

Another year of struggles?



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As this article is being written, the “lame-duck” Congress is currently in the process of “fixing” all of the ills of our country. *Right!* From the early December reporting and representatives’ posturing back and forth, it is evident to this Kentuckian that this group could not fix a one-horse race. Unfortunately, it is not a race (unless you consider a race to the bottom as being the same). The goals of this Congress should be to get the *#@* out of the way and just do what they have done the past two years: *nothing*. Perhaps the incoming electorate will understand that the American people have just voted to:

- Raise the taxes on the top 2 percent of wage earners in the country.
- Adjust the spending habits of Congress, but not at the expense of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.
- Work together to at least start repairing the damage to our country, and especially the middle class, during the past 12 years.

As postal employees, we join the other federal workers in our demands that we stop being used as if we had created the problems of this country’s financial mess. For the past two-plus years, federal employees have seen their wages frozen and their benefits under attack. While we as city letter carriers are not included in these salary freezes, we are affected because all postal contracts to date have been, in effect, frozen due to the ultimate consideration of us as, somewhat, federal workers.

For those of our members who have Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) coverage, your future retirement is in the crosshairs of those who wish to eliminate federal workers by abolishing a decent salary and either instituting draconian cuts or eliminating their health and retirement benefits.

As the new year starts, it is time for all of our members, both active and retired, to recognize that their efforts are needed to protect the hard-earned benefits that some of us enjoy and all of us plan for. You can no longer sit on the sideline and “wait or believe” that someone else will do it. That thought process is what has our benefits under attack now—because a few cannot represent the wishes of the masses unless those masses show their support through action.

Get off the couch, chair, bench or floor that you have been sitting on. Get to your local union meeting. Attend the training and events of your branch, state association or regional assembly. Learn what is required of you to have your job and your livelihood protected. It is your turn to protect what has, to date, been mostly handed to us through the efforts of past workers and members. What we have now, they did not have when they started. You will not have it before you leave if you do not become active and involved. It is your responsibility to protect and defend what you have been given.

A quote that is attributed to President Abraham Lincoln says: “You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.” I would add that to evade it today makes the responsibility more pressing and perhaps that much more difficult in the future.

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New retirement secretary

As reported in the December *Postal Record*, Vickie Bowman, our former office secretary, has retired. With her went much corporate knowledge that she had acquired during her 36-plus years in the office. Please bear with us as we learn to operate without that hands-on experience. If we do not respond to your concerns as quickly as before, it is because we have to find the information that Vickie knew by heart. My most heartfelt thanks go to Special Assistant to the President Ernestine Douglas for her extra efforts during this learning curve. Rest assured that your concerns will be handled with the same dedication and effort as always. But, it is like learning to case a new route, in that sometimes the only answer is more time.

I close with fraternal wishes that this year will be the year we hoped for last year. And that we will only have smiles.