The holidays are upon us, and you can expect the highest volume of packages of the year to be delivered by the Postal Service. This year, it is expected that the volume increase could be two to three times higher than last year. The reason is that the Postal Service actually lowered its rates to draw in more small shippers to USPS. The rates went into effect on Sept. 7. We hope that the new customers will be here to stay.

If you have a small shipper on your route, please discuss the recent rates changes and turn that lead in under the Customer Connect program. If saving money is something the businesses are interested in, now is the perfect time for them to try us out. Our service is second to none and we deliver more often than any other company.

Warehousing of merchant products

More good news: The USPS later this year will be testing “warehousing.” This concept will involve the Postal Service picking up or receiving products from a merchant, warehousing the products in a postal facility, and then, upon receipt of an order from the merchant, labeling the product for shipment and placing the parcel into the mail stream for delivery. We look forward to this starting and are encouraged to see this happening. This is something that has great potential for more growth in the future.

Customer Connect numbers

If you are currently not participating in the Customer Connect program, please consider doing so. This benefits all of us and protects our jobs and benefits, as well as the USPS. (For more statistics of the program, please see charts below.)

We are closing in on reaching the $2 billion mark. Wouldn’t it be great if we could achieve that by the holidays? We are currently at $1,919,182,536. Let’s work to achieve this goal and build our future.

Grocery deliveries

The U.S. Postal Service began a 60-day trial of a grocery delivery service in the San Francisco area in partnership with Amazon. USPS now is looking to begin to expand the market test of morning grocery deliveries. USPS wants to expand that trial into a two-year market test that would be available in other metropolitan areas (and presumably to other retailers).

Organizing report

The latest organizing report revealed that the percentage of unionized city carrier assistants (CCAs) continues to rise. The current percentage is 81.3 percent. We still have a way to go in organizing the CCAs. I would like to ask the branches to assign someone to work on organizing within your branch. Our overall percentage of all members is 91 percent. Keep up the good work.

Health Benefit Plan Open Season

As I close my article this month, please remember that it is Open Season for the Health Benefit Plan. Please consider checking out the NALC Health Benefit Plan section in this month’s Postal Record. There you will find the highlights of the Plan.

NALC President Rolando, Director of the Health Benefit Plan Brian Hellman, and Trustees Larry Brown, Randall Keller and Mike Gill have done an outstanding job keeping the premiums down while increasing benefits. Whether you are an active or retired letter carrier, the NALC Health Benefit Plan has you and your family covered. This year’s Open Season is Monday, Nov. 10, through Monday, Dec. 8.

I hope you and family have a great Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.