



Five day, no way!

I wish I could have watched from the air the convoy of 65 buses filled with nearly 3,600 letter carriers carving a line in the California landscape as they made their way from the Anaheim Convention Center to downtown Los Angeles for the AFL-CIO jobs rally. What a rare and awesome sight it must have been.

But even more spectacular was the sea of blue-clad carriers who spilled from those buses and flooded every inch of the lawn and even the side streets outside city hall. What a loud message it was: The NALC is here and we won't back down on the fight to save Saturday delivery.

Even harder to imagine is that it had the potential to be more. Initially, 4,500 of the 7,000 delegates present at the 67th biennial national convention had signed up to go to the "Paychecks Pay the Bills" jobs rally on Friday afternoon. But because of the likelihood of heavy L.A. traffic on the return trip back to Anaheim, making it hard to estimate what time the buses would actually be back, many delegates didn't attend for fear they might miss their flights home.

Still, the response was typical letter carrier style. Whether it's collecting food for the hungry, raising money for MDA, participating in the Cities Readiness Initiative, Carrier Alert, saving lives or rising up in solidarity with other unions in an effort to help save good jobs, letter carriers *always* deliver.

For me, it was reminiscent of the 1998 national convention in Las Vegas, when the delegates in attendance demanded that not some (as was suggested) but *all* 8,000 of us would be marching on the sidewalk near the convention center with the concrete workers who had initiated an unfair labor practice strike. I was part of that delegation. We shut down Riviera Street, which runs in front of the convention center. The concrete workers were absolutely amazed by the number of carriers who came to picket with them.

More than likely, authorities would have had to shut down the streets in downtown L.A. if another 1,000 letter carriers had been able to make the trip. But make no mistake: The turnout of letter carriers for the rally in Los Angeles was impressive. I wish every member could have

experienced it. The mood was electric and the chants of "Five day, no way!" were frequent and loud. Those chants continued long after the rally concluded as carriers lined the streets adjacent to city hall while they waited for the buses to return them to Anaheim.

It was the perfect close to the convention and a huge boost of added adrenalin for the many important tasks we have ahead of us: upcoming contract negotiations, defeating the Service's proposal to eliminate Saturday mail delivery and repealing the \$5.5 billion annual payments for pre-funding health benefits.

All of these tasks were laid out by President Rolando in his address to the convention. He was intent on making sure that no member would come away from the convention without a deep understanding of what lies ahead for letter carriers.

The NALC needs letter carrier legislative activism to help preserve six-day delivery and to push Congress to make important legislative changes in regard to the CSRS overpayment and the retiree health pre-funding provisions.

At the same time, we need innovation that will increase services and revenue for the Postal Service. We need to explore and experiment outside of the box to come up with service expansion that will bolster the USPS in the future.

President Rolando said it best in his opening speech to the convention: "The real strength of our union is the pride that each member feels as we serve our customers, in every neighborhood—at 150 million addresses nationwide—*six days a week*. We will stand up to protect the future of the Postal Service, because this is our company and *we are the Postal Service!*"

Though the tasks ahead are not easy, we will succeed. Together, we are 300,000 strong. We will not back down from this fight; that message was sent loud and clear in L.A.

And on a personal note, I want to thank you for electing me as your assistant secretary-treasurer. It is truly an honor and a privilege to represent the members of the NALC. ☒