

Elections matter...especially for us



**Fredric V.
Rolando**

I often say—and I will emphatically repeat—that no group of workers has a greater stake in what happens during national elections than do letter carriers. Who serves and who leads in both chambers of Congress are not just matters of political preference that are vaguely important or remotely tied to our day-to-day concerns as American citizens. For us, who serves and who leads are central workplace issues, matters of fundamental importance to our families' finances and our economic security. For us, who runs Congress and who leads the committees that oversee the Postal Service make huge differences

in our standard of living and our job security.

Will we have decent health insurance that requires a significant contribution from the Postal Service, or will we be forced to buy insurance on our own in the state-level exchanges, without even a modest tax subsidy, as proposed in a new bill introduced by Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI)?

What will we contribute for FERS pension coverage—the 0.8 percent or 3.1 percent or 4.4 percent of our salaries we now pay (depending on when we were hired), or up to 7.1 percent (regardless of when we were hired) as some powerful House members have proposed?

Will we continue to deliver mail on Saturdays, or will this service be cut and will the nation's mailboxes be opened to delivery by private companies that would surely demand total deregulation and access to those boxes seven days a week?

Will we provide high-quality, door-to-door service to tens of millions of households, or will we be forced (as proposed by H.R. 2748) to replace that service with cluster boxes that would reduce the value of mail, cause more mailers to exit the postal system and threaten the viability of the Postal Service?

For those of us with families, these questions matter not just to us, but to our spouses and children as well. Our families also benefit from the pay increases and cost-of-living adjustments we have won through collective bargaining, so they too have a stake in whether Congress seeks to eliminate our bargaining rights (as an influential member of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has proposed). They too have a stake in which

politicians lead that committee, and in which party takes control of the United States Senate.

For us, then, voting in the midterm elections is not just a patriotic duty or a proud obligation of those lucky enough to live in a democracy; it is a matter of basic job security and an important determinant of our standard of living. Of course, not all letter carriers base their votes primarily on how those votes could affect their job and their standard of living. That is their right. But if your job and your economic well-being are important factors in your ballot decisions, please vote this November and please support the candidates—in both parties—who support letter carriers.

Who are these candidates? To find out before you go to the polls, I urge you to consult the NALC's voting guide on our website. It identifies political leaders who support good jobs for letter carriers and other postal employees, who work to strengthen and preserve a strong and viable United States Postal Service, and who recognize and promote the rights of all American workers to join unions and to bargain collectively. It also will let you know how you can do more to help turn out the vote for pro-letter carrier candidates in your state. I will be writing to some NALC members this month in support of such candidates from both parties. But no matter *how* you vote, I hope that you *will* vote and urge all of your voting-eligible family members and friends to do the same.

All elections are important, not just the ones that have presidential candidates at the top of the ballot. We saw how disastrous the consequences were for working families when too many workers sat out the last midterm elections in 2010—the assault on public employees and on workers' rights since then has been relentless. Let's not repeat that mistake. The economy is finally growing again. The Postal Service is recovering, and with the right kind of reform and the right kind of bipartisan leadership in Congress, we can build a thriving USPS for the 21st century. There is a bipartisan majority in Congress right now that could embrace the reform plan we have developed with the mailing industry, while hundreds of Democratic and Republican lawmakers have helped us preserve Saturday and door delivery against repeated attacks. Let's strengthen that bipartisan postal majority this fall by voting and by helping to turn out the vote.

Voting is a great way to protect our job security and our standard of living. But it's also a way to show how grateful we are that we live in the United States—the greatest democracy the world has ever known.