

As NALC celebrates its

125th we look ahead to what's in store for 2014

Letter carriers are celebrating the 125th anniversary of our union this year. Looking back, we see how many challenges our predecessors overcame. As we look ahead to consider what 2014 might have in store for us, we see that challenges and obstacles never go away, and that every generation must build on what previous generations accomplished.

“Our union has a long and proud history, and we’re still going strong after 125 years,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “And it’s because letter carriers never hesitate to step in and do what’s needed to make our jobs better and our communities stronger. In 2014, let’s do our part to keep this union strong enough to thrive for another 125 years.”

Legislation

The greatest challenge this year, as in recent years, is the Postal Service’s financial situation and efforts in Congress to pass legislation to address it. Some proposed legislation would fix the problem; other bills are terribly misguided ideas that would only make things worse. Our task is to convince Congress to enact laws that will strengthen, not degrade, the Postal Service—and at minimum, to stop the bad ideas from becoming law.

The bills proposed in 2013 are still alive this year. H.R. 2748, introduced by

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, would cut Saturday delivery and even most door-to-door service rather than address the real problem—the mandate that forces the Postal Service to pre-fund future retiree health care costs.


Issa’s committee has sent his bill to the full House for a vote, but none has been scheduled. We need to work to make sure it never comes up for a vote this year.

In the Senate, Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE) and ranking member Tom Coburn (R-K) introduced a similar bill. Though the “reforms” in the Carper-Coburn bill (S. 1486) are less drastic, it still calls for downsizing the Postal Service rather than fixing the pre-funding problem. The committee has held hearings on the bill but has not acted on it, though that could change at any time.

“The future of the Postal Service and our jobs are at stake in Congress,” President Rolando said. “We need every letter carrier to contact their representatives in Washington and urge them to support fixing the pre-funding problem instead of cutting service.”

With the help of letter carriers nationwide, NALC will continue to work this year to encourage Congress to do just that. This Congress is so preoccupied with rehashing



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political battles over issues like the budget and the debt ceiling that it's unlikely any bills will pass. That would head off bad bills like Issa's or the Senate bill, but it brings a new concern—if the dysfunction in Congress leads to another crisis like the government shutdown last October or a fight over raising the debt ceiling, the Postal Service could be dragged into the fray even though it is self-supporting and uses no tax funds. For instance, the U.S. Treasury might dip into postal pension funds on an emergency basis.

You can stay up-to-date on legislative developments through the e-Activist Network (sign up at nalc.org/e-activist), through the website (nalc.org) and by reading *The Postal Record*. We will continue to report on all the legislative news throughout 2014.

Congressional elections

Things are likely to get even more partisan (if that's possible) on Capitol Hill this year as both parties jockey for position in anticipation of the mid-term elections. Many votes, filibusters and stunts are designed more to attract votes than to actually get things done.

The entire House of Representatives and a third of the Senate will be up for grabs in this year's election. Historically, voters have begun to tire of a two-term president about this time, and punish members of his party in off-year elections, a phenomenon known as the "six-year itch." Bill Clinton was the only two-term president since Reconstruction whose party did not lose seats in Congress in his sixth year.

Democrats will try to repeat Clinton's feat this year. They hope the chaos Republicans have wrought in Congress, such as the government shutdown in October, will turn voters away from the GOP and insulate Democrats from losing seats. To win enough seats to take control of the

House, though, would require keeping all their seats while gaining roughly 17 Republican-held seats (three seats are currently vacant), which is a tall order. Democrats might be happy with preserving their Senate majority, since they must defend 21 of the 33 seats in play this year.

Republicans, on the other hand, seem determined to make the problems associated with Obamacare central themes in this year's elections.

NALC national convention

Letter carriers from across the country will converge on the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia July 21-25 for our 69th annual national convention. The delegates' tasks will include considering policy changes and amendments to the *NALC Constitution* and electing national officers. They will also mark the union's 125th anniversary and honor the memory of President Emeritus Vincent Sombrotto, who passed away in January of 2013.

The biennial convention is a chance for delegates to discuss important issues facing the union and to plot a course of action for each. They can ask national officers questions and give them policy guidance. Delegates also will attend classes and seminars held every day of the convention to help them understand the details of emerging issues in areas such as city delivery, the National Agreement, route adjustment, city carrier assistants, steward training, and legislative and political action.

Sunday and same-day delivery

In its bid to mold its service to the needs of e-commerce, the Postal Service is expected to continue, and possibly expand, its experiments in increasing delivery service.

The Postal Service currently is testing guaranteed same-day delivery of parcels and perishables such as flowers in several urban areas. Under the name Metro Post,

the service offers delivery between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. for orders made by 2 p.m. from local participating retailers to certain residential addresses in the same city.

