

Key Senate leader signs on as supporter of postal reform

A key Senate Republican told a gathering of NALC's top officers and hundreds of rank-and-file letter carriers that he will use his influence to ensure postal reform legislation includes a provision that lifts the \$27 billion burden of military retirement benefits of postal employees from the Postal Service.

The military benefits question has been one of the contentious issues delaying final congressional approval of reform legislation, which was awaiting action by a House-Senate conference committee as this issue went to press. The Bush administration has threatened a veto over the matter.

In a surprising declaration before the annual congressional breakfast of the Pennsylvania State Association of Letter Carriers on May 11, Sen. Rick Santorum pledged he would buck the administration and "give any help I can" to pass a reform measure that includes the language NALC supports.

Santorum, the third-ranking member of the Senate Republican leadership, was put on the spot when he was introduced by NALC President William H. Young.

Young noted that in a display of budget hocus-pocus, President Bush is forcing the Postal Service to pay for pension benefits postal employees accrued for military service time—a multi-billion dollar expense no other government agency faces. Young pointed out that Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA), chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, "stood up against the president" and support the bills passed by the House and Senate that would return the obligation to the U.S. Treasury.

"I know that our members would be real interested in your views on this issue," Young said as he brought Santorum to the microphone.

Pennsylvania
Congressional Breakfast



Above: Republican Reps. Jim Gerlach (l) and Michael Fitzpatrick speak at the May 9 congressional breakfast on the bipartisan support for postal reform.

Left: President Young (l) thanks Sen. Rick Santorum (R) for promising to support an NALC-backed provision to end the requirement that the Postal Service pay retirement benefits for military service years of its retirees.

Santorum told the nearly 300 letter carriers and the NALC national officers at the breakfast that after meeting the day before with NALC members on their annual lobbying trip to Capitol Hill, he called Senator Collins and “had a long discussion with her.”

“I made it clear to her that I supported her in her effort,” Santorum said.

“In fact, when I was told by the [NALC] folks at our meeting yesterday that the president has suggested that, or implemented that, I was, in a word, stunned that we would be requiring an independent organization to pick up a government responsibility.”

He said that he “made it very clear [to Collins] that any help I can give as a member of the Senate leadership to make sure that we get that provision in the final conference report, you will have.”

Later, Republican Sen. Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania’s senior senator and a long-time friend of letter carriers, said he was “pleased to hear of Rick’s support” for the military retiree provision.

President Young welcomed Santorum’s commitment. “I am delighted with his response,” Young said, adding, “I will do everything in my power to make sure he delivers on his promise.”

The Pennsylvania visit was one of three

major NALC lobbying efforts in May. Ohio carriers came to the capital May 3-4, and Region 13 carriers from Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia and the District of Columbia joined forces to educate lawmakers May 4-5.

The Ohio carriers, nearly 150 strong, were addressed by several members of Congress during a May 4 breakfast. Rep. Marcy Kaptur, a strong advocate for labor and the NALC, closed her remarks by reporting that she had undergone a routine screening for skin cancer the day before—she received a clean bill of health—and made a heart-felt appeal to letter carriers to guard against the dangers of sun exposure and to get annual checkups for skin cancers.

Also speaking to the group were former presidential candidate Rep. Dennis Kucinich; Rep. Ted Strickland, who is running for governor of Ohio; and Rep. Tim Ryan, whose vigorous remarks on social and economic issues won an enthusiastic response.

The Region 13 breakfast on May 5 drew about 300 NALC activists who heard from President Young and others, including Reps. Nick Rahall of West Virginia and Dutch Ruppersberger of Maryland, and Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton of the District of Columbia. ✉

Legislative photos are by Mark Danneker, Mike Shea and Sean McCormally.

Below: Rep. Mike Doyle (D)

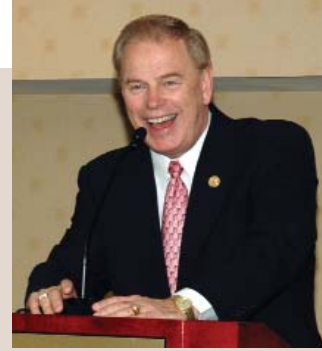


Above (from l): Reps. Curt Weldon (R) and Tim Murphy (R).

Right: Sen. Arlen Specter (R) tells the breakfast he is pleased to hear Santorum’s comment. Also at the head table are NBA Bill Lucini (l) and Pennsylvania State Association President Joe Antal.



Ohio Congressional Breakfast



Above (from l): Democratic Reps. Dennis Kucinich, Ted Strickland and Marcy Kaptur spoke to the assembled NALC members at the Ohio congressional breakfast held on May 4.

Below: Director of City Delivery Fred Rolando (l) jokes with Ohio State Association President Tony Heitic and Region 11 National Business Agent Bill Cooke (r).



Above: Rep. Steve Chalot (R) explains the need for patience when dealing with legislation in the nation's capital as NALC national officers listen.

Left: Rep. Tim Ryan (D) delivers his energetic speech.



Reg. 13 Congressional Breakfast

Right: District of Columbia Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D) encourages carriers to help shake up the Capitol in November during her remarks to the Region 13 congressional breakfast May 5.



Right: Region 13 state association presidents join National Business Agent Tim Dowdy (r). From l are Hugh McElroy (MD), Gail Burton Jones (VA), Joe Paden (WV) and Al Casagno (DE).



Below: NALC Executive Vice President Jim Williams (seated) greets Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV), as Casagno(l), Paden and NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Jim Korolowicz (r) look on.



Right: Maryland Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger (D) thanks NALC President Young for the introduction.

