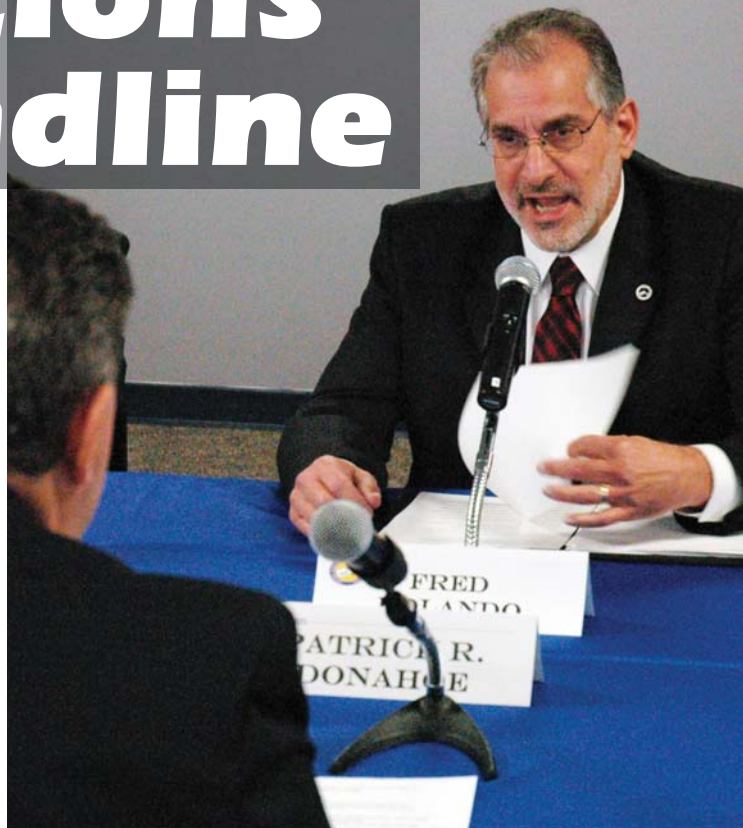


# Negotiations near deadline

**A**s this issue went to press, the entire NALC Executive Council was in Washington, DC, for round-the-clock contract negotiations. They were to be there until the 2006-2011 contract ended at midnight on Nov. 20, exploring the whole range of economic issues—wages, COLAs, and health benefits—and reviewing all the provisions of the NALC’s National Agreement.

Finding common ground had been hard from the start, with the Postal Service releasing three incendiary white papers just days before the opening of negotiations. Those white papers asked Congress to allow the USPS to override negotiated contracts by laying off 120,000 employees, by reducing our health and retirement benefits and by gutting our bargaining rights.

NALC President Fredric Rolando (r) and Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe (below) exchange points during a negotiation session.



Management had informed Congress that the Postal Service would be out of funds to pay for operations within a year, and this mentality has informed the entire bargaining process, with demands for big give-backs from letter carriers.

Clouding the process is the need for congressional action to address the Postal

Service’s financial crisis, brought on by the burdensome pre-funding requirement from the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. It’s interesting to remember that this legislation was signed into law in December 2006, during the bargaining period for the last contract. The negotiations for the 2006-2011 contract stretched beyond the November 2006 deadline, often seeming to head toward arbitration, before an agreement was reached in July 2007.

On the legislative side, NALC has been working with members of Congress to help draft a measure that would return tens of billions of dollars from the overfunded CSRS and FERS accounts and address the unfair pre-funding of future retiree health benefits. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) has introduced a helpful bill. (*See story, page 6.*)

It was also unclear what, if anything, the “super committee” would do to address the postal crisis, as its deadline also was set for after this issue was going to press.

Check the NALC website—[nalc.org](http://nalc.org)—and the *NALC Bulletin* for the latest developments on negotiations and legislation. ☒