

# Winds of change



**C**hange is in the air in Washington. And I am not just talking about the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives. The United States Postal Service will soon have a new leader. In mid-November, Postmaster General Jack Potter announced that he would step down in early December. The new PMG will be Pat Donahoe, the career postal employee who currently serves as the deputy postmaster general. The shift from Democratic to Republican control in half the Congress promises to dramatically challenge the labor movement—including the NALC—on multiple fronts, even though the issue of what to do to assure the long-term viability of the Postal Service should be a non-partisan matter. Meanwhile, the change in leadership at postal headquarters indicates continuity at a time when we need dramatic change from the executives at L'Enfant Plaza. Let us consider what these winds of change mean for letter carriers.

**The nation took a huge step backward** on November 2. There is no way to sugar-coat it. The party that supported the policies of President George W. Bush and then refused to clean up the mess he helped create was returned to power, even as it supports the same pro-Wall Street, Big Business agenda that has proven so damaging to workers for decades. An angry electorate, aided and abetted by a flood of secret corporate money unleashed by President Bush's nominees to the Supreme Court, decided it was taking too long to fix the worst economic crisis in 80 years. So despite the heroic efforts of the labor movement and hundreds of tireless NALC activists, whose get-out-the-vote efforts clearly succeeded in many statewide races and saved a small pro-worker majority in the Senate, dozens of anti-union politicians were swept into office in congressional districts across the nation. The impact on letter carriers—in terms of the security of our jobs and the safety of our

pensions and health benefits—will depend on how well we mobilize our members to resist in the months ahead. Get ready, brothers and sisters: We are in for one of the toughest battles in our union's history.

Let me give you a taste of what is to come. The incoming chairman of the House Government Oversight and Reform Committee, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), vowed in a pre-election op-ed article to force the USPS to downsize and the postal unions to make concessions at the bargaining table. He has repeatedly called for the elimination of 200,000 postal jobs and has falsely suggested that allowing the USPS to use its own pension surplus would constitute a "taxpayer bailout"—reversing a position he took just a year ago. I am hoping that the op-ed article was just a lot of election-year rhetoric and that we can make a fresh start with the new chairman. We have a long and proud history of working with and supporting reasonable leaders from both parties. But if we can't work it out, we must be prepared to fight with everything we have.

**We will take the same approach with** the new leadership at the Postal Service. We have worked with Pat Donahoe over the years on many delivery issues and wish him well in his new job. We hope he will pivot away from the disastrous focus on five-day delivery and work with us and Congress to build a 21st century Postal Service that offers expanded services to meet the evolving needs of the country. On this front, there is some basis for hope. Last year, Donahoe said in an interview, "Our unions want to do the right thing. We have to resolve pay and labor issues internally and I think that it's important that we do that, because if we do that, that makes for a stronger Postal Service." We could not agree more. The 280,000 members of the NALC look forward to working with the new leadership of the Postal Service to make that happen. Change is coming; let's make it work for all of us. ☒