

# Needed: A postmaster general with vision and guts



**Jane E. Broendel**

of Governors to jettison Donahoe.

**G**iven the aftermath of the Arab Spring, I'm sure self-indulgent and delusional leaders around the world latch on to the words attributed to France's Louis XV: *Après moi, le déluge*. Or, in translation, "If you get rid of me, everything goes to hell."

Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe, prideful and obtuse, is so confident of his "shrink to survive" strategy that he's convinced that without his leadership, the Postal Service would sink in a heartbeat.

Delegates to NALC's 68th Biennial Convention in Minneapolis last summer obviously wouldn't agree, since they called on the USPS Board

This is exactly why after Donahoe goes, the Postal Service will need a stand-up PMG, a man or woman with vision, with guts, and, most important, with a deep and unyielding commitment to the institution and its mandate to serve the American people.

**Let me focus on vision for a moment, because vision is not only what Patrick Donahoe so obviously lacks, it's a deficiency he shares with most of his predecessors.**

Sad to say, while the Postal Service has generally stood on the sidelines over the last two decades as the Internet and emerging digital technologies have eroded the Service's mail volume and revenue stream, the NALC, almost alone, has called on the Service to adapt to the changing realities. As early as 1994, then-NALC President Vince Sombrotto called for legislation, "Postal Reform II," to provide freedom for the USPS to price its products properly and develop new services. Ever since, this union has been at the forefront of advocating a new business model that accepts the fact that first-class volume would decline, and once the decline began—as it obviously has—this would be irreversible. President Rolando's November 2009 remarks to a Rutgers University workshop on "The Future of the Postal Sector" symbolized this effort, focusing on the Service's incompatible "last-mile network" and how it should be utilized for both old products and services as well as new ones.

A visionary PMG would have seized years ago on the NALC's willingness to think big and think bold. He or she would have brought together all the postal unions and other postal stakeholders to form a real, ongoing advisory council to develop both a vision for the USPS functioning in a digital future as well as an operational plan to turn this vision into reality. And central to this vision would have been an energetic and relentless plan to reposition the Postal Service as the No. 1 package delivery service in the nation.

Unfortunately, the Postal Service has lacked visionary PMGs, and Patrick Donahoe persists in looking backward, not forward. This is why he's got to go.

But as Vince Sombrotto would say: "That's a no-brainer." The real question is what kind of a successor the USPS Board of Governors would choose because the future of the Postal Service depends in large part on who's next.

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**I can only hope Donahoe will soon realize that he's unable to provide the leadership the Postal Service requires at this critical stage of its history and throw in the towel.**

But once Donahoe is no longer villain No. 1 for letter carriers and others who care about the survival of the U.S. Postal Service, then what? What kind of a PMG do we need? And what kind of a PMG should we have had, not just in the last couple of years, but for the last couple of decades?

First, however, let's admit that if the USPS wasn't buckling under the weight of the totally unfair and unnecessary burden of pre-funding retiree health benefits and if the Office of Personnel Management hadn't overcharged the service some \$75 billion in pension costs, the Service would be in decent financial shape today. Presumably, then, not even a PMG as short-sighted as Donahoe would be advocating eliminating Saturday delivery.

Still, we have to face reality. Saving Saturday delivery—and we will—doesn't mean the issue will go away because the Saturday delivery issue promises to pop up constantly—yes, "whack-a-mole" is the proper analogy.

So once we win, Darrell Issa or someone with similar views will soon emerge to argue that the Service can survive only if it reduces services, closes facilities, and reduces workers' wages and benefits.

## Important reminder

Branches are reminded that the 990, 990-EZ or 990-N are due by the 15th day of the fifth month following the end of the fiscal year. Therefore, branches with fiscal year ending Dec. 31 must file one of the above listed forms no later than May 15. For more information, visit [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).