

NALC's March Madness... Survive and advance



**Fredric V.
Rolando**

the country and Congress to renew the mandate to provide six-day service in the continuing budget resolution (CR) that was passed in March to avert a government shut-down. We succeeded on both fronts. But the battle to save America's Postal Service is not over—there are more tests to come.

Our goal: Survive and advance. Survive the attacks and advance an agenda that will strengthen the Postal Service, not dismantle it.

The PMG's novel legal theory that a CR does not really require the Postal Service to provide Saturday service is a desperate attempt to force Congress to accept his fatally flawed "shrink to survive" business strategy. Mr. Donahoe hoped to bamboozle Congress into eliminating the six-day delivery mandate in the CR passed in March to fund the government for the rest of the fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30.

Fortunately, the NALC and its allies fought back. We reminded Congress and the media that the mandate goes back 30 years and has been extended with CRs on multiple occasions. We pointed out the PMG's multiple prior statements that only Congress could end Saturday service. And we urged our friends on Capitol Hill to issue statements on the PMG's crude attempt to evade the law, and to express their support for six-day service by endorsing H. Res. 30 in the House of Representatives. Those friends, including the Senate majority leader, responded in numbers—and the list of co-sponsors of H. Res. 30 expanded to more than 150 members, including 20 Republicans.

One of those friends, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) challenged the legal basis of the PMG's assertion that he could end Saturday delivery unilaterally. Rep. Connolly asked the Governmental

If you love college basketball, there is nothing better than March Madness—the anticipation of Selection Sunday, the fun of filling out workplace brackets, the early round upsets that turn into bracket-busters, the late-game heroics. The mantra of winning coaches is "survive and advance." As I've traveled around the country in recent weeks to rally our members and coalition allies to fight for a stronger Postal Service, that mantra feels fitting for the challenges facing NALC.

Over the past few weeks, we've had to take on Postmaster General Donahoe's bogus assertion that he could end Saturday delivery even without congressional approval, and to mobilize

Accountability Office (GAO) to review the law and the Postal Service's legal claims. The GAO responded on March 21 with a report that totally rejected the Postal Service's legal theory (see story on page 4). The finding backed the NALC's view that only Congress can make the decision on Saturday delivery.

As if to underline that point, both the House and the Senate then approved a new CR in late March to fund the government for the rest of the fiscal year—a measure that includes the mandate to deliver mail six days a week. But that result did not come easy.

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK), the ranking member of our oversight committee in the Senate, pushed an amendment to remove the six-day mandate from the CR. We used our e-Activist Network to generate thousands of calls to the Senate to help defeat that effort.

We also launched a month-long media campaign to remind Congress that Saturday delivery is not sinking the Postal Service, it is the retiree health pre-funding policy that was enacted in 2006. With a sophisticated combination of national television ads on key cable news outlets, targeted print ads in Capitol Hill newspapers, digital ads on key websites, outreach to reporters and a social media strategy coordinated through the Delivering for America coalition, we hammered home our message that ending Saturday delivery would lead to the destruction of the Postal Service. In short, we survived and advanced.

But the job is not done. We face new struggles to protect the future viability of the Postal Service in both the 2014 budget-appropriations process and in the debate over comprehensive postal reform. Moreover, the PMG has still not announced the withdrawal of his plan to end Saturday delivery in August, though he did tell letter carriers in San Francisco that he would follow the law if President Obama signed the CR. Now that the president has done so, we will remain vigilant to ensure that Donahoe obeys the law. And we will fight to secure a permanent victory in Senate postal reform legislation that is to be unveiled this month.

It was with an eye on this larger battle that NALC organized a national day of action on March 24 through our Delivering for America coalition. At 112 strategic locations across the country, tens of thousands of letter carriers were joined by their families and friends, small-business owners, veterans, senior citizen activists and others to tell Congress that fixing the Postal Service requires a plan for growth—not a plan to dismantle it, starting with the elimination of Saturday delivery. Our rallies received massive media coverage and helped set the stage for a decisive debate over the future of the Postal Service.

We've *survived* March Madness. Now it's time to *advance* to victory.