

Election Day results reveal the fruits of NALC's labor

By the time you receive this issue of *The Postal Record*, it should be all over but the counting as far as this year's midterm elections go (depending on the outcome of possible run-offs), and letter carriers ought to have some sense of what lies in store for us legislatively when the new Congress begins its business in January.

"So many of us have worked very hard these last few months to get

House and Senate representatives elected who understand the value of letter carriers and the Postal Service," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Now we will find out how those efforts turned out."

As this magazine was being prepared, Election Day still was a couple of weeks off, and active and retired letter carriers were trying to get the word—and the vote—out. The entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate were up for election on Nov. 4.

"In every election, letter carriers have plenty at risk," Rolando said. "Each election cycle brings with it worries about the kinds of legislation our elected representatives on Capitol Hill might introduce that could affect the customers we serve six—and sometimes seven—days a week.

"Of course, our jobs, our pay and our benefits always are at risk, no matter who's in charge on the Hill or in the White House," the president said. "NALC members should well understand by now that it's for all of these reasons that we as a union get so deeply engaged in political campaigns and in legislative battles. We know that

everything we've worked for over the years could easily be wiped away with the stroke of a pen, because we've seen it happen."

Playing by the rules

Without a headlining presidential election to draw voters to the polls, turnout for midterm elections

historically tends to be disappointingly low. Nevertheless, letter carrier activists—released NALC members as well as active and retired volunteers at the grassroots level—worked side by side with our brothers and sisters in other AFL-CIO-member unions to get out the vote on Nov. 4.

"The last thing we wanted to see was a repeat of 2010," Rolando said, "when anti-worker legislators took control of the House and prevented the Senate from accomplishing much of anything."

Even so, we as letter carriers aren't defenseless against these assaults—on us or on other public employees, the president said.

"For example, thanks to the e-Activist Network, thousands of active and retired letter carriers have stayed informed about what's been going on in Congress," Rolando said.

Open only to NALC members, the e-mail-based e-Activist Network allows messages from the union's headquarters in Washington to reach your inbox in an instant, giving you the latest news from Capitol Hill and letting you know how you can take immediate action, if necessary.

"We have built an army of activists over the years, yet only about one-fifth of our members are e-Activists," the president noted. "Just imagine how strongly we could make our feelings known if every active and retired letter carrier was an e-Activist." A link that members can use to sign up for the e-Activist Network (as well as update their existing information, if needed) is available on the home page at nalc.org.

Money matters

Another tool of the modern political process that NALC uses to full advantage is the power of campaign contributions.



Above: Sharon Dale of Anchorage, AK Branch 4319 discusses postal reform with Sen. Mark Begich during his re-election campaign.

Below: NALC members work on get-out-the-vote efforts in Colorado.



Change is coming to postal committees

Whether Democrats would retain majority rule in the Senate following Election Day on Nov. 4 was very much up in the air as this magazine was being prepared. Republicans needed to win six seats to wrest control, but at this writing, with about two weeks to go until Election Day, there remained uncertainty about the future legislative landscape.

For example: The Senate committee with Postal Service oversight—Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee—is currently led by Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE). The committee's ranking Republican, Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK), is retiring at the end of the year; his replacement will likely be Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI).

So if the GOP takes over Senate control, Carper's and Johnson's roles would be flipped. NALC President Fredric Rolando's column on page 1 of this magazine explains why a Johnson-led committee would probably be a bad thing for letter carriers.

Meanwhile, continued Republican control of the House of Representatives over the next two years seemed all but certain as this *Postal Record* went to press. Certainly, plenty of Republicans already are on the record as understanding the

value of the Postal Service, and they fully support the work that letter carriers do six (and often seven) days a week.

Not so with Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), the outgoing chairman of the House committee with Postal Service oversight. During Issa's term as leader of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, he has repeatedly launched attacks on six-day delivery, door-to-door delivery and the collective-bargaining rights of letter carriers. Fortunately, House rules call for Issa to step down as committee chairman at year's end.

Government Executive identified four representatives as Issa's possible replacements, noting that Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Jim Jordan (R-OH), John Mica (R-FL) and Michael Turner (R-OH) have reportedly expressed interest in the job.

Mica has seniority, having served in the House since 1993. He and Jordan lead subcommittees, as does Chaffetz, who has made no secret of his desire to take the reins of the oversight panel come January.

It's worth noting that none of these leadership front-runners has co-sponsored any of the NALC-supported postal bills or resolutions introduced during this session of Congress.

Congressional committee chairmanships were set to be decided by party leaders sometime in mid-November. *PR*

Federal law forbids the use of union members' dues money for political purposes, so ever since the mid-1970s, NALC has made use of a political action fund known as COLCPE—the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education—to solicit voluntary contributions from active and retired members to advance our cause on Capitol Hill.

"The money that's collected for COLCPE goes to support candidates for public office who are on the record in support of letter carriers," the president said. "It's an important conduit that allows all members to get involved in the political process."

