

Letter from the Editor

I was in my local post office in Maryland shortly after noon on a Saturday in mid-April. It was just three days before taxes were due, and the place was full. Perhaps because I had on a blue T-shirt that read “Save America’s Postal Service” on the front and “Save Saturday Delivery” on the back, the woman ahead of me in line volunteered how much she liked the employees at this post office, and indeed how much she liked the Postal Service itself.

Nothing unusual there, but then she surprised me.

When I said the postmaster general needed to come up with a business plan, she readily agreed. When I started to mention what Congress should do, she finished the thought for me, citing future benefits the Postal Service is unfairly forced to pay.

At that point, I asked her how she knew all this. She said she paid attention to the news media.

But the media haven’t always told the full story, I responded. Well, she said, they’ve told her enough that she knows what’s going on.

Why do I relate this anecdote? Because it reflects on a practical level the importance of what so many of you—from our president to our NBAs, our state association presidents to branch leaders to rank-and-file carriers—have been doing in recent months, and continue to do, to spread the word.

In this space, I’ve frequently noted that many of you are writing letters to the editor or commentary pieces, getting on radio shows or being interviewed for TV news reports, alerting us of unfair news stories or editorials that we need to respond to, or telling us of magazine covers or ads that disparage the USPS.

Today, I’d like to cite just a few examples of why this matters, by looking at the impact NALC folks can have—often in ways one wouldn’t anticipate.

Recently, a TV station in upstate New York delivered an outstanding two-part report that shattered some of the prevailing myths about the Postal Service’s financial situation and highlighted the onerous pre-funding burden. The station, in Watertown, is an affiliate of both CBS and Fox.

I called the news director to congratulate him on some excellent journalism—and to find out what had sparked this. I eventually got the full story, when the reporter on the

story told me that his first exposure to the whole pre-funding issue was our Day of Action in the fall, when we held rallies in congressional districts around the country.

As he put it, “We all sat around in the newsroom after, scratching our heads, and said, ‘Can this really be true?’ So we started to look into it.”

Let’s deconstruct that. A letter carrier at that rally handed out a flier to the station’s reporter, who brought it back to the newsroom, where a subsequent discussion kicked off weeks of research and interviews that led to a report that got the truth across to tens of thousands of viewers in the area, as well as to local business leaders and members of Congress.

Another example: Letter carriers at Nalcrest, NALC’s retirement community in Florida, spoke with a visiting *Wall Street Journal* reporter about their ongoing interest in their craft and in the Postal Service—and they exhibited a level of commitment and insight that prompted her to write a colorful story that made it onto the front page of the *Journal*, which has the country’s largest newspaper circulation and is widely read by legislators and business leaders.

One more: Louisville recently became the newest “pilot” city in the Cities’ Readiness Initiative, with an impressive 323 letter carriers—60 percent of the branch membership—volunteering to deliver medicines to residents in the event of a biological attack.

That level of involvement helped spawn some excellent news coverage. It then led to an audio statement by President Rolando about the homeland security contribution of letter carriers that ran on 800 stations around the country and was heard by 4 million listeners. And it lent power to the congressional testimony delivered to a House homeland security panel on April 17 by NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr.—in which legislators, reporters and the public alike heard him talk about letter carriers doing something selfless and patriotic.

Bottom line: In many ways, big and small, intended and unintended, your actions in a variety of areas are positively influencing the debate about the future of the Postal Service, and of our jobs.



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