

Letter from the Editor

One year ago, as President Rolando opened the NALC's 67th Biennial Convention in Anaheim, he imparted an unmistakable sense of resolve, a determination to not back down. Lest there be any doubt, the music loudly playing as he took the stage did the same.

Those were welcome sentiments. I'd just joined the NALC staff a week earlier; communications and media relations would be my responsibility, and I was all too aware of the challenges we faced in getting the message out. First and foremost: The lack of journalistic knowledge—worse, lack of curiosity—about the real situation at the U.S. Postal Service.

Let's fast forward to the present. Over the past month, I have watched as this union—resolute, determined—has countered the prevailing myths. From President Rolando at Headquarters to union leaders in New York and California and in between, the NALC has forcefully communicated the facts about the Postal Service. This is critical if the American people—and their representatives in Washington—are to understand both how to fix the problems at the USPS and why we should preserve the unique value of the universal network.

When a misleading op-ed piece in the *Miami Herald* was circulated by the McClatchy news service, President Rolando crafted a response that McClatchy also distributed, and which as of this writing has run in 16 newspapers—including large metro dailies in Minneapolis, Louisville, Raleigh, Buffalo and Sacramento—and on eight websites.

A few days later, he responded swiftly to a misleading column in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, hometown newspaper of Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), chairman of the House committee that oversees the Postal Service. The next day, in the *Washington Examiner*, the president knocked Issa's previous piece touting his destructive "postal reform" bill out of the water. Both rebuttals ran within a week of the original columns, a rapid-fire response in the world of newspaper op-ed pages. And the latter commentary subsequently ran in the *San Francisco Examiner*.

President Rolando found yet another forum in the July 15 *Florida Times-Union*, after the Jacksonville-based newspaper approvingly cited Issa's *Washington Examiner* piece in an editorial. As the president noted, Issa's bill stands apart from other congressional propos-

als in not addressing the top financial drain on the USPS—the congressionally mandated pre-funding payments.

Other voices were heard as well.


Region 15 NBA Larry Cirelli made a gutsy decision to talk to a *Daily News* reporter doing a series on improperly parked cars in New York City. He returned her phone call not out of any desire to be quoted, but because he knew that not doing so could result in negative publicity, with the NALC "refusing to comment."

California State Association President John Beaumont alerted the Communications Department to a biased *Union-Tribune* online poll on Issa's bid to end Saturday delivery. A phone call to the conservative newspaper's web editor led to fairer wording, and within a couple of days the poll's final results reflected a turn-around—with readers rejecting the proposal by 58 to 41 percent. Following our column in Issa's hometown paper and our *Examiner* op-ed piece directly rebutting his own column, this capped a three-day period of comeuppance for the anti-labor congressman.

A strong op-ed piece in the July 16 *Glen Falls Post-Star* by William Cook, president of Northeastern NY Branch 358, rebutted an editorial and urged the local congressman to step up. Meanwhile, numerous local NALC activists have alerted us of objectionable media coverage in their areas.

In short, we're finding that misleading commentary presents a golden opportunity to get our message out.

Newspapers weren't our only forum. On one morning alone, President Rolando did 15 drive-time radio interviews—some carried live, others taped for later broadcasts. The outlets ranged from single stations in Phoenix and Boston, to radio groups with multiple outlets in Ohio and Montana, to Fox Radio Network's 300-plus affiliates around the country.

This represents an impressive range of activities by the NALC folks mentioned and by others. As a result, several million Americans heard or read compelling explanations of the real situation at the USPS. We clearly have some momentum, though there are still recalcitrant media organizations that need a dose of reality. There remains much to be done—and at all levels of this union, we'll make every effort to do it. 



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