COLCPE (pronounced COLE-sepp) is non-partisan, a reflection of the NALC itself. "A quick glance at our voter guide for the 2014 midterms [posted on nalc.org] shows that there are plenty of candidates from both parties who support letter carriers and a strong, viable Postal Service," Rolando said. "This is how we approach candidates for public office: If they support us, we will support them, regardless of their political affiliation." COLCPE funds also are crucial to the success of local get-out-the-vote campaigns that are staffed by—and often led by—released letter carrier activists.

Thousands of NALC members give varying amounts of money to COLCPE

through payroll deduction or electronic funds transfer, but as with the e-Activist Network, participation in COLCPE is nowhere near universal.

"You insure your car, your home, your health," Rolando said, "so try to think of COLCPE as job insurance." For just a few dollars per pay period, he said, you can join the fight to protect your job and your benefits against the near-constant attacks against them.

To find out how to contribute to COLCPE, visit nalc.org.

Boots and bodies

Aside from all of these virtual ways NALC members can effect change during election season, letter carriers know firsthand that nothing beats the power of one-on-one communication. That's why the union once again supported this fall's AFL-CIO Labor 2014 and Workers' Voice initiatives.

Across the country, released letter carrier activists as well as dedicated volunteers knocked on doors, walked precincts, handed out flyers and phoned their brothers and sisters throughout the labor movement, all in an effort to make sure they voted on Nov. 4 and kept postal and labor issues in mind once they were inside the voting booth.

NALC Field Director Jeremy Goldberg describes the union's grassroots operations in more detail on page 27.

Beware the lame duck

Our work in Washington is by no means finished once the polls close on Nov. 4, Rolando warned. "The so-called lame-duck period between Election Day and the swearing-in of the next Congress can be one of opportunity for us—although history has shown how it can also be a perilous time for letter carriers."

For instance, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 was passed and signed into law during that year's lame-duck session, saddling the USPS with the unfair mandate to pre-fund the health benefits of future retirees decades in advance—a requirement made of no other government agency or private enterprise. Pre-funding is the real reason behind the Postal Service's red ink.

"The lame-duck is the last chance for some in Congress to legislate a legacy for themselves," Rolando said. "For bills under consideration, it's make-or-break time—either they'll get passed and signed into law, or they'll die when this session of Congress ends. So we have to stay sharp, looking out for fast-advancing legislation that

Stop delaying America's mail

Postal unions call for national day of action Nov. 14

The four postal unions are calling for a national day of action on Nov. 14 to send a message to Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe and the USPS Board of Governors: Stop delaying America's mail!

"The postmaster general is poised to make devastating cuts in service to the American people—cuts so severe that they will forever damage the U.S. Postal Service," the union presidents said in a statement.

Preparations for the day of action were being made as this issue was prepared. Look for details in the *NALC Bulletin* or on nalc.org.

could affect issues important to us, such as six-day delivery or door-to-door delivery, just to name two."

So as letter carriers gear up for the busy holiday season ahead—both at the office and at home—they need to keep an eye on what's happening in Washington as well. "We'll keep you posted in every way we can," the president said. "Watch for *NALC Bulletins* on your bulletin board and in your union hall. Make sure you're an e-Activist and that your contact information is up to date."

Other ways to stay informed, Rolando said, include making nalc.org your web browser's home page, as well as clicking on that page's links to connect to NALC's official Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Lemonade from lemons

"Now, the waiting game is on," Rolando said. "Over the next two months or so, as one session of Congress ends and another one begins, we'll see the fruits of our legislative and political activities. We'll find out whether our friends in Congress will stand up and defend our jobs and way of life when the time comes. We'll see if the men and women who said that they support a robust Postal Service will back up those words with actions.

"No group of workers has a greater stake in what happens during national elections than letter carriers do," Rolando said. "It's true that we all vote for different reasons—as is our privilege and right—but if enough NALC members chose to keep in mind their jobs and their economic well-being when they voted on Nov. 4, that could go a long way toward giving us a fighting chance in the months and years ahead."

"No matter what congressional composition we end up with come

January," the president said, "if the men and women of the NALC stand together, we'll be ready to play whatever hand we're dealt."

You can read more in the President's Message on page 1 about what lies ahead.

Letter carriers in the news media

President Rolando's op-ed in Southern California's *The Desert Sun* ran on Oct. 4. In it, he refuted claims about the Postal Service made earlier by a columnist for the paper, which serves Palm Springs and the surrounding area's growing desert communities.

The president was the only person quoted in an Oct. 1 story on The Motley Fool website about Amazon.com's partnership with USPS, in an article that thoroughly explored the Postal Service's financial situation.

Rolando had a strong letter published in the Sept. 3 *Orange County Register*, responding to an Aug. 28 editorial in the paper that blamed workers' compensation and workers' salaries for the Postal Service's red ink. Rolando gave the paper—and local Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA)—a basic lesson.

