

Influencing the national discussion



**Philip
Dine**

I've been involved with communications, journalism and labor in various ways for more than 30 years, as a student, researcher, journalist, academic, author and commentator. But I've rarely witnessed anything like the situation involving the U.S. Postal Service.

I mean that in two ways.

Unfortunately, the gap between the conventional wisdom and the reality about the USPS is astonishing—especially since the Postal Service affects every resident of this country, every business, every institution. Older than the country itself, it's our only universal delivery network. Letter carriers are in every neighborhood six days a week,

are deeply involved with the communities they serve, and are beloved by millions of Americans. In short, the Postal Service and letter carriers are part of our nation's social, economic, civic and political fabric. Yet, prevailing myths about the USPS, in particular its finances and the best way forward, have held sway.

Fortunately, that gap is rapidly narrowing as the truth gets out, which leads to the second remarkable aspect of this saga. You, America's letter carriers, just one one-thousandth of the population of this vast country, are not only changing but elevating the debate, imbuing it with facts and context.

It's challenging under any circumstances to influence a national discussion; all the more when it involves battling a conventional wisdom that appears intuitively reasonable, fighting misinformation from the head of the agency in question, dealing with a highly dysfunctional Congress, and educating journalists invested for convenience's sake in simply repeating press release headlines rather than challenging the spin.

And yet, with your drive and grit, backed up by your knowledge and helped by your credibility, influencing the national discussion is exactly what you're doing.

The president of this union had letters—distinct in content—published by two of the nation's three largest papers (the *Wall Street Journal*, No. 1, and *USA Today*, No. 3) on the same day. That's something I'd never witnessed until President Rolando accomplished it on May 30, and it results from the respect in which letter carriers, the NALC and this president are held. The next work day, Federal News Radio featured an interview with him. President Rolando also was quoted extensively by Bloomberg and the Associated Press in wire stories, and in the *New York Times*, *Federal Times*, *Government*

Executive and the *Hill*, and on the Huffington Post. His rebuttal to a *National Review Online* article sparked a firestorm of 190 comments, many favorable, from the conservative website's readers. And he had letters in the *Washington Post* and the *Augusta (GA) Chronicle*, plus a commentary piece on the national Watchdog.org website.

Impressive as all that is, it's only the headline for the story of what the NALC's men and women have done in recent weeks to inform the public. Region 6 NBA Pat Carroll did an hour-long Workers' Voice podcast interview. Efforts by Long Island City, NY Branch 357 President Dave Van Aken helped get letter carrier Joey Urbina's heroic actions extensive media coverage in New York City as well as city council recognition. Prior to writing about Urbina, New York's *Daily News* covered the heroics of South Jersey Branch 908 letter carrier Joy Melita. Idaho State Association President John Paige had letters in the *Idaho Statesman* and *Twin Falls Times News*; Region 2 NBA Paul Price was quoted by the *Idaho State Journal*.

Region 9 NBA Judy Willoughby's letter ran in the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, as did Lansing, MI Branch 122 President Matt Tanner's in the *Argus-Press*. Ron Berry, retired member of Marshfield, WI Branch 978, wrote a column for the *Marshfield News Herald*. Debra Dixon of Olympia, WA Branch 351 had a letter in the *Olympian*, as did retired Region 5 NBA Joe Miller in the *Gazette* of Cedar Rapids, IA. Logan, UT Branch 970 President Aaron Porter spoke to radio station KVNU. Carmel, IN Branch 888 letter carrier Ronnie Roush had letters in the *Indianapolis Star* and *Herald Bulletin*.

Centennial Colorado Branch 5996 letter carrier Danny Chavis' award for heroic actions on his route prompted coverage by Denver's NBC and ABC TV affiliates. Ron Brada, retired member of Branch 512 in Grundy Center, IA, has had four recent guest columns in a local newspaper. Fremont, NE Branch 89 letter carrier Brian Greunke's letter ran in the *Pilot Tribune & Enterprise*. NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber made the economic case for keeping Saturday mail delivery in a *Businessweek* Q&A.

We have millions of more Americans to inform and hundreds of additional politicians to educate—so keep it up!

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