



Building on our success

Another year has come and gone. Where does the time go? It seems like just yesterday that the world was bracing itself for the millennium. Well, that and arguing over when the millennium actually was. Hard to believe that was 10 years ago. I'm still waiting for my computer to crash.

What is it about the arrival of a new year that causes us to look back and reflect? I'm not saying that's a bad thing, it's just something we all do as we count the clock down to midnight. In fact, it's a good thing to recognize past successes and even failures. Both can be learned from and even built on.

It was a success for NALC activists when Congress approved legislation in September that granted \$4 billion in immediate financial relief to the Postal Service. The one-year change to the 2006 postal reform law created a little breathing room, allowing the Postal Service to defer part of the required pre-funding of the future retiree health care liability.

However, we have to build on that success. We still have a lot of work to do in Congress. A long-term reform of the pre-funding schedule for future retiree health benefits—the money USPS is setting aside to pay its share of retirees' health insurance premiums in years to come—is at the core of the legislative relief the NALC is advocating.

It was a success when letter carriers received the option to give to COLCPE using automatic contributions. A steady stream of contributions to the NALC's political action committee is important for legislative planning. As you know, with one vote, Congress can undo many of the benefits we have earned and can put letter carrier jobs at risk. During this financial crisis, with one vote, Congress can determine the future of the Postal Service.

We need to build on the success of obtaining the option to give through automatic contributions to COLCPE—our political action fund used to help protect letter carrier jobs and benefits. It's important to talk about giving to COLCPE at branch meetings and to encourage members who have not signed up to give to do so. The automatic contribution option—whether from a USPS paycheck, a personal checking account or an annuity payment—has

made it more convenient to give.

The plan unveiled last year to go to five-day delivery poses a real danger to the future of the Postal Service. A move to five-day delivery makes no business sense. It won't save that much money in the short run and in the long run it would result in lost business and revenue.

Instead of looking at ways to dismantle the Postal Service, let's look at creating new uses of the mail and new uses of our last-mile delivery network. Instead of being content to count the clock down to midnight and say farewell, let's also look to the future with a little creativity and vision to come up with a viable strategy. If you read the cover story in this issue, you'll see a report on President Rolando's presentation to a Rutgers University Center for Research in Regulated Industries workshop on "The Future of the Postal Sector." He made it clear the NALC is committed to exploring alternatives that would build the Postal Service instead of tearing it down piece by piece.

As union members, we would be remiss if we didn't also look at our branches with an eye to the future as well. Do we know where the future leaders of our branches are? Members who want to become more involved in the union are a blessing. As union leaders, we should consider them additional contributors who can be taught, groomed and shown the way to become effective advocates for letter carriers. Knowledge should be passed on, not kept locked away.

I had the privilege in the past of being a mentor for two participants in the NALC Leadership Academy. This year, I will have the honor of conducting part of the training for the first time. This training program provides a unique opportunity for union members to learn and gain leadership skills. I hope that branches are encouraging members to consider applying for the Leadership Academy, a program that benefits the future of our union.

So as we say goodbye to 2009 and welcome 2010, let us all resolve to build on what we have fought so hard to achieve thus far. As I said, reflection can be good. But success is in the vision. ✕