

Postal Record

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Letter from the Editor

Let's stay practical. Last month, we discussed the impact we'd have if thousands of carriers get the message out on the local level, and we examined what *the content of that message* should be—the points to get across to the public and their elected representatives via the media.

Now, we'll address *the process of communicating that message*, with some practical tips on how to do so. Remember, it's all up to you: both taking the initiative, then deciding what approach makes the most sense for you.

Wherever you live, you likely have television, radio and print outlets. If there's a local TV station, whether broadcast or community access cable, you might call the news director to ask about a reporter doing a story or about possible discussion shows you or someone from the branch could participate in. The same applies to radio.

There's also print, probably the simplest option for most of you. The key choice there is whether you'd like to try to generate/influence news coverage, or present your own point of view.

The former might make sense if you have a contact in the newsroom, or if there's a particular local angle you could convey to a reporter—for example, small businesses favoring keeping Saturday delivery. The advantages are that a story might get prominent display and that you might get a reporter interested and thus promote ongoing coverage. But what a reporter writes is beyond your/our control, and the results might not be what we're looking for.

Presenting your thoughts won't land us on the front page, and some readers will downplay it as just our opinion. But it lets us shape the message and, given the factual arguments we have and the credibility of letter carriers, what you write will be widely accepted.

All things being equal, I'd make this the top option. That leaves two types of choices. First, there are probably a weekly community newspaper, a suburban/local daily and a larger metropolitan daily in your area. You're more likely to get something published in the weekly or small daily, but the metro paper has more readers. There's no right or wrong answer; you

need to balance access vs. influence, and decide how that works out in your case.

The second choice is between writing a letter to the editor (LTE) or a commentary piece/op-ed column. You're more likely to get an LTE published, but it'll be relatively short—perhaps 200 words, though a weekly might allow more space. A column offers about 700 words, but the competition is tougher.

Here too, deciding is a balancing act. It depends partly on whether you have a specific point to make, which suggests an LTE, or you want to do a broader narrative. To get some guidance, it's good to call the editorial page editor (sometimes called the opinion page editor).

If we can help with this process, or in the actual writing, let us know.

Now let's look briefly at the value of such efforts, with a sample of some of our recent media presence. President Rolando's column in the *Orange County Register*, rebutting Rep. Darrell Issa's commentary and castigating his bill, sparked a spirited online discussion at this large California newspaper in his district. Just a few excerpts: "...please keep informing the rest of our country of the 'truths' that conveniently get left out of most postal-related articles." "It is about time someone took Rep. Issa to task!" "Well said...It is heartening to hear it from the leader of a national organization." "Finally the truth, thank you."

After months of trying, the NALC had its views published in the *Washington Post*, with President Rolando's LTE. He also had a letter in the *Virginian-Pilot*, citing the newspaper's editorial on the congressional pre-funding fiasco. The Virginia paper's excellent stories and editorials stem in part from outreach done by Region 13 NBA Tim Dowdy. Meanwhile, Massachusetts residents were deluged with information about the real situation at the USPS, with LTEs from Region 14 NBA John Casciano in the *Boston Globe*, Branch 25 President Dave Barbuzzi in the *Boston Herald* and Branch 212 Vice President Kevin Poe in the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune*.

Let's get the real story out to every media outlet in the country! 



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