

## Letter from the Editor

**A**s the battle for the future of letter carriers and the United States Postal Service shifts from the Senate to the more conservative, Republican-controlled House of Representatives, one might assume that's a disadvantage, given labor's ties to the Democratic Party.

But this may be a simplistic way of looking at the challenge.

President Rolando often says that the Postal Service shouldn't be a partisan issue, and he's right in profound ways. Perhaps more than any other union or craft, we have a message that stands to resonate with Republicans and conservatives.

How so? Think of concepts like patriotism, tradition and the Constitution, economic efficiency, homeland security, volunteerism and charity, small business, military service and privacy. Each applies to the Postal Service and to our jobs.

As we seek to influence the views—and votes—of the House GOP majority over the next few weeks, in what must be a union-wide effort given the stakes, these buzz words offer ways to formulate a communications strategy and to start a conversation. Which ones are best suited for a specific case depends, of course, on the interests, perspective and districts of the congressional representative involved, or on the type of potential ally—business group, veterans, seniors—we hope to enlist.

**President Rolando and our legislative and political staffers** are explaining the specifics of the campaign; what I aim to do here is briefly outline some key components of a message for our intended audience:

- The Postal Service doesn't use a dime of taxpayer money and hasn't for 30 years. It funds itself by the stamps, other products and services it sells.
- It's indispensable to the nation's small businesses, which create two-thirds of all new jobs and which need to send and receive financial documents on weekends. Without Saturday delivery, their costs—and prices—would rise as they turn to expensive private carriers.
- The USPS is the centerpiece of a \$1.3 trillion national mailing industry employing 7.5 million Americans in the private sector. (We can provide job figures for your state.)
- It offers Americans the most efficient and affordable delivery service in the industrial world, several recent international surveys have found.
- Mail service is enshrined in the Constitution

as a federal duty, and is older than the country itself. For more than 200 years, it has bound this vast country together and unified individual communities.

- Rural communities and the elderly particularly rely on universal, six-day service, as does anyone needing medicines on weekends.
- Reflecting the caring volunteer spirit that defines America, every year on the second Saturday in May, letter carriers conduct the country's largest single-day food drive, with 1.2 billion pounds collected since it began 20 years ago.
- The universal network allows letter carriers, who have the privilege of being in every neighborhood six days a week, to regularly save residents who have fallen ill or injured themselves, to put out fires, to stop crimes and to find missing children.
- When President Bush needed ways to protect Americans after Sept. 11, he turned to the Postal Service and letter carriers. Under the Cities' Readiness Initiative, since expanded by President Obama (a sign of the bipartisan nature of the USPS), letter carriers voluntarily train to deliver medicines to residents in case of a biological terror attack. Already, Louisville, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Seattle, Philadelphia, Boston and San Diego County are involved.
- One-quarter of letter carriers are military veterans for whom these types of activities simply continue their service to the nation.
- Degrading service and dismantling the network as called for in the Issa bill—including five-day and curbside delivery—would not only inconvenience millions of Americans and small businesses and drive people away from using the mail, it also would compromise their safety and privacy.

**Which points would be most effective in a given case depends not only on your audience but partly on your own background and situation.** If, for example, you're a veteran or your area is part of the Cities' Readiness Initiative, you can make a powerful case about the network's value in enhancing public safety.

Whatever the specifics, there's plenty here to work with to appeal to any lawmaker or group interested in the economy and jobs, neighborhood and homeland security, the Constitution and tradition, charity and volunteer work, rural communities or the elderly.

We have the case—let's make it!



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