

NALC activists prepare a lobbying agenda for the 114th Congress



NALC President Fredric Rolando answered members' questions during a rap session held on Feb. 23.

Delegations of letter carrier activists representing 16 states came to Washington in February to discuss their legislative strategy with NALC President Fredric Rolando and to meet with their elected representatives about issues of importance to letter carriers and the U.S. Postal Service.

"Now that the 114th Congress has been on the job for a few months," Rolando said, "it's a good time for NALC members to sit down with House and Senate members from both parties and explain to them why preserving and strengthening the Postal Service is so important."

Of course, high on the letter carrier agenda is working on a comprehensive, bipartisan plan to solve the ongoing drag on postal finances caused by pre-funding—the requirement under a 2006 postal reform law that USPS pay in advance 75 years' worth of future retiree health benefits.

"No other government agency or private enterprise is required to pre-fund such benefits at all, let alone to the tune of \$5.5 billion or so per year over 10 years," the president said. "Fortunately, more and more members of Congress are coming to the realization that pre-funding needs reform. Proposals for service cuts decreasingly make sense, especially in light of the Postal Service's growing operating profits over the past few years."

Visiting letter carriers also informed representatives and their staff members about a variety of other postal issues, such as the importance of preserving door delivery and six-day mail delivery.

"We want the folks on Capitol Hill to understand that letter carriers want the Postal Service to innovate and grow," Rolando said. "Degrading the quality of service is the wrong approach, especially when our customers

deserve—and demand—more service from us, not less."

The group of letter carriers who traveled to Washington, DC, in February represented NALC members from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. They began their visit with a number of meetings with Rolando and the rest of the NALC Executive Council, including a question-and-answer "rap session" to discuss the latest news from the Hill as well as from USPS Headquarters. Activists also received a briefing and lobbying training conducted by NALC's Department of Government Affairs.

"We have a new Congress, new leaders of the committees that oversee the Postal Service, and a new postmaster general in Megan Brennan," Rolando said. "But almost all of the same old issues are still around and still need our full attention if we're going to play a role in keeping our employer strong and thriving for decades to come."

Letter carriers from Louisiana made a similar visit to Washington in early March.

Read Missouri State Association President Kevin Boyer's first-person account of what these trips typically entail, beginning on page 8.

Rap sessions, regional and national

As educating members and activists alike remains a top priority for the NALC, President Rolando and other members of the Executive Council so far this year have attended a number of the annual rap sessions that are held in most of NALC's 15 regions—with more on the way. (Region 9 holds its

Pictured (from l): Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) and Rep. Bill Foster (D-IL) attended a congressional reception on Feb. 24.



rap sessions biennially in odd-numbered years.)

“Regional raps provide members the chance to ask about the issues and get the answers they need,” Rolando said. (See story on page 5.)

The national rap session in Houston July 17-19 also will provide those in attendance a variety of training workshops to choose from. These workshops will be overviews of future, longer-form sessions led by the NALC’s resident national officers and key staff members:

- Executive Vice President Timothy C. O’Malley’s workshop will deal with NALC’s legislative agenda, with a specific focus on how the union can best leverage its structure to help elect letter carrier-friendly candidates in 2016 and beyond. Also, O’Malley and staff will talk about the NALC’s media outreach efforts and our attempts to build coalitions with a broad range of labor and progressive organizations.
- Vice President Lew Drass will lead a workshop that will focus on the various steward responsibilities as well as on the grievance process, from Informal A all the way through arbitration.
- Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine and Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Judy Willoughby will lead a workshop designed to go beyond the traditional secretary-treasurer training to help newly elected branch leaders answer the question, “I’m an officer; now what?”
- Director of City Delivery Brian Renfroe will lead a workshop that includes a focus on the City Delivery Route Alternative Adjustment Process (CDRAAP) and on issues specific to city carrier assistants (CCAs).

