



NALC'S



**Be a part
of the
movement
to save
the Postal
Service**

Labor unions exist because there is strength in numbers. One worker alone cannot match the power of an employer or government, but thousands acting together can.

That's why grassroots activism by every letter carrier is so important to our success in Congress. As we work to pass a meaningful postal reform bill and stop legislation that would severely harm the Postal Service and threaten our jobs and way of life, we need every NALC member to help by speaking up—contacting their representatives by mail, e-mail or phone, visiting them in their home offices or at town hall meetings, writing letters to the editor to educate the public, and participating in rallies and marches.

Congress is considering measures like S. 1486, introduced by Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE) and Tom Coburn (R-OK), that would allow the Postal Service to cut service to the public and curtail our collective-bargaining rights to cut costs rather than address the real cause of the Service's financial problems—the requirement that it massively pre-fund future retiree health care benefits.

In the House, a bill sponsored by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), H.R. 2748, would cut Saturday delivery and then phase out door-to-door delivery altogether to nearly 30 million households, while also failing to fix the pre-funding problem. (For more information and

the latest news on postal legislation, see page 10).

NALC President Fredric Rolando has asked all letter carriers to immediately contact their representatives in the House of Representatives about this bill. “Tell your congressman you oppose H.R. 2748 because it would only hurt the Postal Service, and it ignores the real problem—the mandatory pre-funding of future retirees’ health care,” he said. “Ask instead for support for H.R. 630, the Postal Service Protection Act, which would deal with the pre-funding problem.”

For the Senate, Rolando said, “please contact both of your senators and tell them you oppose the Carper-Coburn bill (S. 1486) and ask them to support S. 316, the Postal Service Protection Act, which, like the House bill of the same name, would get to the heart of the Postal Service’s financial woes.”

“We need every letter carrier’s help,” he added. “The stakes are too high for any letter carrier to sit this out. Congress is poised to do massive damage to the Postal Service and our pay and benefits by stripping us of our rights as workers. If we don’t all stand up for our rights and our futures, nobody else will.”

Becoming a grassroots activist

Voicing your opinions to your representatives in Congress is one of the easiest ways to participate in NALC’s grassroots efforts. You don’t have to research the facts, track the votes or find your representatives’ names or contact information—NALC does all that for you.

To find the names and contact information for your senators and representative in Congress and to get the latest legislative news, go to the NALC Legislative Department’s web page, nalc.org/depart/legpol.

“We can give you all the information you need, but we can’t contact your congressman or senators for you,” Rolando added. “That part is up to you. All letter carriers need to stand up for their rights and make their voices heard, before it’s too late.”

President Rolando urged letter carriers to sign up for the NALC e-Activist Network to receive legislative alerts by text message or e-mail. The e-Activist Network gives carriers a tool to keep up with the fast-paced legislative process and to voice their views to Congress at critical times. To become an e-Activist or to update your contact information, visit nalc.org.

Contacting your representatives is a great first start, but there are many more ways for you to make a difference, as a number of activists in the field make clear.

“It’s not as hard as it sounds,” NALC grassroots activist Ronnie Roush said. “NALC is going to get the information to us; we just need to take it and run with it. I don’t look up these bills—I lean on the NALC to put the information and data out there.”

Roush, a member of Carmel, IN Branch 888, is part of a network of letter carrier volunteers who help the rest of us participate in the process. As a congressional district liaison, he keeps in regular contact with his representative in the House with the help of other carriers. Along with state association chairmen, newsletter editors, branch officers and stewards, activists like Roush brings the latest information on legislative happenings to letter carriers in branch meetings, newsletters and on the workroom floor to help them participate.

Most letter carriers just want to deliver the mail and live their lives without worrying about the mess in

Washington, DC, but the stakes for postal workers are too high to ignore—especially since the federal government is our employer, Roush noted.

“It’s definitely not something I enjoy,” Roush said. “but I don’t want to sit on the sidelines and later say I should have done something.”

Widespread grassroots participation by letter carriers nationwide is essential to winning this difficult struggle. NALC officers, staff and volunteer activists like Roush can’t do it alone. Politicians need to hear from their constituents for democracy to function.

