

Future of Postal Service rides on this election



How many times have you heard a politician say: "This is the most important election in our lifetimes"? You roll your eyes and let it go in one ear and out the other. But for letter carriers, that cliché is absolutely true this year.

The fate of the Postal Service is on the line. The 113th Congress—if not the lame-duck 112th Congress—will be forced to pass postal reform legislation because the USPS has exhausted its borrowing authority and the combined effects of the retiree health pre-funding burden and the Internet will cause a cash crisis in the months ahead.

So who wins and who loses the White House, and who wins and who loses in the House and Senate, will do more to determine your job security, your standard of living and the quality of your health benefits and pensions than any other factor before us. If you doubt that, compare the postal reform bills before the current Congress.

H.R. 1351, the Lynch bill that has majority support in Congress (thanks to us) but cannot get a vote because the GOP leadership has blocked it, would resolve the USPS financial crisis by letting the Postal Service use its CSRS pension surplus to cover the retiree health pre-funding burden.

Meanwhile, H.R. 2309, the Issa bill, would effectively dismantle the Postal Service to satisfy the pre-funding burden—ending Saturday and door-to-door delivery at a cost of tens of thousands of city carrier jobs.

If you still doubt me, read the Republican platform's Postal Service "plank" adopted in Tampa in August under the direction of Mitt Romney. It falsely claims that postal employee pensions are "seriously underfunded" in order to justify the partial privatization of USPS. Of course, the exact opposite is true—our pensions are massively overfunded and we have pre-funded our retiree health benefits to a greater extent than any other company in America.

But that did not stop Kevin Hassett, one of Romney's top economic advisors, from vowing to privatize USPS, saying, "If the Tea Party activists want to fix the country, they should start by privatizing the Postal Service." Gov. Romney would relish the chance to employ on us the union-busting, job-cut-

ting skills he perfected at Bain Capital. Indeed, Hassett hinted at the Bain approach when he was asked about the financial losses at the Postal Service: "We[']ll sell it to a private contractor, avoid those losses while cashing a nice big check."

This election can also make a huge difference in the Senate, where it is essential that we improve the fatally flawed bipartisan bill adopted in April by electing truly pro-labor candidates.

S.1789, which was co-authored by Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA), fails to adequately reform the pre-funding burden and facilitates the elimination of 100,000 jobs by permitting the ending of Saturday delivery in two years and embracing the PMG's downsizing plans. Brown opposed all of our amendments. He is a senator who pretends to be a GOP moderate but who voted against the Affordable Care Act, the Wall Street reform bill and the Obama stimulus legislation. He is no friend of letter carriers and no friend of workers.

Imagine how much better the bill would have been with a true labor advocate like Elizabeth Warren in Brown's seat.

The national economy—and the Postal Service—will never truly recover until we begin rebuilding the middle class and the labor movement in America. For that we need pro-union champions like Warren, and we need to re-elect great labor friends like Sherrod Brown in Ohio and Jon Tester in Montana.

I urge all NALC members to vote on Nov. 6 for the candidates NALC endorsed in last month's issue of *The Postal Record*. But that is just the bare minimum.

Talk to your children, your family and friends, your fellow workers and retirees, about how important this election is to our jobs, our benefits and our future. Go to the NALC website and sign up to be a Carrier Corps member and find out how to join union members where you live who are working with the AFL-CIO's Labor 2012 program to turn out the pro-working family vote in 2012.

There is no better investment you can make in your future—and no better way to express commitment to our country and our democracy. Let's all do our part to build a better country and a stronger Postal Service. Let's vote. Let's win. ☒