

Show-Me State carriers can show us all the way



William H. Young

Over the course of a football game, a few moments are usually decisive. A great catch here or a bone-jarring tackle there can often turn the game one way or the other. The same goes for the legislative process—a few key events can make all the difference. If postal reform acceptable to the NALC emerges from Congress early this year, one of the turning points may well be the “week of action” in December by active and retired letter carriers in Missouri. Thanks to their efforts, led by the state’s e-Activists, Sen. Kit Bond of Missouri finally appears willing to allow a vote on postal reform next month.

Bond has been the sole stumbling block to passage of postal reform in the Senate. Last summer he placed a “hold” on S 662, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, preventing it from being approved by unanimous consent. Our recent e-Activist effort demanding an up-or-down vote appears to have cleared that obstacle away and that gives me a lot of hope. If e-Activists elsewhere respond as well as our brothers and sisters in the Show-Me state did when the time comes, I am confident we can win our long campaign for reform.

As you may know, on December 1, I sent a special message to our e-Activists in Missouri to put some muscle behind NALC’s demand that Senator Bond lift his hold. I made that demand in a November 30 letter, when I told the senator reform is crucial and reminded him, “Nearly 10 million Americans, including 187,000 in the state of Missouri, rely on the USPS and related sectors (printing, publishing, direct advertising) for employment. A strong postal sector contributes to a strong national economy.”

The week of action included informational picketing outside Bond’s home-state offices on December 6, when hundreds of carriers braved extremely cold weather to picket in St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield and Jefferson City. Thousands of NALC members responded with telephone calls

to Bond’s offices on December 7 and 8. I chipped in with an opinion piece in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and also gave interviews to radio stations across Missouri to reinforce our message (*for more details, see pages 18-20*).

Perhaps Senator Bond believed he could ignore this union—after all, he has refused to meet with anyone from NALC on postal reform and he did not even respond to my letter. But the senator could not ignore the hundreds and hundreds of Missouri letter carriers who called and picketed his offices. Nor could he ignore the media attention our action generated. Television stations in St. Louis and Kansas City covered the picketing and interviewed NALC leaders, including National Business Agent Art Buck and branch presidents from the four targeted cities. Newspaper coverage also was extensive.

In the end, Bond told a Kansas City television reporter that he expected a vote on postal reform in February. That is the first indication he has given us that he will release his hold. I sincerely hope Senator Bond follows through and allows a fair, up-or-down vote next month. If he does not, I will be counting on our e-Activists in all 50 states to do what our e-Activists in Missouri did last month: mobilize and work together to send a strong message on behalf of letter carriers everywhere.

As the new year dawns, I am filled with optimism about the challenging year ahead. Even with a Senate vote, our work on postal reform will be far from over. There are many differences and deficiencies to work out when the House and Senate bills go to a conference committee. On top of that, we have to prepare for an important national convention in Las Vegas, mobilize for a crucial mid-term congressional election—and conduct negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement with the Postal Service. If we all perform as well as our activists in Missouri, I have no doubt that we will succeed in all our endeavors in 2006.