One activity on the agenda of the Minnesota State Association of Letter Carriers recent convention was an Oct. 6 rally to protest the planned closure of more than 80 mail processing centers nationwide, including one in Duluth. NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine was interviewed at the rally by KBJR-TV, while the Public News Service covered the convention and the rally, quoting **Scott Dulas**, the state association's vice president.

South Florida Branch 1071's **Matty Rose**, the president of Nalcrest's board of trustees, was quoted in *Senior Housing News*' Sept. 23 edition about how some Florida retirement communities

such as Nalcrest are attracting new residents. Rose, who is a retired NALC national business agent, also was interviewed for an Aug. 28 ABC News "Good Morning America" program about tests of drones for package delivery.

NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber was interviewed by *The Dallas Morning News* for an Aug. 30 story about the effect technology is having on a number of industries.

Bakersfield, CA Branch 782 letter carrier **Alex Dang** recently retired after 47 years of service. On Oct. 5, a columnist for *The Bakersfield Californian* wrote about how Dang's customers commemorated this milestone.

Mark Garcia, a member of Elkton, MD Branch 2069, was featured in *The Cecil Whig* on Oct. 1, in a story that also mentioned his service in the Army.

Greer, SC Branch 2553 letter carrier **Chris Brown** was a guest on the Sept. 17 episode of "The Ellen Show" to talk about his rescue of a choking baby on his route. Brown's story had received a good deal of press attention across the country as well, leading up to his appearance on national television.

Former Northeastern NY Branch 358 President **Robert Massaroni's** letter to the editor of Schenectady's *Daily Gazette* ran on Sunday, Sept. 7.

Central California Branch 231 letter carrier **Eric Ellis'** letter to the editor of *The Fresno Bee* ran on Sept. 5.

An Aug. 27 *Idaho State Journal* story about the impact of planned postal facilities closures on residents and businesses featured quotes from several union representatives, including Idaho State Association President **John Paige**.

Iowa Falls Times-Citizen continues to run regular columns about the Postal Service written by retired Waterloo, IA Branch 512 letter carrier **Ron Brada**. **PR**

Sombrotto Post Office dedicated

The Vincent R. Sombrotto Post Office in New York City was officially dedicated on Oct. 16, in a ceremony held at the Grand Central Station facility. Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), who sponsored the bill, led a group of speakers about Sombrotto's importance, not just for the Postal Service but for all working people.

"Having a post office named after you carries great meaning," NALC President Fredric Rolando told the gathered crowd of Sombrotto's family, NALC and USPS officials, and dozens of retired letter carriers. "It celebrates true patriots and lets every American know that you have contributed to the common good of our country. Vince is not the most famous person to have a post office named for him, but for letter carriers and other public employees, he is by far the most important figure in the history of the Post Office.

"Vince made the American dream possible for hundreds of thousands of American families," Rolando said. "Just as important, Vince knew the real meaning of the American dream—to work hard and earn a decent wage, provide health insurance and a home to your family, save a bit for retirement and hopefully send your children to college so that their lives will be better than yours. Vince knew that and he made it happen for letter carriers everywhere, here in New York and across the entire United States of America."

Vince's daughter Dr. Lisa Sombrotto spoke for family members, explaining that they knew the important work her father was doing as the president of the union, but that he always found time to be their dad.

New York Branch 36 President Charlie Heege, New York State Association President George Mangold, New York Postmaster Elvin Mercado, USPS Vice President of Area Operations for the Northeast Area Richard Uluski and New York State Assemblymember Dan Quart also spoke at the event.

Many NALC retirees attended the event, remembering Sombrotto as the rank-and-file union member who led them on the wildcat walkout that became the Great Postal Strike of 1970. Ruby Almeida remembered him fondly,



NALC President Fredric Rolando spoke at the dedication ceremony of the Vincent R. Sombrotto Post Office in Manhattan.



Many members of the Sombrotto family attended the event.

"I believed in Vincent," she said. "It was scary to walk out. But I followed him knowing that he would stand his ground and would always have our backs."

Once he became president of the national union, serving from 1978 to 2002, Sombrotto engineered pay raises in each national agreement, something rare in the U.S. labor movement during the Reagan and subsequent White House administrations. Almeida made note of how Sombrotto improved the pay, benefits and working conditions for all letter carriers, something she sees in her monthly pension check.

"Every time that check comes in

the mail, I praise the name of Vincent Sombrotto and ask God to bless his family and children," she said. Many of the attendees also made note of how all working people benefited from the work Sombrotto did with the NALC and as a vice president of the AFL-CIO.

Vince's son Stephen, president of Local 621 of the United Workers of America, said that his father wasn't one for big displays but he would have appreciated the dedication. "My father would have never dreamed there would be such a day," he said after the ceremony. "He would truly be honored, but more so for his family, because he left behind a legacy." **PR**