

## Our diversity is our strength



**I** often call the NALC the world's largest local union. The deep connection letter carriers have to one another—and the ties of solidarity that come with doing the same job for the same employer under the same terms and conditions no matter where we live and work—make for an incredibly strong union. That we are the best-organized open shop union in America—with more than 92 percent of us voluntarily choosing to belong to the NALC—is evidence of this special bond. That more than half of all retired letter carriers remain union members offers yet more proof.

Such cohesion normally is possible only at the local level, but the extraordinary workplace connection we have is something I feel everywhere I go. Yet I think it hides an even deeper and less self-evident strength: our diversity.

Although we remain a heavily male workforce—even as a record one-third of all new city carriers are women—the membership of the NALC is a magnificent reflection of the wide diversity of America itself. We come from all races and all ethnic groups; we practice all the great religions of the world; we were born in every corner of the country and every corner of the planet. We are workers united by a devotion to freedom, democracy and solidarity and divided by a common language. If you doubt my last point, attend an NALC convention and listen to the wonderful variety of accents and ways of speaking that emerge from the convention floor.

**Of course, the strength from diversity is** not always obvious. Our membership is divided politically much like the country. About half our members are Democrats, with Republicans and independents dividing up the rest. Sometimes this is a source of tension. When we endorse candidates or work for their election, we focus on how politicians vote and act on legislative matters that affect letter carriers on the job—our rights to bargain collectively, our wages and benefits, our job security and the future of the USPS.

In today's politics, that translates into greater support for Democrats—the party that has most strongly supported the labor movement and the cause of universal mail delivery through a publicly owned Postal

Service. But the NALC does not shy away from supporting Republicans who support letter carriers and the USPS.

This makes a lot of members uncomfortable, if not downright angry. Believe me; I get letters from both sides—from Democrats when we support Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) and from Republicans when we support the whole range of Democrats. I explain our workplace focus and that we understand that for some members other issues take precedence—whether it's abortion, climate change, immigration or gun rights. We get it and most members understand.

**So why does this partisan divide add up** to a strength to the NALC instead of a weakness? Because we need our Republican members more than ever—right now. At a time when a significant portion of the GOP has unleashed a national assault on public employees and public employee unions, we need every Republican NALC member to fight back with the leaders of their party.

This is not just a fight for state and local public employees—it's a fight for federal and postal employees as well. Read about the recent “postal pay and benefits” hearing in the House (see story, page 4) or look at the federal pension cuts in the GOP-adopted budget if you have any doubts (see story, page 29). In April, our House committee chairman, Darrell Issa (R-CA), called for eliminating 170,000 postal jobs—**our jobs**—and announced his opposition to proposals to recover surplus pension funds to cover the crushing cost of pre-funding retiree health benefits.

Every single member of the NALC, but especially our Republicans, must convince the GOP it is wrong about the Postal Service. Each and every one of us must contact our members of Congress, Republican and Democrat alike, and urge them to co-sponsor H.R. 1351—the bill that can stabilize the Postal Service's finances (see story, page 26).

“Republican city carriers” are not a source of weakness or division. They are our brothers and sisters who can make a big difference right now. *We Are One* is more than a slogan, and diversity really is a strength. ☒