Another new venture expands delivery to Sunday. After testing the idea over the past year, the Postal Service signed a deal in November to provide Sunday delivery for online retailer Amazon.com. Sunday delivery from Amazon already is available in about 900 ZIP codes, most in the Northeast and California, and Amazon plans to expand it this year to other areas, including Dallas, Houston, New Orleans and Phoenix. Neither Amazon nor the Postal Service charges extra for Sunday delivery.

The Sunday package delivery partnership with Amazon was unveiled just months after Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe announced his intention to end mail delivery on Saturdays.

"Fortunately, Congress rejected Donahoe's misguided plan to downsize the Postal Service by passing legislation requiring Saturday delivery to continue," President Rolando said. "Now we're expanding service to Sunday instead. The demand for our service is growing with e-commerce, and the Postal Service needs to take advantage of it by expanding, not cutting. Sunday and same-day delivery are both moves in the right direction."

Wage Increases

Letter carriers will see a boost in their paychecks this year. Under the



2011-2016 National Agreement, full-time career letter carriers receive two cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) each year based on the change in the consumer price index (CPI).

The National Agreement required deferral of the payment of the two 2013 COLAs to this year, meaning carriers will receive them in the first and second halves of 2014 instead. If the CPI triggers COLAs for 2014, they will be paid on a normal schedule, overlapping the 2013 payments.

The first 2013 COLA is a \$146 increase in annual pay for Step O carriers, which comes to an extra 7 cents per hour. It will be paid beginning in the second full pay period after the January 2014 CPI is announced, which is scheduled for Feb. 21. In the second half of this year, the 2013 COLA of \$541 annually (for Step O carriers), or 26 cents per hour, will kick in the second full pay period after the June 2014 CPI is announced on Aug. 15. (In both cases, carriers below Step O will receive proportionally smaller COLAs.)

In addition to the 1 percent general wage increase all carriers received last November, CCAs received a separate 1 percent increase in their hourly wages. They will see another 1 percent increase in November 2014 on top of the 1.5 percent general wage increase for all carriers.

Leadership Academy

Since 2005, NALC's Leadership Academy has brought together 16 classes consisting of 30 letter carriers each (two from each region) for comprehensive instruction in leadership skills to develop the next generation of union leaders. More than 475 carriers have graduated from the program.

This year, Class 17 will come to the Maritime Center near Baltimore, MD, for three one-week sessions (see the article on page 24). The attendees will develop and test their skills in areas such as public speaking, writing, organizing, union administration and the National Agreement. Between sessions, they will work on take-home assignments with the help of a letter carrier mentor. To complete their training, each student will "shadow" their region's NBA to learn more about the day-to-day business of being a union leader. A new set of students will attend Leadership Academy sessions in the fall as Class 18.

"Leadership Academy graduates go on to serve their fellow carriers in many ways," Rolando said. "Some may move on to elected office, but many will simply organize events or inspire their fellow carriers to get things done. As demonstrated by Vince Sombrotto, who held no office but emerged as a leader during the Great Postal Strike of 1970, leadership isn't about offices; it's about stepping up when you are needed."

Public service

Building on our tradition of public service, letter carriers will continue their support for the communities they serve through NALC's public service programs.

We will once again hold the nation's largest one-day food drive on the second Saturday in May (May 10), with a goal of exceeding last year's total collection of 74.4 million pounds of food. This will mark the 22nd year NALC and its partners have held the nationwide food drive. Through the food drive, letter carriers have collected 1.2 billion pounds of food left

by postal patrons at their doors for delivery to local food pantries.

Branches will sponsor a host of events to support the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the union's official charity, including bowlaathons and fill-the-satchel efforts. As always, branch MDA coordinators and volunteers will conceive of many creative fundraising events and organize them to boost support for MDA even higher.

The Postal Record will continue to bring readers stories about everyday heroes who save lives and help the poor or others in need, whether on their routes or on their own time. In recognition of all the heroic ways letter carriers serve their communities, NALC will honor several letter carriers as part of its Heroes of the Year ceremony this fall.

"I couldn't be more proud of the many ways letter carriers go out of our way, every day, to give back to our communities," Rolando said. "Our service extends far beyond delivering the mail."

Nalcrest's golden anniversary

Nalcrest, the retirement community founded by and for letter carriers, will celebrate its 50th anniversary this month. Located in central Florida, Nalcrest's 500 apartments are clustered in 66 one-story buildings spread over 153 acres around two large lagoons. Residents enjoy a wealth of amenities, as well as activities on the property and throughout the state.

Look for coverage of Nalcrest's celebration to mark this occasion in a future issue of *The Postal Record*.

It'll be another full year for letter carriers as the NALC turns 125. "While it's a great time to look back," President Rolando said, "we must be ever vigilant, as history has a way of happening when you least expect it." **PR**