



The Patrons Chain

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GRANGE

August 21, 2020

DON'T LET THE CONNECTION GO COLD

As we are not permitted to meet, we ask you to share these newsletters by forwarding this or printing and mailing to your Grange friends

Action and Information on USPS – Part 1

By Betsy Huber National Grange President

The United States Postal Service is part of our public trust – an essential resource for individuals and businesses, and a piece of the American fabric that has long made our nation great. The current crisis involving USPS and its solvency is not new in 2020, though the pandemic has exacerbated the problem, as it has with so many other facets of American life.

Since its earliest days in the late 1800s, the Grange has known the importance of a robust and solvent postal service and advocated for such. Specifically, the work of our members in the latter part of the 19th century to secure rural free delivery helped to elevate life in some of our nation's most remote corners and level the playing field for social connection and business.

For more than two centuries the USPS was an official department within the U.S. government and as such had a budget that helped subsidize shortfalls in revenue, meaning its operations came with a little help from its friends – the U.S. taxpayers. In 1970, as part of an overall shift toward a smaller federal government, the Postal Reorganization Act was passed, a milestone in the evolution of USPS from federal department to self-determining agency. Over the next several years, \$9 billion tax dollars were used as part of that move towards independence, and in 1982, the now-independent agency took its last no-strings-attached taxpayer dollars. Loans to the agency are still available through the federal government, but must be paid back in full.

From 1983 to 2006, under its own management with little federal interference, the agency ran a deficit budget only four times. Then in 2006, the [Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act](#) - that required it to fully fund the pension of employees 75 years out - was signed and pushed the financially solvent agency into the freefall we have seen since.

Not once since 2006 has the agency turned a profit or even come close to breaking even. Their best year since the unfunded liability mandate was 2017 when they lost just over \$2.5 billion. Five years before, in 2012, the agency had its worst year on record when expenses were more than \$15.7 billion over revenue and they missed making payments into the pension plan – a failure repeated year after year since. To date, the agency – which cannot set its own rates and as such does not determine its own destiny – has paid \$278 billion into the fund, but owes more than \$120 billion.

The act also mandated specific service goals for the USPS, weakened the provisions in the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 that protected rural and remote post offices, and created a postal rate cap that has been beneficial to consumers but undermines the agency's ability to raise the funds necessary for the mandated pension payments.


In 2016, [then Postmaster General Megan Brennan told Congress the agency would run out of funds by 2024](#). By May 2020, COVID-19 shifted the timeline dramatically with Brennan's deadline changing to [first September 2020](#), then [April 2021](#) as some momentum picked back up in the economy and as consumers rallied around the beloved agency, purchasing stamps and sending letters.

Americans rely on the Postal Service to deliver not only correspondence, but income checks, tax documents, and other sensitive materials daily. [In 2019, the USPS handled more than 140 billion items, down from its peak of 213 billion in 2006](#).

The USPS is also the essential connection for many rural Americans who have been left behind in the great buildout of the internet age. Millions of Americans have no high-speed internet at home – [about 30 million according to the FCC](#), or upwards of [41.2 million individuals as reported](#) by a study conducted by BroadbandNow which has highlighted the inaccurate methods used to produce broadband maps.

The move by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to have Congress return and the emergency hearing with recently-appointed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy slated for Friday, August 20 is necessary. However, plans for legislation to restrict the USPS's options to make its way out of the financial quicksand is equally short-sighted if it does not include an effort on the part of both the House and Senate to somehow repeal or reform this pension mandate.


The USPS Fairness Act, which would undo the pension pre-funding requirement, [passed the House in 2017](#) and again [just before the pandemic began this year](#), but has never been acted upon by the Senate.



Grange Resource Binder now available

The Grange Resource Binder is a comprehensive tool for Community Granges that outlines important information on business procedures, Grange meeting procedures, Grange law, Grange officer resources, and program resources. Each Resource Binder is 434 pages that comes with a flash drive that contains certain documents in a digital format.

FREE BY DIGITAL DOWNLOAD ON NATIONALGRANGE.ORG
\$30* FOR BINDER & FLASH DRIVE; \$10* FOR FLASH DRIVE ONLY
*PLUS SHIPPING



First Digital Membership & Leadership Training A Success!

By Joe Stefenoni, National Membership Director

On Saturday August 15, Growth Through Action: Planning the Future for Your Community Grange, the first fully digital membership & leadership training, was held via Zoom. This program lays the foundation for Community Granges to create their own strategic/action plans. In a typical year, these workshops would be conducted in person all across the country. However, COVID presented the challenge and opportunity to transition these trainings into a digital format.

Participants go through four steps beginning with evaluating the current condition of their Community Grange, determining what is the future of their Community Grange, evaluating the resources available to their Community Grange and finally creating a strategic/action plan. Participants should finish the workshop with the ability to return to their Community Grange and work to create a strategic/action plan. The goal is that participants return to their Community Grange and work with the Grange leadership to create a shared vision for the future.

Strategic/action plans are useful tools for Community Granges no matter their status. Strategic/action plans are a way for Community Granges to objectively evaluate where they are, where they want to be and how they get there. These plans shouldn't be made by just one person, instead they should be created by Grange leadership & stakeholders and shared with all the members. These strategic/action plans also show the community and potential members that the Grange is actively thinking about its future. All members are invited to attend and participate since all members have a stake in the future of their Community Grange and the Grange as a whole organization.

The next session of Growth Through Action will be held on Saturday September 19th beginning at 12:30 pm eastern time (9:30 am pacific). A third session has been added for Saturday October 10th. The October 10th session will begin at 1 pm eastern (10 am pacific). Each session lasts approximately 2.5 to 3 hours with short breaks throughout. Participants are given a workbook to use during the seminar as well as when they return to work with their Community Grange. To register go to: <https://form.jotform.com/202015073739147>



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WHAT DOES *We're in this together* MEAN TO YOU?

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"Being 'In this together' means we all coexist in the same space. It is incumbent upon each of us to look out for the welfare of all of us...Above all, we must respect one another. That's what being 'in this together' means to me."

-Michael Martin, Valley Grange #1360

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Upcoming Lecturer Contests

While convention may not be in the most conventional format this year that does not mean our contests need to be put on hold.

We are hosting a virtual photo contest, a quilt block contest and more so use some of that quarantine time to tap into your creative side. While you are out on your walks feel free to bring a camera along and snap pictures of things that bring you joy and ones that you can eventually enter in our contest.

If you are looking for a new hobby and wanting to try something out of your comfort zone look up some quilt patterns and break out your teal fabric. This contest only requires you to enter one block.

Check out our website at <https://www.nationalgrange.org/lecturers-programming/> for more information on dates and other contests.



EVERYONE CAN ENTER OUR
2020 VIRTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Get all details at bit.ly/ng20fotocon
Submit entries at bit.ly/grange20photo

2020 NATIONAL GRANGE QUILT BLOCK CONTEST

Sponsored by the National Lecturer
All blocks should incorporate teal or turquoise
Block may be any of your choice or Shoo-Fly Block, finished at 12.5" x 12.5"

ADULT, JUNIOR AND MEN'S DIVISIONS
October 31, 2020 Deadline

Go to nationalgrange.org for all details and entry sheet

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