

## **Statement by National Association of Letter Carriers President Fredric V. Rolando at the start of negotiations toward a new collective-bargaining agreement with the United States Postal Service, August 18, 2011.**

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The United States Postal Service faces a crisis. The nation's city letter carriers understand this, but we also understand that we are not the source of the crisis; we are the solution.

The Postal Service crisis is not caused by the cost of labor; nor by "legacy costs"; nor by excessive debt; nor by foreign or low cost competition. Therefore, any Auto, Steel and Airline analogies are simply wrong. The Postal Service's crisis is caused by a lack of any business plan or strategy that addresses the market place as it exists.

The Postal Service's plan for the future is to downsize and reduce service; last one out, turn out the lights. This nearsighted approach will have devastating impacts on the American public and on our national economy.

In contrast, the nation's city letter carriers believe that the answer to the challenges of the market is to grow, improve service, develop and expand new products and services; and to utilize in creative and productive ways the unique last mile delivery network .

NALC's contract proposals will intend to promote reasonable and rational approaches to the foregoing concepts. In reflection of the unique environment in which these negotiations will take place, the proposals will be designed to initiate discussions, not confrontations, that will result in a responsible collective bargaining agreement that recognizes the unique contributions of city letter carriers.

It is extremely unfortunate that you have taken actions in the last two weeks which intend to render collective bargaining a futile, sterile exercise. Your blatant, unprecedented lobbying in Congress to violate our contract; your provocative mandatory stand-up sessions; your attempt to block the free speech of your employees while you flood the media with a slash and burn agenda.

We are disappointed, disturbed, and insulted by this misguided assault on the employees and institution, and we will do everything in our power to block this attempt to destroy the Postal Service.

Having said that, we still believe in the collective bargaining process, and we will make every effort to engage you in good faith bargaining and to succeed in negotiating a constructive agreement.

I recognize and acknowledge this ritual of us initially exchanging carefully prepared remarks, and I fully expect you to repeat what we have continually heard at our meetings, in the press, and in the halls of congress: the death spiral routine - woe is us, business is going downhill - hard and fast; congress won't let us have billions of dollars of our own money, there's no way to replace the lost revenue, our hands are tied, we don't want to anger the congress; there's only one solution - cut deliveries to 5 days, then 3 days; reduce the workforce, reduce wages, reduce pensions, reduce health care, gut collective bargaining.

The Postal Service may be prepared to surrender, but the nation's city letter carriers are not. We are here to help you grow the business and find real solutions to preserve America's only universal communication network.

We are ready to move boldly into the future, and we hope you will join us.