

Careful coalition building yields backing of mailers



William H. Young

The headline in the September 1, 2003 *Federal Times* said it all: "Corporate Mailers Join Unions in Opposing Pay Caps."

This is solid, good news for letter carriers, for NALC and for postal reform. I want to thank the mailers for taking this position and in particular the Mailers Council, which is, as the *Federal Times* put it, "a coalition of 50 corporations, non-profit organizations, and major mailing associations."

Why, you may wonder, are organizations of mailers joining the postal unions in opposing the recommendations of the President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service concerning postal collective bargaining and postal employee pay? After all, those draconian recommendations would destroy postal collective bargaining and cap postal pay by regulatory edict. Wouldn't some corporate mailers see a benefit in capping our pay as a way of restraining postal rates?

The answer is that this union has gone out of its way to talk frankly with the major mailers over the past several years. We have learned about their interests and goals, they have learned ours, and we have built a relationship of openness and trust.

In our discussions with the mailers we have found some common ground. We and the mailers believe that a healthy postal service is a good thing. We and the mailers believe in universal mail service for all Americans, and in retaining six-day delivery. We also share a belief that postal reform is absolutely required to preserve the Postal Service long into the future.

These core agreements are a good foundation for an effective and powerful coalition. We will work together with the mailers because that is the best way to ensure that meaningful postal reform can succeed. While NALC's interests and those of the mailers may diverge on some issues, we have learned to understand and respect the other points of view.

The Mailers Council has chosen not only to respect, but to actively support, our point

of view on postal labor relations. Our view is, of course, that the Commission's recommendations for capping postal pay and destroying collective bargaining must be scrapped entirely. We will not compromise when it comes to independent collective bargaining.

As I told the National Rap Session participants in Bloomington, MN in early September, we remain in the earliest stages of our struggle toward postal reform legislation. NALC must sign up thousands more activists to ensure that when the time comes, we will be able to show massive grassroots support for our cause.

Given the turnout at the Minnesota Rap Session, I am convinced that our activists are fully engaged on the subject of postal reform. The 1,300-plus members who came to hear NALC's message are surely unified and ready to fight for universal service, independent collective bargaining and a healthy Postal Service.

Yet we still need many more letter carriers to sign up for this fight. We still intend to obtain the commitments of tens of thousands of our members. Now you can sign up right on NALC's website, www.nalc.org. When the time comes we will need all of you to respond to the call.

One word of caution as we proceed: Please understand that this legislative battle is just beginning and that what we say publicly, when, and to whom is a very sensitive and important matter. So you should understand that there is just one command center for this legislative battle—and that is NALC headquarters. When NALC speaks to Congress or the media, we need to speak with one voice. I urge you to await our call and follow our instructions carefully. Coalition-building is a sensitive process and absolutely essential as we move forward.

I am gratified that the Rap Session was so well-attended and that the members were unanimous in their support for their union leadership. With your continued support I know we can succeed. ☒