

## Finding a role for everyone



**Fredric V. Rolando**

**A**t a time of profound political polarization, working for a government-owned enterprise is a mixed blessing. We often get caught in the political crossfire. There is nothing inherently partisan about the publicly popular Postal Service, an agency mandated by the Constitution. Yet partisan gridlock has blocked postal reform for years.

Letter carriers are not immune from this polarization. We perfectly reflect the political diversity of America. We come from all backgrounds, and we hold the whole range of political views, from the populist left to the Tea Party right. Our members generally reflect the political divisions that exist

between the “red” states and “blue” states. I see the diversity of opinion within our ranks wherever I travel, and I respect it.

Finding a way for all NALC members with different views to work together in this political environment can be challenging. As the country gears up for another presidential election and we try once again to convince Congress to enact sensible postal reform that strengthens the Postal Service, preserves quality service, and respects our collective-bargaining rights, this challenge is especially daunting.

**At the Houston Rap Session, I addressed this issue as we announced the rebranding of our political action committee (PAC) and outlined our plans to strengthen our grassroots networks, which are essential for advancing our legislative agenda in Congress. We are retiring the venerable, yet confusing, PAC name COLCPE—the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education—in favor of a more straightforward and understandable name: the Letter Carrier Political Fund. (See the story on page 10.)**

Our approach to making campaign contributions and spending on get-out-the-vote efforts won't change. We will support candidates, Democratic and Republican alike, who support the Postal Service, letter carriers and the rights of working people.

But just as importantly, we are working to upgrade our grassroots capability to create an NALC network that will expand the ways our members can contribute to the success of our legislative agenda. In addition to strengthening our e-Activist Network, we will focus on training an expanded pool of activists in the field. That's the goal of a special conference for field activists that we are planning to hold this fall in Washington.

We need letter carriers to help build local community coalitions with other unions, local politicians, municipal chambers of commerce, veterans groups and even churches to support not just Saturday and door delivery, but also new services such as postal banking. We are perfectly positioned to use our membership diversity to appeal to the widely varying constituents who make up congressional districts across the country—and to educate them about the importance of postal issues.

We need members to engage their local media to defend our interests and views, not just by writing letters to the editor of local papers, but also by going on local radio shows and setting up information booths at public events. Our message is that postal issues are non-partisan issues that are important to all Americans.

We need NALC activists to directly contact their members of Congress in their district offices and at town hall meetings to educate them about the importance of affordable universal service and the role of letter carriers in our communities.

Over the past year or so, we have focused on encouraging our state associations to improve our recruitment of legislative activists. Members of the Executive Council have met with state association executive boards, and our government affairs staff members have been working to identify the activists we wish to train.

**Of course, I still believe that every member should give to our newly rebranded PAC.** It offers an essential political insurance policy for our jobs and benefits. But I know that not every member feels comfortable doing so. Some letter carriers who are lifelong Republicans have told me this. At a time when few Republicans in Congress stand up for the Postal Service or the interests of working people, some of our members face a real dilemma when it comes to PAC giving.

However, that does not mean that such members should sit on the sidelines when it comes to our legislative agenda. We must give all of our members ways to contribute toward the achievement of our legislative goals—beyond contributing to the Letter Carrier Political Fund.

Working for a public employer may be a mixed blessing, but it is still a blessing. We have the honor of providing a valuable public service that is essential for our economy. We also have a strong union that gives us a voice at work and a decent standard of living. To preserve that blessing, we need to build our Letter Carrier Political Fund. But more importantly, we need to find a role for all NALC members to contribute to our efforts, regardless of their political affiliation. If we do that, we will not only succeed legislatively, we also will be able to show the entire country that it is possible to rise above political divisions to achieve the common good.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fredric Rolando', written in a cursive style.