

Change is coming in Washington, but our agenda remains the same



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Letter carriers and working people did not have a good election night this year. That's obvious.

Many of the races we worked very hard to influence did not go our way, especially those for the U.S. Senate. Candidates who strongly supported letter carriers and the Postal Service lost in many states. Despite our best efforts and much higher turnout among letter carrier and union households, we could not overcome the lowest turnout in 72 years—only a third of all registered voters bothered to cast ballots.

Unfortunately, the people who did vote elected a Con-

gress that will be much more hostile to the Postal Service and to public employees. We expect to face huge fights over Saturday delivery and renewed attempts to cut our pay, pensions and health benefits next year.

But the basic facts about what needs to be done to strengthen the Postal Service remain the same—and there is reason for some hope if we look closely at the new political landscape.

First, letter carriers have many allies in the Republican House of Representatives, including the 40 Republican members who support H. Res. 30 to preserve Saturday delivery along with more than 180 Democrats. We also will have a new chairman of our oversight committee in the House. In the past, we have been able to work with the two leading GOP candidates for that job—Rep. Michael Turner of Ohio and Rep. Jason Chaffetz of Utah. We can be grateful that the misguided and hyper-partisan chairmanship of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) is coming to an end.

Second, in the Senate, there are men and women of goodwill in both parties who want to strengthen the Postal Service. Indeed, we worked throughout the summer and fall with two Republican Senate offices to fine-tune the consensus package of reforms we will advocate next year along with allies in the mailing industry. On the other hand, the incoming chairman of our oversight committee, Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI), has called for voiding our labor contract by forcing the Postal Service into bankruptcy. We will certainly oppose such a radical and destructive idea. But

we will also do our best to build a constructive relationship with Sen. Johnson. Given Wisconsin's important paper industry, which has a huge stake in a healthy Postal Service, there is plenty of room for common ground.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, positive change is happening at the United States Postal Service. The USPS announced on Nov. 14 that it earned an operating profit of \$1.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2014—excluding the unique and unfair pre-funding mandate for retiree health benefits and a large, non-cash accounting adjustment related to future workers' compensation costs. It was the second straight year of operating profits and more evidence that the e-commerce-fueled recovery from the Great Recession is firmly taking hold.

Change is also coming to the top management of the Postal Service. Postmaster General Pat Donahoe will retire in February and the Senate is poised to fill the five vacancies on the USPS Board of Governors, hopefully ending the leadership void that enabled Donahoe to attack our jobs and our networks rather than working with us to find legislative solutions.

Megan Brennan, the Postal Service's current chief operating officer, will become PMG in 2015. We congratulate her and welcome the chance to work with her to construct a common vision for the future of the Postal Service. We are committed to working with the new leadership to embrace innovation and growth. It's time to turn the page on simply "shrinking to survive."

Although we had hoped for a better midterm election, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the tens of thousands of letter carriers who contributed to COLCPE and to the hundreds of members who volunteered to do COLCPE-funded campaign work this year. The vast majority of the candidates we supported—in both parties—won their races this year. We have a strong base of support in Congress for our agenda to enact sensible postal reform. We must continue to work together to build bipartisan coalitions in Congress to enact sensible reforms to strengthen the Postal Service's unmatched delivery, retail and processing networks. And we must fiercely resist those who would instead dismantle the Postal Service.

It was a disappointing election. Our democracy feels broken when two-thirds of Americans don't vote, corporate cash dominates and both political parties fail to offer compelling proposals to address our country's problems. But let's not focus on political pessimism. Let's build on the rays of hope we see today—to fight for each other and to better serve the American people. And let's vow to do better next time.