

# Your work helps fall legislative fight



Philip  
Dine

**S**ome good timing, good fortune and solid work by NALC members and leaders have us in decent shape as we strive to get our message out to the public and to lawmakers recently returned from a lengthy recess.

This is a key period, with the fall legislative session underway and possible consideration of bills that would damage the Postal Service, reduce services to the public and hurt letter carriers.

Shortly before lawmakers left for vacation, they—and the country—read headlines with a tone not recently seen: “Postal Service finances improve...” (*Washington Post*), “Postal Loss Shrinks...” (*Wall Street Journal*), “Labor leader says USPS financial results show improvements” (*Federal Daily*).

As for the stories, *The New York Times* cited “a better-than-expected performance for the agency,” and quoted President Rolando as saying, “The Postal Service’s latest quarterly report makes clear that Postal Service finances are rebounding strongly as the U.S. economy improves.” The *Wall Street Journal* called the USPS 2013 third-quarter financial report “a sharp improvement from a year earlier,” while the *Washington Post* wrote that postal finances “are trending in the right direction” and this “has agency and postal labor officials cautiously optimistic.” Reuters reported that “The Postal Service was also helped by an 8.8 percent increase in revenues from shipping packages and parcels as more Americans shop online and use the agency for deliveries.”

The USPS report showed \$740 million in red ink and \$1.4 billion in pre-funding charges—meaning the agency would have been \$660 million in the black without pre-funding.

And so, when the Postal Service held a conference call a few days later to discuss its report, the postmaster general and the chief financial officer faced questions they’re unaccustomed to. For starters, reporters grilled them on how their service-reduction agenda in Congress would fare given these positive figures.

**To be sure, the media coverage reflected the good news—but it also reflected the work done by President Rolando, other NALC officers and rank-and-file letter carriers to educate reporters and to get the message out to the public.** Absent such efforts, the USPS figures would have gone right over the heads of most journalists, who for too long simply repeated the conventional wisdom.

Instead, thanks to you, reporters are beginning (this remains a work in progress) to understand that pre-funding is not a normal cost of doing business and is skewing postal finances.

This, of course, is not good for those aiming to destroy the Postal Service as part of a broader attack on unions, public service and government. The last thing they want is an in-

formed public—which, conversely, President Rolando calls our best ally.

**The NALC kept up the momentum as senators and representatives left Washington for their home districts.** President Rolando recorded a news feed distributed to 870 radio stations/networks across the country. He had commentaries in newspapers from New Jersey to Texas, Alabama to Colorado, Pennsylvania to Nevada, Ohio to Nebraska. He was interviewed on the national Ed Schultz radio show and the national Thom Hartmann TV show.

Region 12 NBA Bill Lucini was quoted by Philadelphia TV and a local newspaper. President Emeritus James Rademacher, Vermont President Jill Charbonneau, Utah President John Paige and Casper, WY Branch 1681 President Rene Eberhardt got our message out in newspapers. Gainesville, GA Branch 1441 letter carrier Gary Dover was the focus of a newspaper feature story; Rockford, IL Branch 245 president Kelly Pruka was interviewed on TV; Carmel, IN Branch 888 letter carrier Ronnie Roush and Southeast PA Merged Branch 725 letter carrier William Mellon had letters to the editor—just a few examples.

By helping the media do their job, we’re helping ourselves.

**Our message now is particularly powerful: This year, the Postal Service is profitable delivering the mail!** That’s no fluke, but rather the result of two trends—an improving economy and rising package revenue that’s offsetting a slowing decline in first-class mail revenue.

Postal financial woes, once viewed as the inexorable march of history and technology, now clearly stem from ill-conceived public policy.

This shifts the narrative from a problem people can merely shrug about to one where they can take action—including demanding that lawmakers fix the problems they created with the pre-funding mandate.

Our foes can’t match what you’re doing in terms of communicating facts and altering public perception. Yet, they remain powerful, well-placed—and determined. So we need even more of you to get the word out, whether in big cities or small towns, red states or blue states. If I can help, let me know. You, and only you, can help preserve a great American institution for generations to come.

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