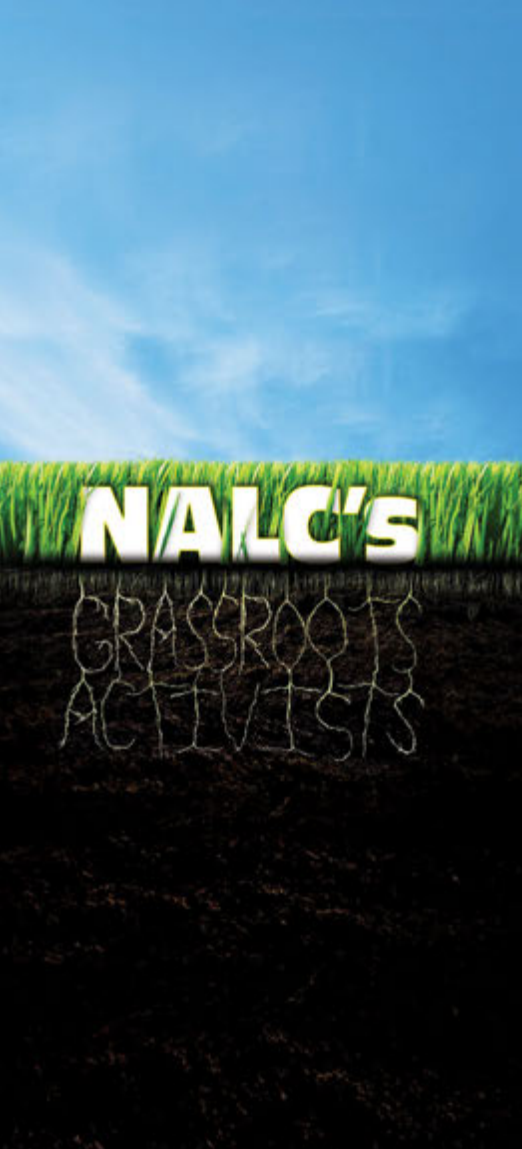
As Congress moves closer to voting on postal legislation, grassroots



CDL Ronnie Roush (2nd from l) and other NALC activists take the NALC’s message directly to Rep. Susan Brooks (R-IN).

activism by letter carriers is more important than ever. If it seems like the NALC is constantly urging letter carriers to contact their representatives and participate in the process, that’s because it’s true—getting through to elected officials often involves repeated communications before they notice or understand the message.

“The activists in the NALC need to be thinking three steps ahead,” Philadelphia, PA Branch 157 member and activist Ed Morgan said. “If you get in



NALC's grassroots activists are particularly adept at labor walks, where they inform union members about the issues at stake in an upcoming election.



that crisis mode, if you're not three steps ahead, you're four steps behind."

To assure they pay attention enough to understand the complexities of the Postal Service's financial situation, senators and representatives must hear from many letter carriers many times throughout the legislative process.

"There's a lot going on in Congress, and it takes time to get lawmakers and their staffs to stop and think about our issues," President Rolando said. "We have to break down the conventional wisdom about the Postal Service's finances and explain the pre-funding problem. For many of them, it won't sink in until lots of letter carriers back home tell them, over and over."

Election activism

The process begins even before Congress convenes. No member of Congress can support letter carriers without first getting elected to Congress. Letter carriers help the campaigns of pro-labor candidates for office to win election and demonstrate their commitment to the candidate's team in the process.

Whether they are released to work as long-term campaign helpers or simply volunteer on their days off, letter carriers assist candidates in many ways. When they lend their job skills for a campaign, letter carriers are a powerful weapon.

"Nobody does a labor walk better than a letter carrier," Morgan said. Sending volunteers to walk through neighborhoods to distribute campaign literature and talk to voters is a crucial part of any campaign for office—and who does that better than we do?

"That's what we're good at—going door-to-door and talking to our customers," Morgan said. "It's all second nature to a letter carrier." As a campaign volunteer for several labor-friendly candidates running in Pennsylvania in the last elec-

tion, Morgan noticed that letter carriers covered twice as much ground in a day as other volunteers. Letter carriers also make great campaign workers because they know how to organize and get a job done under pressure.

