



Wag the dog

There's an old idiom that comes to mind as the Postal Service continues to brazenly lobby the American public to win approval to eliminate Saturday mail delivery—wag the dog. To “wag the dog” basically means to divert attention from what would otherwise be of greater importance to something else of lesser significance. By doing so, the less-significant issue is thrown into the spotlight, drowning out the proper attention to what was originally and should be the more important issue. Or, more simply put, you concentrate on the dog wagging its tail—not on that the tail might be wagging the dog.

In our situation, the more important issue is to correct the \$75 billion CSRS overcharge reported by the USPS Office of Inspector General. The \$75 billion would go a long way toward resolving the Postal Service's financial problems. The OIG estimates that if the overcharge were used to pre-pay the health benefits fund, it would fully meet all accrued retiree health care liabilities. Fixing this problem would save the USPS at least \$8 billion annually.

Even Postmaster General John E. Potter says that correcting the overcharge would slow efforts to cut back mail service and ease the Postal Service's financial crisis. On March 18, Potter testified before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government and stated that he would not be pursuing five-day delivery if the \$75 billion surplus in the Civil Service Retirement Fund were returned to the Postal Service.

Unfortunately, this is not the message that the Postal Service is giving to the public—all efforts have been channeled into its campaign to go to five-day delivery. It is the less-significant issue being thrown into the spotlight.

The Postal Service even launched a website in late March designed to gain support for the move to five-day delivery. The site offers misleading information and planning guides for businesses and households regarding its plan to cut Saturday collection and mail delivery services.

Never mind that Congress has shown very little interest in eliminating Saturday service and must approve any change. Current law requires the Postal Service to deliver

mail six days per week.

Never mind that the plan to cut Saturday delivery would, according to the Postal Service, only save \$3 billion a year—far less than the \$8 billion a year it would save if the over-funding were corrected.

Never mind that the Postal Service has failed to estimate how much revenue would be lost by cutting a day of service. As President Rolando wrote in a letter to the editor of *The New York Times*: No business ever bounced back to health by rushing to offer slower service and turning customers away.

And never mind that Postmaster General Potter has testified before Congress that returning the \$75 billion surplus would sufficiently address the Postal Service's financial issues.

It is up to us to focus the attention back where it belongs, because five-day is the wrong way to save the Postal Service.

Efforts have been and continue to be under way to educate Congress and the American public on the \$75 billion over-funding issue. The state chairs and all 15 national business agents were in Washington in March to lobby Congress, as were delegations from New Jersey and Ohio. Delegations from New York and Maryland were here in April. President Rolando has conducted countless interviews, written letters to editors and scheduled meetings with members of Congress on this issue. He also submitted testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Federal Service and General Government on March 18.

The NALC has also set up its own special website to provide the news media and the general public with complete information on why the proposed change to five-day delivery is a deeply flawed plan. I urge all members to check the website daily for updates on the NALC's fight to save the Postal Service at nalc.org.

Remember, we are all in this battle together. Sign up to be an e-Activist. Contribute to COLCPE. Together, we can place the focus on real solutions, not risky and counter-productive service cuts. 