

PMG announces unlawful end to Saturdays; NALC vows to fight

On Feb. 6, Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe called a press conference to announce that he planned unilaterally to end Saturday mail delivery service in the first week of August, despite Congress' legislated mandate of six-day delivery. Donahoe said that his lawyers had advised him

Saturday delivery and many vowed to fight the language's removal in the continuing resolution.

"There is also a question of the legality of USPS' move," said Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). "Congress enacted legislation directing the USPS to maintain Saturday delivery and the USPS should go through Congress if it wants to alter delivery."

"The postmaster general cannot save the Postal Service by ending one of its major competitive advantages," Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) said. "Cutting six-day delivery is not a viable plan for the future. It will lead to a death spiral that will harm rural America while doing very little to improve the financial condition of the Postal Service." (Many other congressional statements opposing Donahoe's actions can be found on nalc.org.)

In fact, in the last Congress, a bipartisan majority of House members co-sponsored legislation backing the continuation of Saturday delivery. Despite Congress' obvious resistance, Donahoe has vowed to end Saturday delivery even if the continuing resolution maintains the six-day language.

"The PMG didn't equivocate when he talked to me before unleashing a sneak attack on the nation's postal customers, letter carriers and mailers who rely on Saturday delivery," Rolando said. "He told me he plans to go ahead with his service- and job-killing plan, even if Congress extends in March the continuing resolution that mandates Saturday delivery. He's essentially telling Congress to, 'Drop dead!' He is presuming the right to override the will of America's elected representatives."

During his announcement, Donahoe claimed to have letter carrier support to make the switch to five-day delivery, something Rolando told him was untrue when the postmaster general spoke to him 18 hours before the announcement.

"I made it absolutely clear that letter carriers totally oppose this destructive plan," President Rolando said. "I told him directly that we consider this an attack

on letter carriers, on the Postal Service's customers and on the American public, not to mention an affront to Congress. I informed him that I would direct our lawyers to take the most aggressive action possible to thwart his reckless plan.

"Donahoe's claim that postal employees support his self-destructive downsizing plan is plainly untrue—every union has announced its opposition. If he is truly willing to be guided by the views of the nation's letter carriers, NALC would gladly agree to jointly commission a carrier poll on this matter, so long as the PMG is willing to be bound by the results. Otherwise, he should not arrogantly presume to speak for America's letter carriers."

NALC has long held that there are better ways to save the USPS from its current financial crisis. The union has tried time and again to work with Postal Service management to pursue growth measures and cost savings, but it has become clear that the Postal Service leadership's only strategy is to gut the unique postal network that provides us with the world's most affordable delivery service, and to eliminate the services on which Americans depend.

Donahoe has succeeded not only in alienating carriers and Congress, he also has alienated the businesses that pay for the mail, Rolando said.

"If the postmaster general is unwilling or unable to develop a smart growth strategy that serves the nearly 50 percent of business mailers that want to keep six-day service, and if he arrogantly thinks he is above the law or has the right to decide policy matters that should be left to Congress, it is time for him to step down," the president said.

"Letter carriers, the core workforce of the United States Postal Service, have lost confidence in Postmaster General Donahoe. It is time for him to go."

Call for action

President Rolando used the opportunity to address NALC leaders from

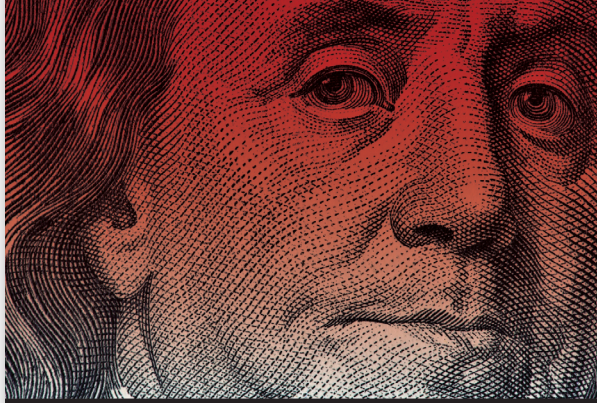


Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe held a press conference on Feb. 6 to announce his decision to end Saturday mail delivery.

that he has the authority to do so, and that if Congress disagrees, it should strip the six-day language from the continuing resolution set to pass on March 27, allowing the United States Postal Service to end Saturday mail delivery.

"This plan to end Saturday delivery is a disastrous idea that would have a profoundly negative effect on the Postal Service and on millions of customers," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Congress cannot let him get away with this arrogant power grab—not only because it will drive more business away and do irreparable harm to the Postal Service, but also because it will set the stage for a move to four-day and three-day delivery in the years ahead."