To facilitate activities like releasing carriers and other support for campaigns, letter carriers support the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE). COLCPE is an essential part of NALC's grassroots activism network. Voluntary donations to COLCPE help candidates who support letter carriers get their message to the public. (NALC does not use dues money for these activities.) And, of course, letter carriers do their part by voting in primaries and on Election Day.

Educating Congress

After Election Day, when a new Congress convenes, it's time for us to educate senators and representatives about our issues and where we stand.

It's just as important to contact our allies in Congress as it is to reach representatives who don't support us. Our friends in Congress need the latest facts, and they need to know letter carriers will stand behind them when they work on our behalf. Their staffs change frequently, so new congressional staff members need to learn our issues and get updates or facts that the media rarely provide, such as the Postal Service's improving financial situation (see last month's issue of *The Postal Record*).

"Sometimes a member of Congress will go up on the floor and say, 'Most people in my district tell me they want this or that, and I support them,'" President Rolando said. "Our input matters to them, even our allies."

Reaching elected officials who aren't sympathetic, or are even hostile, is a more challenging job. But it's our right as Americans to tell our representatives what we think and what we want from them—and



with the right message and enough letter carriers delivering it through letters, phone calls, e-mails and meetings, we can convince some to support us, or at least not oppose our efforts.

Roush works hard to persuade his member of Congress, Rep. Susan Brooks (R-IN), who has repeated the old myths about the Postal Service's finances spread by detractors like Rep. Issa. "I'm trying to educate her about pre-funding," he said, and get her to at least acknowledge that pre-funding is the root of the Postal Service's financial woes. Roush takes every opportunity to communicate with her, including personal meetings, to make the message stick. "She's been cordial but unresponsive," he said. "But that doesn't mean I'm going away."

With persistence like Roush's, and the right approach, even the most unlikely of alliances can come together.

"The formula we have in Utah is: We can't go in as union members. We go in as letter carriers," Utah State Association Chair Phil Rodriguez said. By tailoring his arguments to fit the conservative politicians who dominate his state—banking on the respect letter carriers enjoy and ducking anti-union sentiment—Rodriguez has made surprising inroads with some of them.

When he makes his case, Rodriguez stresses specific points that appeal to his listeners. For instance, he reminds Utah Tea Party activists that the Postal Service's function is mentioned in the Constitution and is essential to so many businesses in the state. He managed to recruit them as allies in NALC's efforts to protect the Postal Service from misguided "reforms" that would harm it, and Utah Rep. Rob Bishop, a Republican and Tea Party Caucus member, co-sponsored a postal reform bill in the last Congress supported by

NALC that would have addressed both the pre-funding of future retiree health care and the overpayments the Postal Service has made to its pension funds.

Rodriguez asks letter carrier activists in Utah to use the same approach when they contact their representatives. "If you narrow it down, it clicks with them," he said.

Building coalitions

Widespread grassroots participation from letter carriers is the only way to achieve results like this, Rodriguez said. "You've got to go from the bottom up, not the top down," he said. "You have to have boots on the ground."

In her efforts to generate grassroots support for our cause, Willoughby, OH Branch 3688 President Lori Ann Mottolo stresses reaching beyond letter carriers for grassroots support.

"We always make sure we ask letter carriers to contact their congressman and senators," she said, "and also to ask customers, friends and family to help."

At branch meetings, Mottolo and other officers help carriers with the best ways to talk to postal patrons or neighbors when they find themselves discussing postal legislative issues. Letter carriers should simply present the facts that can turn a skeptic into a supporter, she said, such as the fact that the Postal Service supports itself without tax funds, and rely on the trust letter carriers enjoy in the community.

Like other activists, Mottolo works to get media attention and she responds to negative news reports. She is working to organize community meetings about postal issues to reach the public directly. She even asks her two college-age children to get involved and enlist the support of other young people, since preserving jobs, good wages and work-

ers' rights is essential to their generation. "This is their job, this is their future," she said. "We need the help of everyone."

