

Taking it to the streets— and to the airwaves



On Sept. 27, the NALC and its sister unions in the Postal Service took our campaign to Save America's Postal Service to the streets of America. In solidarity with the members of the APWU, NRLCA and the NPMHU, we coordinated the largest single-day demonstration in the history of the postal labor movement. All across the country, in every congressional district in the land, we rallied the public and our members to save the USPS by demanding action from Congress.

I hope as many of you as possible were there to raise your voices and to gather the public to our side. Our fight was not and is not simply to save our jobs and protect our wages and benefits—although that is certainly an important part of it. Our fight was and is a struggle to save one of the country's national treasures, the United States Postal Service.

Even before the rallies, we launched a national website (saveamericaspostal.org) and a national advertising campaign to explain the “financial crisis” at the Postal Service caused by the 2006 congressional mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits, emphasizing the fact that Congress created the crisis and Congress can fix it. Since Congress was working on a 30-to-90-day extension of the next \$5.5 billion pre-funding payment due Sept. 30, we planned to run the new advertisement on cable television and on the radio in selected markets for 60 days, though we may alter the message should circumstances change.

Meanwhile, I have been speaking on radio shows, appearing on cable and broadcast television and doing interviews with print reporters from all over the country to spread our message. Many of you are using our talking points to do the same with excellent efforts in the local media—for which I thank you.

Of course, we have complemented our grassroots and media efforts with a relentless lobbying effort in both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government. In recent weeks, I have met with the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Jack Lew, and senior officials in the Obama administration and have enlisted

the support of the top leadership of the AFL-CIO in our campaign to stave off an entirely avoidable meltdown at the Postal Service. I have also personally lobbied the top leadership of the U.S. Senate, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and his leadership team, as well as Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), who co-chairs the all-important House-Senate “supercommittee” established by the debt limit legislation enacted in August. That supercommittee is expected to consider postal reform proposals as part of the \$1.5 trillion deficit reduction package that must be completed by Thanksgiving.

Our basic message is that Congress created the crisis at the Postal Service and Congress must fix it. We emphasized the need for four actions:

- An immediate suspension of further pre-funding payments until the economy recovers and the Postal Service's finances are stabilized;

- An immediate transfer of the undisputed \$6.9 billion surplus in the USPS FERS pension account, to permit the Postal Service to pay down the debt it ran up to pre-fund retiree health benefits and to replenish its cash reserves;

- Immediate access to the \$42 billion in our retiree health fund, now closed to us until 2016, to pay for current retiree health benefits and other operational needs if necessary; and

- Adoption of the CSRS pension provisions of either Sen. Tom Carper's bill in the Senate or Rep. Stephen Lynch's bipartisan bill in the House of Representatives.

We argued that these steps would make the radical proposals of the Postal Service's Board of Governors and those of some House Republicans unnecessary. These extreme measures would dismantle the Postal Service, strip postal employees of their workplace rights and benefits and add hundreds of thousands of workers to the ranks of the jobless at a time of mass unemployment.

The fight to save America's Postal Service has reached a critical stage. Thanks to the strength and solidarity of America's postal unions, we can win this fight. But we need all of you to join us to succeed. ☒