

Pulling together toward new horizons





WELCOME TO THE SIXTH ANNUAL SPECIAL EDITION of *The Postal Record* honoring active and retired letter carriers who made contributions during the past year to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education, the NALC political action fund known as COLCPE. Since the inaugural special issue in 2005, tens of thousands of letter carrier names have been splashed across the magazine's pages, representing hard-earned dollars donated for the common good.

It's important to remember that—the common good. That's why we have a union, the National Association of Letter Carriers, dedicated to protecting carriers on the job, to securing a middle-class lifestyle for members and their families, and to fighting for working people across the country—because, as the saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats.

The Great Recession that began in 2007 made it brutally clear that when the economy goes sour, working people suffer. Millions have been left without jobs; millions more work part-time in low-wage, no-benefit positions.

Yet not a single NALC letter carrier has lost his or her job in this economic catastrophe.

Think about that. Not a single one—with global financial markets teetering on the knife edge of disaster and the Postal Service in the cold grip of declining volume and electronic diversion, city letter carriers have survived, their wages and benefits protected by the shield of the union and the sword of political action.

That's where COLCPE, our 34-year-old, non-partisan fund, comes in.

It is through political action, lobbying the Congress and the White House, and supporting candidates who support carrier issues that the NALC has become a key player in Washington's halls of power. And make no mistake: A lone vote on Capitol Hill or the stroke of a pen in the White House can strip away our benefits, water down job protections or endanger the very survival of USPS.

Political muscle essential

"Sometimes we hear a message so often it gets to be just a buzz in our

head," NALC President Fred Rolando said. "With all the distractions and worries in our lives today, I'm afraid some of our members have forgotten the simple truth that we have to maintain our political muscle to survive."

"I'm not exaggerating," he added. "If we are going to survive—survive as employees of a stable, growing United States Postal Service—we must have political clout. The politicians, the decision-makers, have to respect us. They have to know we can help them or oppose them."

The NALC leader said members will have to pull together to get the USPS back on the road to prosperity. "We have a lot of innovative ideas for growing the Service, but many of them will require approval from Congress, or can be nudged ahead by Congress," he said. "Like it or not, politics is a fact of life for us."

Rolando noted NALC members' job security is not a given. The recession has been especially hard on the USPS, which already was being squeezed as first class mail business morphed into Internet transactions. Compounding the problem was the unrealistic schedule imposed on the USPS by Congress for pre-funding retiree health benefits.

Thanks to NALC's vigorous leadership, the USPS got a one-year pre-funding reprieve, a \$4 billion break that cut the



agency's fiscal 2009 deficit roughly in half. "Winning that vote for the H.R. 22 legislation wasn't easy," Rolando said. "Without the grass roots organization that COLCPE helped us build, we would not have prevailed."

But we must fight that same battle again this year, he pointed out, again with the goal of winning real reform in the pre-funding schedule, not another Band-Aid.

That's another overlooked fact—COLCPE funding isn't just a source of campaign donations to pro-carrier candidates, regardless of party. It provides the foundation for NALC's political action programs, from organizing precinct walks by Carrier Corps members to releasing hundreds of letter carriers to work full time in the weeks before general elections to turn out the vote for labor-friendly candidates.

When you put it all together, COLCPE looms large as we look ahead. With all the threats and opportunities before us,

supporting our political fund is an essential first step as we begin to pull together toward the new horizons beckoning us into the future.

'Gimme 5'—the linchpin

The linchpin of our fund-raising is "Gimme 5 for COLCPE," a project launched in 2004. The simple idea: Sign up to automatically donate \$5 per pay period from your paycheck or monthly annuity, or set up an electronic fund transfer from a checking account. *(See pages 39-42 for how you can contribute by payroll allotment, EFT or direct from an annuity.)*

Prominent among the thousands of names in this issue are your brothers and sisters who answered the call to "Gimme 5." Also listed are occasional contributors and a report on group donations. As you look through the listings—your branch is listed under your home state—you'll find rank-and-file carriers and retirees who have

stepped up to help propel us to a brighter future.

“When thousands of letters carriers give just a few dollars every pay period, it really mounts up,” Rolando said. “When we pool our resources, we magnify our political power.”