Media attention is another great way to get our message to the public and gain support for our cause, and any letter carrier can help. Many carriers write letters to the editor or commentary



During Labor Day, Louisville, KY Branch 14 members set up shop at the local zoo to inform citizens about the issues facing the Postal Service and to ask them to join our coalition.

pieces for their local newspapers, or call in to talk radio shows, to explain postal issues or respond to news stories that aren't balanced or get the facts wrong. Even simply participating in events that attract reporters helps, such as the local Labor Day parade that Morgan and several other carriers marched in. "It helps get our 15-second soundbite out to the news organizations," Morgan said. "That's very important."

Whatever you do to stand up for your rights and your job, the key to our success is participation by every carrier, regardless of how long you've been on the job or how active you are with the union. Rodriguez looks to NALC's history to inspire everyday letter carriers to take part in the grassroots struggle. "You can't go forward unless you look back," he said. He points to the Great Postal Strike of 1970, in which a group of determined regular carriers—led by Vin-



cent Sombrotto, who would later become president of NALC but at the time held no national or local office—stuck together to stand up for their rights and improve

their wages and working conditions. With the same spirit of unity and participation, today's generation of letter carriers can save America's Postal Service. **PR**

Missing the point

Congressional leaders' 'reform' bills don't solve USPS' financial problems

A number of postal-focused bills continue to wend their way through the legislative process on Capitol Hill. Some of these are truly reform-minded measures designed to give the Postal Service the tools and flexibility it needs to grow and thrive in a 21st century world.

Unfortunately, two bills—one in the House and one in the Senate—sponsored by committee chairmen and getting attention from legislators and the news media, would damage the Postal Service.

NALC's grassroots activists are taking the initiative to aggressively engage and educate their representatives on exactly why these bills are not the reform measures that their sponsors claim that they are.

In the Senate, there's S. 1486, introduced by both Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE), chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Tom Coburn (R-OK), the committee's ranking member. In the House, it's H.R. 2748, introduced by House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-CA).

Both bills are misnamed "The Postal Reform Act of 2013."

"That these bills contain the word 'reform' in their titles is laughable," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "since neither one provides actual solutions to the postal financial crisis that a true reform measure should have.

"Instead of reforming the Postal Service, both bills give top priority to continuing the 2006 postal reform mandate to massively pre-fund future retiree health benefits, and to pay for that mandate by slashing service and jobs."

This mandate, required of no other federal agency or private enterprise, forces the Postal Service to pay off decades ahead the health benefits of future postal retirees, and to do so within a 10-year time frame—at a cost of around \$5.5 billion a year.

Instead of repealing this unfair burden, those House and Senate bills instead focus on service cuts to pay for it. For example, each bill would eliminate Saturday mail and door delivery, at a cost of nearly 100,000 postal jobs, and for slower mail service, which would drive even more business away and deepen the USPS' financial crisis.

"To be fair, there are a number of individual provisions in these bills that are good in isolation," Rolando said. "Nevertheless, both bills would hasten destructive downsizing and service cuts that would hurt the public, and both attack the collective-bargaining rights of postal employees."

S. 1486 would unfairly single out new postal employees by making their eligibility for pension benefits subject to collective bargaining, and would force unions to negotiate over health benefits outside of normal contract talks. H.R. 2748 goes even further by seeking to define what

can be included or excluded from bargaining agreements, such as “no layoff” clauses, and also would give management an unfair advantage in contract negotiations.

“The Postal Service and its unions have successfully negotiated or arbitrated labor contracts for more than 40 years without any such interference,” Rolando said. “The fair and democratic collective-bargaining process has kept postage rates low, phased out taxpayer subsidies and prevented costly strikes or lock-outs. It is wholly inappropriate for Congress to suggest that the scales now be tipped in favor of postal management and against the Postal Service’s hardworking employees.”

Profit in packages

Meanwhile, as some in Congress continue to look for ways to dismantle the Postal Service, the agency managed to put itself in the black operationally. As we reported in last month’s magazine, setting aside the pre-funding liability, USPS would have recognized a \$330 million profit in the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2013, which covers April, May and June of this year.

