

## Voting and the Postal Service are essential



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**E**arlier this year, the Harris Poll company released a survey report on the U.S. corporate response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It asked Americans to identify the most valuable and essential companies during the crisis. Ranked No. 1 among the 100 companies deemed *most essential* during the pandemic was the United States Postal Service. That public affirmation of the value of our employer is a testament to the dedication and extraordinary service provided by America's letter carriers and our fellow postal employees. You can and should be very proud of this recognition.

But our work in this pandemic is far from done.

At this moment, the country is turning to us to reaffirm and protect something of immense value to our country—our democracy, the very heart of our national identity. At a time when the coronavirus continues to spread and when voting in person can endanger our health and the safety of our loved ones, voting by mail has emerged as one of the main solutions. It provides a safe and efficient means for exercising our right to choose our leaders in a democratic fashion. Nothing could be more essential than that.

In fact, 83 percent of all U.S. voters will have the option to vote by mail this year. Some 51 million Americans will automatically receive their ballots in the mail from states that are using a full vote-at-home model as a public health measure designed to keep lines short on Election Day. These states include California, Nevada, New Jersey and Vermont, as well as states that adopted Vote at Home before the pandemic (Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington). In addition, 44 million citizens were automatically sent applications to vote by mail. And no fewer than 100 million Americans have had the option to request an absentee mail ballot, most of them in states that already had “no excuse” absentee voting but others in states that liberalized the rules because of the coronavirus.

If our experience earlier this year during the primary election season is any guide, up to half of all votes cast in the November election will involve mailed-out ballots. Never in the history of our country have the American people needed us more than they need us right now. As we step up to deliver for

the country once again with integrity and nonpartisan professionalism, we can take tremendous pride in this role.

NALC is certainly doing its part to ensure a smooth election. We proposed, and the postmaster general agreed, to expand the Postal Service's National Election Task Force to include the postal unions and the postal management associations. We've been meeting weekly to coordinate public messaging, training and operational planning for the surge in mail ballots this year. Our goal is to get every ballot delivered on time and counted.

You can help in this effort. In these final weeks of this election, if you notice a problem that might delay or damage political mail or election mail, alert your steward. He or she will be part of local labor-management teams designed to troubleshoot such problems. As always, “if you see something, say something.”

**Of course, letter carriers are not just part of the machinery of our democracy—we also are citizen-participants in it.** Over the past several months, we have used the pages of *The Postal Record* to give you information about the candidates for president and the contrasting records of the two chambers of Congress as they relate to your jobs, your work life and your employer. On those matters, former Vice President Joe Biden and Sen. Kamala Harris are far and away the best choice for NALC members.

We have used those same workplace metrics to evaluate House and Senate races, and we have used the voluntary contributions of our members to the Letter Carrier Political Fund to support scores of candidates from both parties who have demonstrated their support for letter carriers and our issues. All of the arguments have been made, and I will not repeat them again. What I will repeat is that we fully respect the political diversity of our great union, and we understand that each and every one of you will make your own voting decisions based on the issues most important to you. By respecting that diversity, we ensure the unity we need to pursue our common interests as workers.

The important thing is not how you vote. The important thing is that you vote.

Our country is in real trouble right now. We face a pandemic, a related deep economic downturn, and a racial justice reckoning. But our democracy, with all its evident flaws, is still our best avenue for addressing these problems and making progress. As a former president used to say, there is nothing wrong with America that cannot be fixed with what is right with America.

Among those things that are most right about our country is our right to vote. It's sacred. It should not be squandered. Please vote and urge all your family and friends to do the same. Like the beloved U.S. Postal Service, voting is essential.