



# Spreading the word

## NALC continues to try to save the USPS, Saturday mail delivery

**F**or your politically minded union, the holidays were a time to bid farewell to the 111th Congress and plan for working with the incoming 112th, a Congress with a labor-friendly majority in the Senate and a labor-hostile one in the House. With the possible elimination of Saturday delivery still on the table—and with it, the potential loss of 80,000 middle-class postal jobs—the NALC’s national officers rang in the new year by keeping up the pace in the fight to secure the U.S. Postal Service’s financial future.

On Dec. 17, NALC President Fredric V. Rolando, along with AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and about a dozen other labor leaders, met with President Barack Obama in the White House’s Roosevelt Room for a productive discussion about American jobs and joblessness and how to address the difficult times facing workers. This rare opportunity gave Rolando the chance to raise with the administration the issue of Postal Service finances, including the onerous mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits.

Two days later, Rolando was a special guest on CNN’s “State of the Union” Sunday program. Rolando described to host Candy Crowley how the Postal Service can survive the “Age of the Internet,” touted the many good things letter carriers do as we deliver for America six days a week, and debunked some myths about the Postal Service’s financial state.

“What you have here,” he said, “if you take the mail out of the equation, you’ve got this incredible universal network of the American people—probably the only universal network—that goes to every home, every business, six days a week.”

The NALC president then kicked off 2011 with an appearance on “The Skeptical Economist,” a radio program broadcast Sunday mornings from Indianapolis on News Talk 1430 WXNT. Rolando told host Peter Dunn that the biggest challenge the Postal Service faces is not the worst recession in America since the Great Depression, nor electronic diversion of the mail to the Internet, but rather the mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits.

“We have no objection to this pre-funding,” Rolando added. “We just want to take our surplus money from the Civil Service Retirement System and transfer it over to make these [annual pre-funding] payments.”

### Reviewing PAEA

The 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) requires the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) to file a report, at least every five years, about how the Act is doing and to discuss possible improvements.

The first such review is underway, and the PRC held a public forum on Jan. 11 to discuss its report. Attending the session were representatives from organizations ranging from the Direct Marketing Association to the National Postal Policy Council, as well as from the Postal Service’s craft unions and professional organizations, including the NALC.

PRC Chairwoman Ruth Goldway noted that the Commission’s data-gathering over the past year clearly showed that two of the mailing community’s key objectives are gaining broad approval: Applying the pension surplus toward the service’s retiree health benefit fund, followed by repeal of the requirement to pre-fund those benefits—an account that is more than 50 percent funded and has enough money to support current and future retirees’ health needs for years to come.

Goldway noted that Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) have each signaled their intent to reintroduce in the 112th Congress the postal reform bills they prepared during the 111th, and that she expects the new chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), to introduce postal reform legislation of his own.

Although the Service’s proposed elimination of Saturday mail delivery was not mentioned specifically, many speakers noted how service standards are tied directly to value—the implication being that mailers who already pay for services as they are now recognize their value, and that reducing service would decrease that value. ☒