- Director of Retired Members Ron Watson will lead a workshop on retirement and workers’ compensation issues.
- Director of Safety and Health Manuel Peralta’s workshop will focus on basic safety and health issues, as well as dealing with bullying supervisors and letter carriers’ protections under the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace.
- Director of Health Benefits Brian Hellman and Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren will discuss the various insurance offerings available to all NALC members, from CCAs to retired letter carriers.

Appropriations season begins

Following the release of President Obama’s Fiscal Year 2016 budget request in February, lawmakers have begun to set their sights on consideration of 12 annual appropriations bills to fund each government agency beginning Oct. 1, 2015—the start of Fiscal Year 2016.

Letter carriers from 16 states were in Washington, DC, to lobby their congressional representatives on the need for positive postal reform.



Anatomy of a Lobby Day—or two

We all flew in to DC on a Sunday afternoon. Once we were at the hotel, I set up a meeting for the next morning. We had gone over scheduling through various e-mails, but I wanted to make sure everything was concrete. A trip of this magnitude takes two years of planning, but it also involves some last-minute details.



Monday's meeting out of the way, I headed over to NALC Headquarters for a meeting with President Fred Rolando, Executive Vice President Tim O'Malley and the Legislative Department staff. We met for three hours, outlining our lobby plan for the next few days. At the conclusion, we went down to Hutchings Hall and met the rest of the del-

egates in town for the Western states lobby trip—an overflowing room with plenty of eager activists. (See page 7.)

Our plan for the Missouri delegates was to train on Monday afternoon, lobby on Tuesday and Wednesday, and then have our congressional breakfast on Thursday morning. For our training and breakfast, we were grouped with NALC Region 1—plus South Dakota. When we started doing this eight years ago, I hitched Missouri's wagon to John Beaumont and the good folks of California. He has been a great friend; it's readily apparent that John wants as many states and as many people as we can get to participate.

Lobby training was held in the Rayburn House Office Building. Training there allows everyone to grasp the seriousness of what we're doing, and it allows staffers from various House members' offices to come and help delegates do a mock visit.

Our training materials were put together by the NALC's Legislative Department, including fact sheets we would leave with each member of Congress. NALC's former legislative director, Jennifer Warburton—now chief of staff for California Rep. Loretta Sanchez—spent time listening to, critiquing, reinforcing and talking with each group of NALC delegates.

Tuesday morning—go time! The Missouri group went through the schedule. Since there were eight of us, it was pretty easy to move as a group. For each one of our 10 meetings, I designated a lead

person, whose tasks were to review the information I provided about the representatives and to learn the issues we were lobbying for, taking care to tailor their approach to each representative's political leanings. I have confidence in our members' abilities, so I told the rest of our delegation that they should fill in points of conversation if they saw openings. My job: to make sure they covered everything that needed covering.

I'm always impressed with the staffers in each representative's office. Often just out of college, or maybe interning, they usually have a firm grasp on our issues. Some know far more than the representative ever could. They often do more lobbying for us after we leave.

Wednesday ran much the same as Tuesday: We walked the Hill as a group, doing what we feel is noble work—trying to get Congress to save the Post Office.

All of our meetings were positive. It helps that we were asking for a few common-sense items: six-day delivery, saving door-to-door delivery, and restoring service standards to previous levels.

How could people be against these things? You'd be surprised.

An aside: When I used to come to Washington for these meetings, I had to meet with all of my state's House members and two Senators in one day. This two-day schedule works a lot better. There doesn't have to be a sprint from one building to another when a meeting runs long. And, let's face it—if you know me, you know I'm not sprinting anywhere.

A little bit of snow was falling on Thursday morning, but we had a full house. There's no doubt that any politician will accept a chance to talk to a room full of 120 people. (To see which representatives turned out, see opposite page.)

The plan for the Western states lobby trip is to come to Washington as soon as possible after a new Congress is seated. A lot of planning goes into each trip. John Beaumont, myself and 20 other state presidents already are planning for two years from now. President Rolando, to his credit, has embraced this idea and would like to expand it. He is in preliminary talks to help the states sponsor more trips of this nature.

