



## Do I catch my breath, or just stop holding it?

**W**ell, the 2012 elections are over and we have dodged a big bullet that had been earmarked for the bull's-eye on our jobs as city letter carriers. And while I wish we could have been even more successful in our efforts to elect true friends, I can breathe a sigh of relief. Or maybe just breathe again, since I have been holding my breath for the past few weeks.

With the election over, hopefully we can see some movement in Congress to support the survival of the Post Office and not continue to allow USPS upper management to gut its business model. While I'm not a hunter, I do understand that you do not gut the animal until you have killed it. The gutting of the USPS prior to its demise appears premature.

With the elections over, we cannot afford to let our guard down. We all need to keep informed on the political process during the lame-duck session and make sure that some "rush to fix" program does not allow our undoing. If you are not an e-Activist, I would urge you to contact your local NALC branch or call the Legislative Department here at NALC Headquarters (202-662-2833) and have them assist you in becoming one. It is free and will provide you quick updates should something that we cannot support be discussed or considered. All of our efforts in the recent election will be for naught if we do not continue to fight to protect our rights, benefits and jobs. In closing on this subject, while I am not completely satisfied with all of those elected, I am in a much better mood than I was two years ago.

### Cost of living

The COLA for CSRS annuitants and any FERS COLA eligible annuitants has been established at 1.7 percent. This means that your December 2012 annuity (receipt date of Jan. 1, 2013) will include the new COLA. When you receive your OPM "Notice of Annuity Adjustment," which will provide you with your new annuity amount, please save this document, as it provides valuable information to our office when you or your family call regarding some issue during the year.

### Health Benefits Open Season

Just a final reminder that OPM's Health Benefit Open Season is underway through Dec. 12. If you

plan to change health benefit plans, your time is short. I urge each of our retired members (and active members as well) who do not currently have the NALC Health Benefit Plan to look at the union plan. You own it; why not be a recipient of its benefits?

### The end of an era

By the time this *Postal Record* reaches your hands, the Retirement Department will be different. The difference is that after 36-plus years as the Retirement Office secretary, Vickie Bowman is retiring. While her "official retirement" is not until Dec. 31, she will be on annual leave during this month, so when you call, you will not hear that familiar voice. Vickie has been the *only* secretary the Office of Retired Members has had and she cannot be replaced. I and the other directors with whom she has served with her a joyful and wonderful retirement.

My personal wish is that she receive retirement blessings at least equal to the blessings and comfort she brought to many thousands of our past, current and future retirees through her efforts. I will miss her smile and concern that was always present in her dealings through our office. But most of all, I will miss seeing her when I return from the road and hearing the "There is the director of retirement" greeting that really meant, "You'd better get busy, because you have a lot of work to catch up on."

Vickie—enjoy your retirement as much as I have enjoyed "working for you." You will be missed and I miss you already. To her husband Charlie: Now it is your time to keep her busy. Love to you both.

### Season's greetings

To all of our members, both active and retired, I wish you a very happy holiday season and I hope that 2013 will be the year we planned for 2012. May our recent successes be the tip of the iceberg for this year. ☒

**NALC Retirement Department**  
**Toll-free number: 800-424-5186**  
 Available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only  
 from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m.  
 (Eastern time)  
*This toll-free number is answered ONLY during these  
 hours on the days indicated.*