“Gimme 5 is only asking an active carrier for 50 cents a day,” he said. “I can’t imagine anyone who’d say 50 cents is too much to give to protect a good job with good benefits, like health care, retirement, disability insurance and workers’ compensation.”

Most NALC branches have an official COLCPE coordinator, and the national union’s Legislative and Political Action Department has devised a series of contests to promote Gimme 5. Results of the latest contest appear on page 9. The competition pitted branches against branches for the opportunity to conduct raffles for \$1,000 gift cards for individual members of the winning branches.

Your political action fund enabled NALC to be one of the most active and visible labor participants in the 2008 election. In this election year of 2010, with control of Congress once again at stake, we will need that strength again. There’s no denying the euphoria over the 2008 election victories by worker-friendly candidates was drenched by a bucket of cold reality—both economic and political. Rescuing the economy was pushed to the top of the Obama administration’s agenda, and some priorities of the president’s supporters—the NALC included—were left in limbo.

The ‘no way’ crowd

Worse, never before in our history has “No” been the official policy of the “loyal opposition.” Obstruction has replaced discussion and the Republican leadership (if not all the members of the GOP caucus) has pulled out every trick in the book to block progressive policy proposals—like demanding a super-majority of 60 votes in the Senate

to act on just about every thing. That’s the reason, for instance, there has not been a final vote on the Employee Free Choice Act.

Some NALC members are understandably disillusioned and angry. But that anger should be focused on the culprits—the politicians who got us into this mess and those who seem determined to keep us stuck in the mud. If the wobbly 60-vote Senate “majority” has been unable to deliver for us, this is not the time to turn back to the “no way” crowd. The best response is to fight for an even stronger majority that believes in building up the middle class, not tearing it down.

In the months ahead, the nation will face many tough challenges and hard political decisions. The partisan rhetoric will become white-hot by mid-summer. In the fall, we will need to pull together and work hard to make sure our friends are still around to help us in 2011.

And when the new year dawns, another special COLCPE issue will be in the works. Until then, we need to unite for the common good and pull together to protect the middle-class jobs and middle-class lifestyle we enjoy. ☒



And the winners are...

Top branches in COLCPE contest pick up \$1,000 prizes for members

THE RESULTS ARE IN FOR THE 2009 COLCPE contest and the winners include members from California to Mississippi to Rhode Island, along with every letter carrier who benefits from the NALC's political action fund.

"This has been our best contest so far," NALC President Fred Rolando said. "We made great progress in signing up automatic contributors, plus we have seven members who will collect \$1,000 gift cards."

The friendly competition kicked off last April and ended December 31. It was conducted among NALC branches to spur donations to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education, the union's political fund established in 1975. Branches were divided into five size categories and judged based on the percentage of members who give at the "Gimme 5" level—\$5 per pay period through payroll allotment or \$5 monthly from their annuity, or those sums deducted regularly from their checking accounts via electronic fund transfer.

Each winning branch will conduct a raffle among its Gimme 5 donors for a \$1,000 American Express gift card. (Members who do not give at the Gimme 5 level or higher are not eligible for the drawings.)

"We've reached the point that more than 7 percent of the membership has signed up to make automatic contributions to COLCPE," President Rolando said. "That steady revenue stream gives us a solid foundation as we plan our political strategy for legislative battles this spring and summer and the congressional elections in the fall."

All told, almost 1,800 new Gimme 5 contributors signed up during the contest. As 2010 began, more than

20,000 members were enrolled to give automatically.

"As impressive as this sounds, we still have a lot of room for improvement," Rolando said. "Some branches are shamefully behind the leaders, both in numbers and the percentage of members who support COLCPE. Our goal is just 50 cents a day from active carriers—\$5 a paycheck—to protect our jobs and benefits in these difficult times."

