green, Providence ATCT (PVD), receiving the award in 2020.

Both Jean and Green work tirelessly, coordinating meetings with members of Congress, collecting volunteers for phone and text banking, distributing materials, and much more.

Green found her drive for legislative activism during the 2018-2019 government shutdown. Jean was Bowers's mentee. They have worked closely together during legislative events and attended meetings with the region's congressional members.

NATCA in Washington 2021

Every year, NATCA hosts its NATCA in Washington (NiW) legislative conference where activists meet with members of Congress to further our relationships and educate those congressional members and their staff on issues that are important to our Union.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the 2020 conference and postpone the 2021 conference. NiW 2021 is planned for Oct. 4-6 at the Marriott Marquis Washington,

D.C. Attendees can expect to fly in on Oct. 3 and leave Oct. 6.

We hope you can participate as we welcome back the NATCA Majority and begin developing relationships with the freshmen members of Congress. Registration information will be released approximately June 2021.



Legislative Resources

Ballotpedia: [Click here.](#)

National Legislative Committee: Roster, contacts, information - [Click here.](#)

State Legislative Coordinators contact list [Click here.](#)

U.S. Senate: Numbers of facilities, members, and bargaining unit members in each state - [Click here.](#)

U.S. House of Representatives: Facilities and numbers of members in each congressional district - [Click here.](#)

NATCA in Washington 2021: [Click here.](#)

Legislative Updates on natca.org: [Click here.](#)

Archive of past monthly legislative updates: [Click here.](#)