

Postal Record

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Letter from the Editor

Whenever it seems that you, the letter carriers of America, have done all you can to boost understanding about the U.S. Postal Service and the value of the universal network, you raise your efforts to another level.

Educating folks, not just the public but also those who report the news, shouldn't be necessary because the Postal Service is older than the country itself and few institutions are as directly involved in the lives of all Americans.

But for reasons we've discussed in this space, it is indeed necessary, given the amount of misinformation and the prevailing myths.

By the thousands, you are stepping up to let people know the facts about postal finances, about the importance of the USPS to our nation's private sector, about the many things letter carriers do—beyond providing the world's best and most affordable postal service—to serve our customers, our communities and our country.

Your efforts couldn't come at a better time, because decisions will be made in the next few months that will affect our jobs, our employer and our ability to provide those customers and those communities with the service they expect—and deserve.

Notwithstanding a few ideologues hostile to government, unions and public employees, and despite the highly partisan tone in Washington, many lawmakers want to do what they think is best for their constituents and for the country. There still are legislators who have open minds and some intellectual integrity, and what you're doing to inform them by shaping the public discussion can be pivotal. Even legislators who lack those attributes want to get elected, so by getting the message out to their constituents you can be effective with these lawmakers as well.

Thanks to the universal reach of the Postal Service and hence the geographic dispersal of letter carriers, your efforts are evident in every part of the country.

Just a few recent examples:

From Headquarters, President Rolando had a letter to the editor of *Barron's* pointing out that 95 percent of this fiscal year's postal red ink results from the congressional mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits and that degrading service isn't a business plan. The audience for that letter: the 300,000

subscribers, who include the nation's top business leaders.

His letter in *Politico* on the importance of Saturday delivery, and urging Congress to do better with postal legislation, reached the nation's political leaders. And his letter to the editor of the *Idaho Statesman*, Idaho's largest newspaper, reached residents—and legislators—of that mostly rural state.

Those around the country who've recently helped get our message out include Utah State Association Vice President Julie Todich; Region 12 NBA Bill Lucini; Casper, WY Branch 1681 President Rene Eberhardt; Region 14 NBA John Casciano; Chicago Branch 11 President Mack Julion; Kearney, NE Branch 312 activist Ken Nickerson and Ohio State Association President John Dyce.

It's worth noting that our national business agents are doing an extraordinary job taking the initiative in dealing with the media. And when I've asked them to speak to a newspaper reporter, appear on a radio or TV show, or find a local carrier for an interview, not once has an NBA or the regional administrative assistants failed to come through. Moreover, their work often has a spin-off effect, with local reporters spurred to do stories, or editorial writers doing editorials, based on what the NBAs have said or written. I know of no other union with as powerful a regional presence—and it's showing in our all-important communications effort.

Despite the improved reporting that results from your efforts, misleading stories haven't disappeared. Even when you don't have time to respond with a letter or op-ed piece, it's worth calling an editor to mention the error(s) in a story. If you do so, be precise—have one or two factual errors you can cite. That may lead to a correction; at the least it will inform them for the next time, and with stories that come from a national wire source, such as the Associated Press, the editor may well contact the originating source to complain about the errors—which can only help us by improving the reporting.

On a personal note, next month will mark two years that I've been at the NALC. Over that period, I've learned a lot about the Postal Service, about letter carriers, about this union. But one thing that hasn't changed, since Day 1, is my feeling that it is an honor to work with you and for you, and that we are all engaged in a noble cause. ✉



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