—Missouri State Chairman Kevin Boyer

Appropriations hearings began toward the end of February in both the House and Senate. Formal budget submissions typically are due by April 15.

Of particular interest to letter carriers is the long-standing six-day mail delivery language that has been part of every omnibus appropriations package since 1983. The committees on Appropriations and subcommittees on Financial Services and General Government in both the House and Senate are expected to begin working on their measures soon, and NALC is keeping a close watch on whether six-day language remains safely in place.

"Last year was a fight to keep the language and this year will be no different," President Rolando said. "If you have a House or Senate representative who sits on one of the appropriations committees, make sure he or she understands how important it is for the future of the Postal Service that this language be retained."

Legislation update

As this *Postal Record* was being prepared, 66 House members had signed on as co-sponsors of H.R. 784, the Protect Overnight Delivery Act. Introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the bill calls for restoring USPS' service standards to Dec. 30, 2011, levels.

Rep. David McKinley's (R-WV) H.Res. 54 calls for restoration of service standards to the July 1, 2012, levels. It had 88 co-sponsors at press time. H.Res. 12, Rep. Sam Graves' (R-MO) measure calling for preservation of six-day mail delivery, had 149 co-sponsors, while H.Res. 28—Rep. Susan Davis' (D-CA) resolution calling for continuation of door delivery



NALC members from Louisiana met with NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber (r) for a legislative briefing on March 9 before going to Capitol Hill to meet with their congressional representatives.

of mail for all residential and commercial customers—had 64 co-sponsors.

Visit nalc.org under “Government Affairs” to download the latest fact sheets on these and other important issues.

In the news media

NALC President Fredric Rolando had a commentary piece in the Feb. 19 edition of Norwich, CT’s *The Bulletin*, responding to an editorial. “Despite conventional ‘wisdom,’ the agency’s finances are rapidly improving,” Rolando wrote. “It’s nonsensical to degrade postal networks that have returned to profitability.”

NALC Director of City Delivery Brian Renfroe was quoted in a Feb. 21 story in Great Britain’s *The Guardian* about the Postal Service’s pursuit of a replacement for its aging fleet of long-life vehicles (LLVs). Renfroe also was mentioned in a story about the search for replacement LLVs in a Feb. 27 story for Fox News as well as in an *Automotive News* article.

Idaho State Association President John Paige’s letter to the editor of the Twin Falls *Times-News* ran on March 12, while the *Bangor (ME) Daily News* ran Maine State Association President John Curtis’ letter to the editor on March 10.

On March 6, KSL-TV in Salt Lake City published a story about a community’s reaction to Layton, UT Branch 4506 letter carrier Brent Coulam’s retirement after 42 years. Residents, who told KSL that Coulam always had looked out for them, collected money to send him to Hawaii as a retirement present.

Bloomberg/*Businessweek* ran a Feb. 27 story about Boston, MA Branch 34 letter carrier John Bachman delivering mail in the deep snow and icy temperatures of Hull, MA, a small town south

of Boston. The photo from that story also was used in a March 1 *USA Today* piece about this winter’s unusually heavy snowfall in the northeast.

On Feb. 26, Beckley, WV Branch 2429 letter carrier Dane Snuffer was the subject of a similar piece about delivering mail in harsh winter conditions for southern West Virginia’s WVNS-TV.

Houma-Thibodaux-Lockport, LA Branch 2464 letter carrier Reed Ordoyne’s Feb. 19 letter to the editor of Lafourche Parish’s *The Daily Comet* told of the real dangers posed by dog bites. **PR**

Six representatives from California spoke at a congressional breakfast on Feb. 26 to thank the letter carriers who traveled to the nation’s capital to lobby for a stronger Postal Service.



Rep. Susan Davis (D)



Rep. Janice Hahn (D)



Rep. Ted Lieu (D)



Rep. Jared Huffman (D)



Rep. Judy Chu (D)



Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D)