

Researchers examine precarious work



Research Director
Jim Holland

From Oct. 7 to 9, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) and the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN) hosted their annual conference in Philadelphia. Researchers and policy analysts from across the country attended the two-day conference, which covered a variety of interesting topics. A central theme that ran through the conference was the issue of low-

wage, precarious work. Panelists discussed the prevalence of this type of work in the United States, the way it is affecting the broader economy, and things that can be done to help raise standards.

Fabricio Rodríguez, a member of the Philadelphia Security Officers Union and the lead coordinator of the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Philadelphia, presented research that documented poor working conditions in the restaurant industry. Rodríguez highlighted stories where restaurant workers have become seriously injured or sick on the job and have had to continue working out of fear they would be fired for leaving work to tend to an injury or illness. To help workers in this situation, Rodríguez has been active in trying to win paid sick days for workers, so that people are legally protected if they are injured or sick and cannot work.

Joseph Grady of Topos Partnership gave a compelling presentation about ways to communicate with the public about the importance of workers. He described how it was necessary to help the public make the connection between workers doing well and the economy doing well. While this may seem like an intuitive connection to some, in reality many people do not make the link right away. In video interviews shown during the presentation, many of the interviewees were initially predisposed to think that cuts to pay, benefits and services would lead to economic prosperity. It was amazing to watch people change their minds on this issue after they were provided with some basic information about the connection between workers doing well and the economy doing well.

Finally, there was a presentation about retirement security. A panel of experts discussed how 401(k) accounts have been a poor substitute for traditional pension plans. Money in pensions can be managed efficiently, and since not everyone in the pension plan retires at the same time, the fund can ride out the ups and downs of the stock market. A 401(k), on the other hand, puts all of the risk on the individual worker.

Budget update: The devil is always in the details



Director of Legislative
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Jennifer Warburton

As House and Senate budget conferees get to work on a federal budget deal, there are many rumors floating about Washington, DC, on what will be included in it.

With a deadline of Jan. 15, discussions are well under way.

I believe it is fair to say at this point that the first rumor we can dispell is the notion that there will be a “grand bargain.” Once again, the refusal from most Republicans to include any tax increases has been met with

the refusal from most Democrats to include any entitlement cuts without a fair middle ground.

Where does that leave the negotiations? The answer: with a bare-bones continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government funded for an additional few months.

However, as the House and Senate continue discussions on what will be included in a budget package, the NALC is following along with a close eye. There may be an opportunity to include several positive components of a postal reform package into the budget conference, components the NALC would more than likely support.

But the buzz around Capitol Hill is that the budget might also include yet another hit to federal employees—significant employee increases to Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pension contributions.

There is the Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) approach, which would increase pension contributions by 5.5 percent; the Obama budget proposal, which would increase pension contributions by 1.2 percent over three years; or the Senate approach, which is silent (on this issue).

Obviously, the NALC vehemently opposes any increases to pension contributions, as they are unjustified and equate to a pay cut. Congress needs to find another source for deficit reduction; federal employees cannot continue to balance the national budget on their own, especially when the federal workforce already has contributed \$105 billion to debt reduction through pay freezes and higher retirement contributions for new hires (post-2012).

Stay tuned...the details will be revealed in the next several weeks and, as always, the devil will be in the details.

The power of recognition



Community and Membership Outreach Coordinator Pam Donato

As evidenced by our recent NALC Heroes of the Year awards event in Washington, DC, giving positive recognition is a powerful tool to foster greater participation. By giving respect and appreciation, we're almost certain to create a domino effect of goodness, gaining strength and reach as the act is passed along to others also deserving. When people are given accolades, it confirms that they are valued, likely motivating them to continue their good work and maybe

even expand their involvement in other ways.

This is not a new or complicated concept, yet recognition is not practiced nearly as much as it could or should be. Now we're trying to make it easier.

Recognition can be formal (a public announcement or award program) or informal (a personal comment or pat on the back). It can come from a person in a leadership position, a co-worker, a union member peer or even from the receiver of the act of good will. It can be given by a person, a group or an entire organization.

