



It's not a party thing— it's a policy thing

Not long ago, I received a letter from an irate NALC retiree—at least he was a member of the union at the time. The purpose of his letter was to inform me that he wished to resign from the union because, among other sins, NALC's "solidarity with the teachers union in Wisconsin has put you in bed with the Communist Party."

The letter writer had other complaints, basically pertaining to our support of collective bargaining for public employees but also including our efforts to put the Postal Service on a sound financial footing. Encouraging NALC members to tell Congress to restore to the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefit Fund the roughly \$75 billion the Service was overcharged, thus making the current pre-funding requirements unnecessary and removing a massive financial burden from the Postal Service, is, he believes, "garbage propaganda."

Our real sin, when it comes right down to it, is that we're a union, fighting for the rights and welfare of our members—and, by the way, doing everything possible to keep our employer in business.

It's hard to take very seriously a letter filled with as much bile, misinformation and irrationality as this one was. But the letter did get me thinking. Some other NALC members, I am sure, disapprove of our support for the protesting workers in Wisconsin, Ohio and elsewhere, oppose our positions on a variety of budgetary and social policy issues, and are offended by the fact that more often than not, we side with President Obama and not Speaker of the House John Boehner or Rep. Paul Ryan. Many are riled up that we endorse and support more Democratic candidates than Republicans.

Since the NALC claims to support candidates who support letter carriers regardless of party affiliation, they question—sometimes politely, sometimes not—why the scale is weighted so heavily one way.

To be candid: toward Democrats.

Because hardly any Republicans support us—it's just that simple.

Take a look at the vote in the House of Representatives on Rep. Ryan's regressive, inhumane 2012 budget resolution in April. Of 235 Republicans, 231 voted for the Ryan budget. In contrast, not one of 189 Democrats did.

And closer to home—that is, letter carrier issues—the numbers tell the same story. At the time I am writing this,

H.R. 137, calling for the continuation of six-day delivery, is supported by 106 Democrats and 18 Republicans. In the previous Congress, 206 of 257 Democrats, but only 41 of 178 Republicans, co-sponsored an identical resolution.

Our attempt to relieve unfair financial pressures on the USPS shows the same partisan split. Right now, *only one Republican is a co-sponsor of H.R. 1351*, which has two goals. First, it attempts to correct a decades-old accounting error that led the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to overcharge the USPS by billions of dollars for payments into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Second, it tries to deal with the more recent finding regarding an overcharge to the USPS related to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). In fact, in the previous Congress, only a single Republican—but 143 Democrats—co-sponsored legislation designed to correct the overpayment to CSRS.

When all is said and done, most Republicans have gone out of their way to oppose the interests of the American labor movement. For example, in 2007, 228 Democrats voted for the Employee Free Choice Act, designed to level the playing field for labor when trying to organize workers. The number of Republicans who supported EFCA? *Thirteen, and most of them no longer serve in Congress.*

Republicans weren't always unfriendly to working America. Not that many years ago, large numbers of moderate Republicans could be counted on to vote on behalf of the interests of letter carriers and other working Americans, and understood that this country prospers when there is economic prosperity for all. I think there still are Republicans who can be persuaded about the merits of legislation that must be passed if the Postal Service is to survive—and this is where the Republican members of the NALC become so important. You don't have to agree with this union on every issue, but for your sake as well as for the sake of your family, you should do everything you can to bend the ears and the votes of Republican members of the House and Senate on our issues.

So let's get support from both sides of the aisle. NALC will and does support Republicans who support us. That the number of Republicans supported is dwindling speaks to the direction of the current Republican party. It's up to *all* of us to steer them the right way. ☒