Top branches

The top branches in the contest are:
2,000 members or more—San Diego, California Branch 70, with 8.29 percent of members as Gimme 5 donors

1,000 to 1,999 members—Austin, Texas Branch 181, with 15.41 percent participation

500 to 999 members—Too close to call at press time (*see next page*)

100 to 499 members—Newport, Rhode Island Branch 57, with an eye-popping 52.48 percent

50 to 99 members—Hattiesburg, Mississippi Branch 938, with a whopping 49.33 percent

In addition, a separate raffle was conducted among all Gimme 5 donors in branches of 49 or fewer members. President Rolando drew the winner's name—Donald Dillon of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania Branch 2771, who has been a Gimme 5 contributor since August 2008. The branch has 44 members.

A special category recognized the branch that registered the greatest



President Rolando draws the name of Donald Dillon of Willow Grove, PA Br. 2771 from the pool of Gimme 5 donors in branches with 49 or fewer members. Dillon will receive a \$1,000 gift card. Holding the basket is NALC Political Director Tucker McDonald.

growth in percentage of Gimme 5 members. Sioux Falls, South Dakota Branch 491 captured the honors—and earned a \$1,000 raffle prize for one of its members—by growing from 8.85 percent donors in April 2009 to 24.66 percent by year's end. The 190-member branch went from 17 Gimme 5 contributors in the spring to 62—a remarkable 265 percent growth spurt.

Too close to call

In addition to unexpectedly large increases registered by some branches, the contest yielded one big surprise. The competition in the 500 to 999-member category became a dead heat, with just two percentage points separating the top three, a statistical difference that could easily shift based on a handful of new sign-ups.

The three branches are Birmingham, Alabama Branch 530; Mid-Michigan Branch 256 in Flint; and Honolulu, Hawaii Branch 860. Collectively they have signed up 166 new Gimme 5 contributors and chalked up participation rates ranging from 22.14 percent to 24.2 percent.

“It’s great to see the way these branches and their COLCPE coordinators responded to the challenge,” President Rolando said. “To be absolutely fair, I have our headquarters staff going through the numbers and checking for any last-minute changes before we declare a winner.”

By the time this magazine reaches letter carriers’ homes, the issue will be settled and the triumphant branch announced on the NALC website.

President Rolando pointed out several other branches that had impressive results. South Florida Branch 1071 in Miami logged 109 new contributors, while New Jersey Merged Branch 38 added 66 to the rolls. New York Branch 36 more than doubled its number of Gimme 5 donors.

In addition to the \$1,000 prizes, each of the six winning branches will receive a laptop computer for branch use and the branch COLCPE coordinator will be rewarded with a \$200 gift card.

NALC’s Legislative and Political Action Department is devising a new COLCPE contest for 2010. Watch for an announcement in an upcoming *Postal Record* and on the website, nalc.org. ☒

COLCPE contest results

2,000 or more members

San Diego, CA Br. 70	8.29%
South Florida Br. 1071	6.57%
Minneapolis, MN Br. 9	6.36%
Atlanta, GA Br. 73	5.11%
Seattle, WA Br. 79	4.71%

1,000 to 1,999 members

Austin, TX Br. 181	15.41%
Nashville, TN Br. 4	7.36%
Louisville, KY Br. 14	7.17%
Portland, OR Br. 82	6.16%
MA Northeast Merged Br. 25	5.94%

500 to 999 members*

Birmingham, AL Br. 530	24.2%
Mid-Michigan Br. 256	23.78%
Honolulu, HI Br. 860	22.14%
Salt Lake City, UT Br. 111	12%
Knoxville, TN Br. 419	10.56%

100 to 499 members

Newport, RI Br. 57	52.48%
Aurora, IL Br. 219	43.3%
Lafayette, LA Br. 1760	33.73%
Sioux Falls, SD Br. 491	33.51%
Houma-Thibodaux-Lockport, LA Br. 2464	33.33%

50 to 99 members

Hattiesburg, MS Br. 938	49.33%
Kailua, HI Br. 4454	41.27%
Mililani, HI Br. 4837	39.77%
Danville, VA Br. 595	38.95%
Zanesville, OH Br. 78	33.33%

Greatest percentage growth

Sioux Falls, SD Br. 491	24.66%
Danville, VA Br. 595	16.27%
Kailua, HI Br. 4454	15.12%
Newport, RI Br. 57	13.75%
Lafayette, LA Br. 1760	12.3%

*Winner not yet determined