Hopefully you have been on the receiving end, so I'm sure you know the positive impact. You walk a little taller, feel more confident and are more likely to return the favor to another.

Beyond our NALC Heroes awards, our work for the NALC and as letter carriers provides us countless opportunities to recognize others for their work and contributions to collective goals. It can be as easy as personally acknowledging someone's donation to a union cause with a personal "thank you" at his or her case in the morning. Or it could be giving praise and a certificate during an NALC meeting for his or her volunteer work at a union event. Both actions take only a few minutes, though their impact on the recipient has staying power, lasting for days, weeks—sometimes even a career.

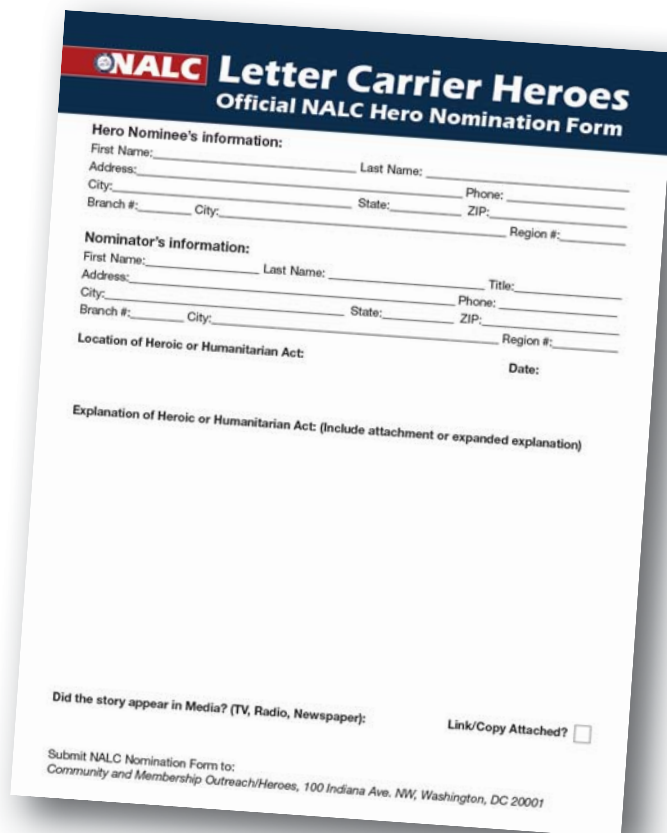
And, as we have experienced with our national NALC Heroes awards, when the public recognizes someone wearing a letter carrier uniform for his or her great work, everyone wearing the uniform walks a bit taller.

At this year's NALC Heroes of the Year awards event, President Rolando presented each hero with a special NALC Hero pin for the first time. This marks the start of a new practice of awarding an NALC Hero pin to each NALC

letter carrier whose act of good will or story of heroism is printed in *The Postal Record* or is acknowledged by a letter from President Rolando.

Historically, these stories come to NALC Headquarters through a variety of ways, including reports from the USPS. To make it easier to report these stories to us, and for a simple way to nominate an NALC letter carrier as a hero, please visit our NALC website. Under the "community service" banner, click on "carrier heroes," and click "NALC hero nomination form." You can complete the form digitally, then print and send it to NALC Headquarters (address on the bottom of the form).

It takes only a moment to fill out the form, but as we've seen, the results can be profound.



NALC Letter Carrier Heroes
Official NALC Hero Nomination Form

Hero Nominee's information:
First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Phone: _____
Branch #: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
City: _____ Region #: _____

Nominator's information:
First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Title: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Phone: _____
Branch #: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____
City: _____ Region #: _____
Location of Heroic or Humanitarian Act: _____
Date: _____

Explanation of Heroic or Humanitarian Act: (Include attachment or expanded explanation)

Did the story appear in Media? (TV, Radio, Newspaper): _____ Link/Copy Attached?

Submit NALC Nomination Form to:
Community and Membership Outreach/Heroes, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001