

The battle to influence the public



**Philip
Dine**

A sports team might win occasional games by relying on a couple of talented players, but consistent success requires a deep roster. Depth allows others to step in when need be without the team missing a beat, provides a broader array of skills, and boosts the number of difference-makers—all of which help a team capitalize on opportunities while keeping adversaries off balance.

The same goes for any institution engaged in a challenging venture, be it a fledgling business, an environmental group, a metropolitan police force—or the National Association of Letter Carriers.

So how do we stack up? You judge, based on some recent episodes.

Midway through the last full week of July, Rep. Darrell Issa's newest postal destruction bill was marked-up by his House committee. The NALC had to respond quickly and forcefully, particularly with lots of reporters seeking our views. Since the proposal to end door-to-door delivery affected folks on the local level, the typical national media interest was accompanied by numerous inquiries from regional radio, TV and print outlets—to which our national business agents are well suited to respond.

But that week, the NALC Executive Council—including our NBAs and resident national officers—was holding scheduled meetings at Headquarters.

This could have been a perfect storm: Major news development, looming media deadlines, and top union officers otherwise occupied. But was it? No. Why? Because our regional administrative assistants filled the breach, buttressed by a state president here, a branch officer there, or a rank-and-file letter carrier.

Whether Region 5 RAA Troy Fredenberg on the Minneapolis CBS radio affiliate or Region 6 RAA Troy Clark on a public radio station in Bloomington, IN, Region 3 RAA Tony Hutson on the ABC-TV affiliate in Springfield, IL, or California State Association President John Beaumont on an ABC radio affiliate in San Francisco, from New York to California and particularly in the Midwest—they produced a mosaic of information that explained the flaws of the legislation, the importance of maintaining services, and the need for lawmakers to address the pre-funding burden they created.

How effective were they? Again, you decide.

As just one example, after Region 11 RAA Mark Camilli was interviewed on WCSS radio in upstate New York, I received the following e-mail from the show's host:

"Mark was great—The response to the show was overwhelming. Since Mark was on this morning, a dialogue has opened

about the plight of the letter carriers. People are going to call our local Congressman—Paul Tonko."

(The contributions of the many who pitched in are cited on our website, nalc.org, under Postal Facts, a great place to follow ongoing news coverage.)

In a fortuitous development, a day before the mark-up, a strong op-ed piece by President Rolando in *Investor's Business Daily* (read by economic movers and shakers) got important information into the public sphere. How persuasive was the piece? Again, you judge. After reviewing it, the publication's editors penned the following headline: "Defending USPS with facts, context."

And as soon as the Executive Council schedule permitted, later in the week, President Rolando went on the national Ed Schultz Radio Show to explain how Issa's bill would affect Americans.

So, President Rolando sandwiched Wednesday's mark-up with valuable perspective on Tuesday (in print) and Thursday (on radio), while our RAAs covered multiple angles on the very day of the committee's vote.

Ten days later in early August, an unexpected opportunity arose to get a commentary piece in *The Record*, the second-largest—and best—newspaper in New Jersey. But the challenge was daunting: The op-ed editor needed the piece to be localized (i.e., contain information pertinent to Bergen County and North Jersey) and turned in ASAP.

Region 15 NBA Larry Cirelli, who maintains a perfect batting average in helping to get our message out, was at his New York state convention—but nonetheless got the ball rolling by bringing in RAA Bruce Didriksen, who hails from that part of New Jersey. Didriksen, in turn, got the two Bergen County branch presidents—Pete Maglio and Jeff Fox—involved.

The result: Within hours, President Rolando's piece ran online and, the next day, in print atop the op-ed page, headlined "Congress to blame for Postal Service's fiscal woes"—for New Jerseyans and their business/political leaders to absorb.

And *The Record's* op-ed page editor, impressed by NALC's capabilities, sent a note thanking us (read, the folks mentioned above) for so quickly revising and localizing the piece.

A team this deep, this prepared to seize opportunities, with this type of leadership, will be tough to beat in the battle to influence the public and its representatives.

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