

NALC's

Field Plan in action



Things change fast in Washington. New people are elected to Congress, new legislators take charge of key committees and new ideas—good and bad—are born, or at least recycled. And NALC's legislative and political program changes just as fast to meet these challenges.

The national officers and NALC staff members at Headquarters who devote their days to sticking up for letter carriers on Capitol Hill are only part of a larger system that involves every single one of us. Without the participation of letter carriers across the nation,

we won't succeed. The NALC field plan created a system for carrier involvement through a network of letter carrier volunteers who keep a close eye on the House and Senate and coordinate with President Rolando and the legislative staff to make sure the system runs smoothly.

State legislative chairmen oversee their states' grassroots legislative and political activities, a role given to them by the delegates at NALC's 2006 national convention in Las Vegas. Part of that job is tracking which letter carriers or NALC staff members meet with which representatives so that our message stays consistent, and relationships get stronger. State chairmen also lead the way on state-level issues such as vote-

by-mail and do-not-mail initiatives and assaults on collective-bargaining rights or "right to work" proposals.

The state leaders also help coordinate the congressional district liaisons (CDLs)—letter carrier volunteers in each of the 435 House districts in the country. Each CDL keeps in routine contact with a specific member of Congress, assuring that he or she gets information from NALC and hears from letter carriers in the district frequently. CDLs also monitor their statements, activities and votes. Many CDLs succeed in forging close relationships with their representatives, and establish themselves as the source of information for letter carrier and labor views and information.

The union boosted the grassroots component in 2008 with the creation of the Carrier Corps, a group of letter carriers who pledge to bring NALC's message directly to members of Congress. Carrier Corps members keep the pressure on Congress in many ways, including personal visits or contacts with members of Congress or their staffers, canvassing or working phone banks, and attending rallies, protests or marches involving events or activities approved by the NALC or AFL-CIO. Carrier Corps members with a high level of achievement are recognized with gold or silver status (*see the January issue of The Postal Record for the latest list*).

For carriers who can't take on such personal involvement, there are many other ways to help. For example, members are encouraged to join the NALC e-Activist Network by signing up with their e-mail address and/or phone number. Headquarters uses the network to send fast messages to e-Activists by e-mail to alert them of fast-moving developments in Washington and to ask them to respond, usually by contacting their representatives. Headquarters



now also uses text messages to contact members about legislative developments.

Another way NALC members can help is by donating to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE), the union's political arm, primarily by signing up at the "Gimme 5" level—\$5 per pay period through easy automatic payroll deduction. COLCPE provides assistance to candidates for Congress, from any political party, who support the interests of letter carriers. (See the February issue of *The Postal Record* for a complete list of COLCPE supporters.)

"Carrier Corps, the e-Activist Network and COLCPE are the three legs our legislative program stands on," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "It's a pretty comprehensive grassroots program, and it's there because we cannot be effective in Congress from the top down. In our democracy, letter carriers all over the country need to stand up for their rights and their jobs.

"Since we reorganized and expanded our grassroots system—giving people at the state level new roles and initiating the field plan—we've learned that one size doesn't fit all," Rolando said. "Different areas will need different strategies, depending on the size of the letter carrier presence or the size of the state, the political culture and strength of labor in general, and how competitive the elections are. We're working to make sure everyone has the most appropriate strategy, training and tools for each situation." The president is in the process of meeting with all 50 state chairs to talk about strategic changes like these.

Another change involves technology—and NALC is taking advantage of the latest tools to keep letter carriers informed about, and involved in, developments in Washington.

Last year, President Rolando used several telephone town hall meetings to discuss legislative and political events with thousands of letter carriers at once. When we needed a quick grassroots response from letter carriers to legislation, the legislative department used a "patch-through" system to call letter carriers in key congressional districts or states to tell them what was happening and to connect them instantly by phone to their representatives in Washington.

Letter carriers can receive texts or automated phone calls to alert them to urgent developments. (To update your phone information, visit the home page at nalc.org or call 202-662-2836.) NALC also helps letter carriers keep up with news and trends through social media, including Facebook (facebook.com/nalc.national) and Twitter (twitter.com/NALC_National). And of course, NALC uses the reliable U.S. Mail—by sending *The Postal Record*, for example—to keep members informed.

"The field plan is an ambitious expansion of our grassroots network. It's absolutely essential that we all play a part in saving the Postal Service and our jobs," Rolando said. "The people at Headquarters—the national officers and staff—simply can't do that without a strong commitment from letter carriers, either by serving in a leadership position to organize our efforts or just by weighing in with your representatives in Congress. We've all got to pitch in—it's how a union stays strong.

"If every letter carrier, active and retired, pitched in for COLCPE and grassroots activism, our efforts would go a long way," Rolando added. "We have nearly a third of a million members, so you can do the math. This is all about getting everyone behind the effort to maximize our reach, and we're always looking at new ways to make sure everyone can get involved." **PR**

In the media

A substantial, six-part piece about the Postal Service in the February edition of *Esquire* magazine rightly noted that USPS "does not cost taxpayers a dollar. It loses money only because Congress mandates that it do so." Part 4 in the series extensively quoted NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber, Legislative and Political Affairs Director Jennifer Warburton, and consultant Ron Bloom.

On Feb. 6, an op-ed piece by NALC President Fredric Rolando's ran in the *South Bend Tribune*, the fourth largest newspaper in Indiana, responding to an earlier business column by the local Chamber of Commerce president.

An excellent, thorough op-ed by Burlington, NC Branch 2262 President Mark Bare ran Jan. 18 in Burlington's *Times-News*. A Jan. 28 editorial in *The Buffalo News* called on Congress to "act now to keep the system viable," while other informative pieces were published Feb. 2 in Drexel University's student newspaper, *The Triangle*, and Feb. 3 in Wasilla, AK's *Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman*.

A story by the Reuters news service on Jan. 22 contained a good description of the pre-funding problem and featured Chicago Branch 11 member Lakesha Dortch-Hardy. In suburban Philadelphia, the *Bucks County Courier Times* ran a story on Feb. 4 calling the financial problems at the USPS "a scam" created by Congress.

And letter carriers coping with cold winter weather received special attention in a local report on Wausau, WI's WSAW-TV on Jan. 22, as well as in a national story Jan. 23 on "ABC World News with Diane Sawyer." **PR**