

Building momentum for our case



**Philip
Dine**

During a heated election decades ago, a plain-spoken politician from the nation's Heartland uttered a line that resonated then—and that is highly relevant in the fight letter carriers currently are engaged in.

The man was President Harry S Truman (the “S” followed by no period is correct; the S stands for nothing), the year was 1948, and the man from Independence, Missouri was the underdog in his bid for re-election against the urbane Thomas Dewey.

Angered by a barrage of misleading attacks, Truman said, “If our foes will stop telling lies about us, we will stop telling the truth about them.”

In the Show-Me state of Missouri, where I worked for years as a journal-

ist, folks still chuckle over a zinger that flummoxed Dewey, who managed to lose a race most observers thought he'd win.

Letter carriers, of course, have to get the truth out, because our opponents have no intention of telling the real story—not about the financial situation at the Postal Service, not about how best to fix the problems, and certainly not about their real intentions for the agency.

And, unlike Truman, we do not have an equal platform in this battle, because we face folks—Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe and House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, for example—whose advancing of destructive positions is facilitated by the prominence and power inherent in their positions.

To counter this, we need to draw upon the ranks, passion and facts we have on our side, as well as the teamwork that long has characterized our union (and our craft)—from our president to retired members and everyone in between.

Fortunately, we—you—are doing just that, in an effort constantly growing in volume, sophistication and effectiveness. Recent examples abound.

The USPS district manager for northern Indiana likely was patting herself on the back after her commentary piece defending her employer's efforts to degrade service ran in Indiana's *Post-Tribune* in late June and just two days later was published by the *Northwest Indiana Times*. But the ink had barely dried on her recitation of L'Enfant Plaza's alternate reality when President Rolando's letter in the *Post-Tribune* debunked her arguments by giving readers the facts. (To drive home the value of six-day delivery, President Rolando was able to refer to the newspaper's recent story about how Crown Point, IN Branch 1624 member Sharon Patterson had saved a 90-year-old patron after discovering her on her garage floor.) And the same day as the *Post-Tribune* letter, re-

tired letter carrier Carl Bernacky's letter to the editor ran in the *Northwest Indiana Times*—making for a powerful double rebuttal in the Hoosier state.

Bernacky, a member of Hammond, IN Branch 580, has had letters and commentaries in the *Fort Wayne (IN) Gazette* and other Indiana papers, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Federal Times*. He recently was on a local radio station discussing the Postal Service and veterans. His efforts have prompted a prominent Indiana newspaper to stop editorializing for dropping Saturday delivery. Indeed, “Carl the retired mailman” is known to several Indiana newspapers for his propensity to walk submissions in to the paper and to follow up with thank-you notes to editors for their time. (Not surprising that a letter carrier would realize the value of personal contact.)

Around the same time those Indiana letters ran, 300 miles to the southwest in the Southern Illinois city of Belleville (just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis), teamwork led to great publicity for letter carriers in the battle for public support.

A Belleville resident, Frank Pawloski, had called a legislative staffer at NALC Headquarters, seeking ways to do something for letter carriers. He was referred to Belleville Branch 155, where Secretary Steve Beck encouraged him, instead of buying coffee and donuts for carriers as he'd planned, to help Oklahoma tornado victims. Pawloski did that, and then—deeply impressed by letter carriers' concern for others—wrote terrific letters to the *Belleville News-Democrat* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that praised letter carriers for their dedication and succinctly explained the pre-funding burden.

Soon after, a *News-Democrat* columnist recounted the tale in a way that depicted the selflessness of the postal workers involved.

These types of actions catch the attention of the public—and their representatives—and produce impacts far greater than the sum of the parts. And they complement the more typical things we're engaged in, such as Region 10 National Business Agent Dan Toth's persuasive appearance on “America's Work Force Radio” and President Rolando's prominent quotes in a *Washington Post* story on Issa's early draft of a possible postal reform bill.

Actions big or small are building momentum and making our case. Let's do even more!

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