Going the extra mile

We know about letter carriers and ‘the last mile,’ but today I’d like to discuss ‘the extra mile’ many of you are traveling to get our message out and thereby preserve the U.S. Postal Service. Increasingly, letter carriers and branch officers, state presidents and NBAs/RAAs are finding creative ways to bolster our communications efforts.

Let’s be clear: Writing letters to the editor and penning commentary pieces, or appearing on radio and TV news shows, remain the meat and potatoes of our campaign to win over the public and their elected representatives. But when an additional spark is called for, the required initiative seems to be in full supply.

The reporter arrived at 8:40 a.m., just as GOP Rep. Adrian Smith was addressing delegates, who then stood up by military branch (including Navy veteran Nickerson) and told Smith why the Postal Service remains important today. This display of the military presence among letter carriers was the terrific idea of Nebraska State President Kevin Hevelone, and it made for compelling television.

Once the convention was over, Nickerson made sure the reporter was driven back to broadcast his report. Aside from the thousands of Nebraskans who watched an informative news story, do you think this ‘extra mile’ built up some goodwill for the future with this particular reporter? (I can tell you from experience that the answer is likely a resounding ‘Yes’—with reporters, much like letter carriers, constantly on the move, under time constraints, and facing pressure from supervisors.)

Going the extra mile also can spark the type of ‘ripple effect’ I’ve mentioned in this space. A good example involves a similar branch president-state president pairing, this one in New Haven, CT, where the presence of Branch 19 President Vincent Mase and State President Chuck Page starting at 6 a.m. for the local March 24 rally helped generate early news coverage, which boosted rally attendance, leading to impressive post-rally coverage. The momentum thereby created has in recent weeks produced a flurry of constructive letters and commentary pieces by postal patrons in the influential New Haven Register.

Such efforts complemented the NALC’s cascading work in terms of media outreach. Just two examples: Never satisfied with preaching to the converted, President Rolando pulled a twofer in hostile territory—getting our message across on the editorial pages of the Washington Post and the Washington Examiner—while also being quoted widely in wire service reports. And in New York, Walter Barton, president of Long Island Merged Branch 6000, talked effectively about pre-funding and Saturday delivery in a news report on WABC-TV.

Nobody said that saving the USPS from its own poor management or from some hostile or indifferent lawmakers would be easy. But if you keep getting the truth out—and going the extra mile—we will do just that.