“This profit was driven mainly by continued growth in shipping and package services,” Rolando said. “Conventional wisdom would have you believe that e-mail and the Internet have all but killed the Postal Service, but that conventional wisdom is wrong, thanks in large part to a thriving e-commerce market that continues to strengthen our employer.

“The economy continues to slowly improve following the worst recession in 80 years, and the Postal Service along with it,” Rolando said. “Take away the unfair pre-funding burden and give the Postal Service the ability to take full advantage of e-commerce, and you would soon see a thriving Postal Service ready

to take on whatever challenges the 21st century brings.”

Moreover, the USPS already has pre-funded decades of retiree health premiums, meaning that the pre-funding account has enough money in it to cover more than half of the total expected costs for the rest of the 21st century.

“How many companies can make such a bold claim?” Rolando asked.

There are more effective proposals before the Senate and House, the president said. A Senate measure that NALC fully supports is S. 316, introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). Sanders’ bill focuses primarily on postal innovation while dealing head-on with the retiree health and pension policies that have so damaged the Postal Service. The House counterpart to S. 316 is Rep. Peter DeFazio’s (D-OR) H.R. 630.

Two hearings on the Carper-Coburn S. 1486 were scheduled to take place on Sept. 19 and Sept. 26, after this magazine went to press. President Rolando was invited to testify at the Sept. 26 hearing. Coverage of those hearings will appear on nalc.org, in the *NALC Bulletin* and in a future edition of *The Postal Record*.

Meanwhile, legislative activists can check out the fact sheets and talking points for these four bills on the Legislation and Politics page at nalc.org, and are encouraged to contact their House representative to support H.R. 630 and their senators to support S. 316.

PMG’s workroom floor video misleads

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe released a video message on Aug. 14 that was played on workroom floors across the country. In it, he not only spoke about the Carper-Coburn and Issa bills—which he sadly but unsurprisingly supports—he also brought up the subject of creating a separate Postal Service

Rate hike request delayed

During its Sept. 5 meeting in Washington, DC, the Postal Service Board of Governors decided to hold off until its Sept. 24-25 meeting a decision on whether to ask the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) for a postage price increase.

The 2006 postal reform law tied rate increases to rises in the Consumer Price Index, but it also allows the Postal Service to ask for a higher increase if financial conditions warrant it—a so-called exigent rate increase.

The Governors are believed to be considering asking the PRC for just such a one-time price hike. If the board does make such a request, the PRC has 90 days to issue its approval or disapproval.

Since the late-September Governors meeting was scheduled to take place after this *Postal Record* went to press, look for the latest news on nalc.org and in the *NALC Bulletin*, with further coverage in a future *Postal Record*. *PR*

health plan, either inside or outside of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP).

“Donahoe stated that he is working with the craft unions on this issue,” Rolando said. “But what he failed to make clear was that neither the NALC nor the other postal unions will support any plan that involves leaving FEHBP.”

The postmaster general was on the right track to note that taking full advantage of Medicare benefits would be an important step toward reducing the Postal Service’s costs for retiree health benefits and the agency’s unaffordable pre-funding obligation. The part that Donahoe missed was that fully integrating those benefits into Medicare can easily be achieved within FEHBP.

“NALC is committed to working with the Postal Service on reducing health care costs for both employees and the agency,” Rolando said. “We believe we can get there while staying in FEHBP and while taking advantage of other money-saving and money-making opportunities.”

The president urged all NALC members to stay informed by joining the union’s e-Activist Network.

“When you’re an e-Activist, you get e-mail alerts asking you to take quick action on things such as letting your

TSP death benefit changes under Windsor

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB), the body that administers the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), has issued a rule change to bring its death benefit policies in line with the Supreme Court decision in June that found a portion of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) to be unconstitutional.

Section 3 of DOMA had provided that, under federal law, the term “marriage” would mean only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and that the term “spouse” referred only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.

The Supreme Court’s *United States v. Windsor* decision ruled that Section 3 is unconstitutional, meaning that the FRTIB must now defer to state law in determining the marital status of TSP participants.