Many in Congress wondered about Donahoe's legal authority to end



After the announcement, the NALC ran an advertisement in Washington, DC-area newspapers and magazines to decry the postmaster general's actions.

Our first postmaster general would not be amused.

Six-day mail delivery is in the law.

For the past 30 years, Congress has required the Postal Service to deliver six days a week. Nothing in the law has changed.

The postmaster general used to believe Congress alone has the authority to change the mail delivery schedule.

"Congress must act ... [to] grant the Postal Service the authority to determine delivery frequency."

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, September 2011

But now he says he doesn't need Congress to get rid of Saturday delivery.

Is the postmaster general above the law?



across the country who had gathered in Las Vegas for the NALC rap session three days after the announcement to plan the union's reaction. Rolando promised those at the rap session that "we will spare no expense and use every available resource to mobilize our grassroots, lobby our legislators in Congress and seek every media avenue available to us to get the job done." But he emphasized that the leaders in the meeting hall had to do their part to mobilize the members in their branches to fight back if we are to succeed.

The president told the gathering that he was drafting a special letter to all active NALC members to explain the dire threat that five-day delivery poses to the future of our jobs and to the viability of the Postal Service. He asked every leader in attendance at the rap session to communicate the union's message to all members as well.

Rolando announced that, before the current continuing resolution expires on March 27, the NALC is planning rallies at post offices in each state, in crucial media markets, probably on a Sunday.

"We want to make this fight about how losing Saturday mail would affect people in each and every state," he said.

As noted above, Donahoe has stated his intention to go through with eliminating Saturday mail even if the six-day language is included in a new continuing resolution. With that in mind, after such a measure gets approved—and assuming the six-day mandate remains in place—the NALC plans to hold a massive rally at USPS Headquarters at L'Enfant Plaza "to demand that Donahoe obey the law." (Further details about these rallies will be posted at nalc.org as they become available.)

"Our focus is not the implementation of Donahoe's plan, but its destruction," Rolando said.

(For more on Rolando's response to the postmaster general's announcement, see story, page 6.)

In the Senate

Donahoe was called to testify before the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on Feb. 13. He attempted to justify to lawmakers his attempt to do an end-run around Congress by ending Saturday delivery.

"Donahoe acknowledged that he had not studied the impact on lost mail volume and revenue of going to a five-day delivery schedule," President Rolando said, "and that his figure of \$2 billion in potential savings was only an estimate.

"That estimate lacks credibility because his previous estimates have been found to be wildly inflated by, among others, the Postal Regulatory Commission—in part because they don't reflect the lost mail volume that would result," he said.

Members of the Senate committee also had problems with the postmaster general's testimony.

"If we're doing things that actually reduce the mail volume and reduce profitability, we're heading in the wrong direction," Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) said.

Meanwhile, Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) indicated that the postmaster general's bid to unilaterally end Saturday delivery runs counter to both the law and the expressed will of Congress.

"Donahoe also misleadingly said that the Postal Service is losing \$25 million a day," Rolando noted. In fact, 80 percent of that so-called loss has nothing to do with postal operations, but rather results from the 2006 pre-funding mandate.

Further, the postmaster general's claims that polls show support for ending Saturday delivery are equally misleading, Rolando said.

"When people are given a false choice, such as between ending Saturday delivery or seeing stamp prices rise and/or the Postal Service go bankrupt, they choose the former," he

said. "But when given a question that reflects the actual source of the red ink, such as whether they'd prefer to lose Saturday delivery or have Congress fix the pre-funding situation, they overwhelmingly choose the latter.

"Instead of allowing the postmaster general to make counterproductive cuts in service that will put the Postal Service on a death spiral," Rolando said, "Congress should address the pre-funding mandate instead, while the postmaster general should develop a business plan that will allow the Postal Service to continue to provide Americans with the world's best and most affordable delivery service.

Support for S. 316

Also on Feb. 13, a coalition of senators led by Sen. Sanders introduced a postal reform bill, S. 316

"The NALC is pleased to endorse Senator Sanders' bill," Rolando said. "This legislation addresses many of the key issues facing the U.S. Postal Service, and would help it return to financial stability while protecting the services offered to Americans and their businesses throughout the country.

"Of particular importance to postal customers and to the future of the USPS itself, the bill continues the six-day delivery schedule that has been the law for 30 years," Rolando said.

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) introduced H.R. 630, a similar bill in the House. **PR**