

The rallies



Philip
Dine

In the spring of 2022, after an historic fight against great odds, letter carriers succeeded in overturning the pre-funding mandate, which together with the artificial financial crisis it produced threatened the future of the Postal Service, imperiled our jobs and harmed the Post Office's ability to deliver for a public that relies on us.

The key behind that achievement was a whole-of-NALC effort marked by seamless coordination among our national leaders at Headquarters, our regional and branch officers, and activists and rank-and-file letter carriers around the country. An effort, moreover, built around a strong legislative push and a persuasive message delivered at all levels of our union.

Now we face another crisis, far different in nature but equally critical—and every bit as daunting. As you know all too well, robberies and assaults targeting letter carriers are now commonplace. This is not—as I tell journalists who want to dwell on the percentage change year to year—a matter of an incremental increase. Rather, this is a case of something exceedingly rare in the entire country suddenly exploding to the tune of multiple attacks sometimes occurring in the same city on the same day.

And once again, America's letter carriers are responding effectively, with your "Enough is enough" rallies around the country. It is too soon, much too soon, to know what their impact will be, but the signs thus far are encouraging. As with pre-funding, where you changed the national conversation, you are delivering a powerful message to the public, the press and the politicians—showing them why decisive action is required. Now.

As I write this, we have held eight rallies, with a couple more already scheduled. As before, the effort to combat the surging criminal activity aimed at carriers involves a whole-of-union approach. Each rally has featured local branch leaders as well as national business agents or state presidents, often a local letter carrier or two relating their own experiences, and President Renfro, who outlines both the national picture and our demands that the Postal Service protect its workers and that federal prosecutors prosecute these crimes against federal employees.

The comparisons between how NALC handled these sharply divergent existential crises—one about finances, one about safety—are instructive. The rallies are more bottom-up—reflecting our union's flexibility in adapting to diverse challenges—with local branches scheduling and organizing the events as they see a need, with some regional and national

assistance. Meanwhile, as before, officers and staffers at Headquarters are working on the legislative front.

The messaging is a little more locally tailored, given that the frequency and nature of the criminal activity differ by location, but overall—as before—the message you are delivering resonates because it is concise, it is factual and it draws in folks by showing how everyone has a stake in this.

While our main focus is, of course, on protecting letter carriers—who shouldn't have to wonder whether they'll be attacked while delivering the public's mail—we also note that residents and businesses shouldn't have to worry about having their mail stolen. More broadly, these brazen crimes damage communities' quality of life. Because we deliver routes for years or even decades, know our customers, notice when something is amiss and often are first on the scene, we alert authorities to an elderly resident's health crisis, find a missing child, or put out a small fire before it engulfs a house. But it is more difficult to pay attention to the well-being of the neighborhood if we're constantly looking over our shoulders or wondering why someone is approaching us.

Including the entire community helps explain the thorough coverage of our rallies, from local TV affiliates of NBC, Fox, ABC and CBS to news-oriented radio stations, online news outlets to prominent display in some of the nation's largest newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Detroit News*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Denver Post*, *Cincinnati Enquirer* and the *Houston Chronicle*, whose story ran on Page One.

That coverage informs the public of the urgency of ending these spiraling attacks; and the press/public engagement inevitably draws the attention of our elected representatives.

Speaking of the media, it's worth noting that while national-level journalism increasingly ignores the craft's principle of objectivity to instead engage in narrative-driven political advocacy, many journalists on local and regional levels aim simply to inform the communities they're part of. They don't think they know it all, rather they want to learn it all—a monumental distinction.

By the effort you are putting into these rallies, by your accessibility before and after the rallies, you are giving journalists in your respective communities much to work with—to the benefit of us all.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Director of Communications and Media Relations Philip Dine
Managing Editor Mike Shea
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Writer/Editor Jenessa Wagner
Editorial Assistant Joelle Dine

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