The TSP is the tax-deferred retirement savings plan available to federal employees. It is a defined contribution plan similar to private-sector 401(k) plans. Under the Federal Employees Retirement System, agencies automatically contribute 1 percent of pay to individual TSP accounts, then match employees’ pre-tax contributions dollar for dollar on the first 3 percent of pay, and 50 cents on the dollar on the next 2 percent contributed. Employees also may put more into a TSP account up to a certain level. TSP is open to Civil Service Retirement System employees, but for them there is no employer match.

The new regulation provides that the FRTIB will look to the “jurisdiction of celebration”—that is, the state where the couple was married—to determine a participant’s marital status for purposes of paying TSP death benefits. **PR**

representatives know how we feel on key legislative issues,” the president said.

NALC members can simply sign up to become e-Activists at nalc.org.

In the news media

NALC President Fredric Rolando’s letter to the editor of *The Columbus Dispatch* ran on Saturday, Aug. 10. The *Dispatch*, serving Ohio’s capital—the state’s largest city—is the Buckeye State’s third-largest newspaper, read by Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH) and other Ohio political leaders.

Rolando was quoted in a story in Washington, DC’s *The Hill* on Aug. 28 about a possible postage rate increase. He had a letter to the editor published in the Aug. 29 *South Bergenite*, a newspaper in New Jersey. The letter responded to an editorial the paper ran Aug. 22.

The president wrote an op-ed about letter carriers saving people’s lives and the value of the postal network. The piece was circulated to numerous small-town and rural newspapers around the country, and it ran in such publications as the *Williamson [WV] Daily News*; in the *Newbury [SC] Observer*; in Salida, CO’s *The Mountain Mail*; in Stroudsburg, PA’s *Pocono Record*, as well as on websites such as OtherWords.org and Nevada City, CA’s Yubanet.

Rolando was a guest on the RT television network’s program “The Big Picture with Thom Hartmann” on Sept. 3. For radio, the president recorded a news feed that explains the Postal Service’s good financial performance in the recent third quarter and urges lawmakers to address pre-funding rather than dismantle a successful network. The feed was timed to run in congressional districts while lawmakers were home on recess.

Region 12 National Business Agent Bill Lucini was quoted at the end of a story in the Aug. 18 edition of the *Lancaster [PA] Sunday News*, helping to give the article

about planned cuts in delivery service a much-needed letter-carrier perspective. Lucini, along with Philadelphia Branch 157 member Bill Schneider, was interviewed for a story about the Cities’ Readiness Initiative (CRI) that aired on Sept. 11 on Philadelphia’s WCAU-TV. The CRI is a program designed to use the Postal Service’s universal delivery network and the voluntary participation of letter carriers to deliver medicines to Americans in selected cities in the aftermath of a biological event, such as a terrorist attack.

Carmel, IN Branch 888 letter carrier Ronnie Roush’s letter to the editor of *Current in Carmel* ran Aug. 14. Two days later, a letter to the editor by Idaho State Association President John Paige ran in *The Idaho Statesman*.

A Sunday, Aug. 18 *New York Times* story about the Postal Service’s new TV ad campaign included—especially in its second paragraph—some important perspective about the state of USPS’ finances.

Eleven Kansas letter carriers, who had recently received the Postal Service’s Million Mile Safe Driving Award, were the subject of an Aug. 27 news story on Topeka’s WIBW-TV.

Letter carriers in Iowa rallied Aug. 29 in Des Moines to set the record straight about how the Postal Service would be profitable right now if it weren’t for the unfair pre-funding mandate. WHO-TV covered the rally and interviewed Waterloo Branch 512 member Mike Bates.

Casper, WY Branch 1681 President Rene Eberhardt wrote about Postal Service finances in a Labor Day weekend op-ed piece for the *Casper Star-Tribune*.

Nalcrest, the Florida retirement community for letter carriers, was profiled on Sept. 4 on “The Fox Report with Shepard Smith.”

Links to all of these items can be found on the Postal Facts page at nalc.org. **PR**