

NALC, activists continue push for positive postal reform

As was reported in last month's *Postal Record*, NALC President Fredric Rolando testified in January before a Senate committee hearing on the U.S. Postal Service.

In the weeks since, there haven't been many headline-grabbing developments in letter carriers' ongoing quest for positive postal reform.

"But a lack of headlines doesn't equal a lack of progress," Rolando said. "Letter carrier activists understand that a lot of the real work toward reforms that are designed to strengthen the Postal Service for decades to come often take place behind the scenes."

Indeed, over the last several months, Rolando and members of the union's Legislative and Political Affairs Department have participated in a number of one-on-one meetings with key Capitol Hill legislators and their staff members—such as Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the House committee that has USPS oversight; and Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI), chairman of the Senate committee with similar postal responsibilities, the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC).

The president and NALC staffers also have spoken at length with Sens. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), all of whom serve on HSGAC.

"Such meetings provide a chance for everyone to educate each other and to exchange information," Rolando said. "We take the opportunity to explain where we're coming from and then hear thoughts and ideas from the representatives."

One thing that helps NALC make a strong case for effective, consensus postal reform is the fact that the particular reform plan that the union



NALC President Fredric Rolando (l) met with North Dakota Sen. Heidi Heitkamp on consensus postal reform in March.

has prepared has the backing of a recognizable and respectable coalition.

"Our coalition represents not just city letter carriers," the president said, "but also our brothers and sisters in the rural, clerk and mailhandler crafts plus the Postal Service itself, as well as a wide range of e-commerce, direct mail, newspaper, financial service and prescription drug companies."

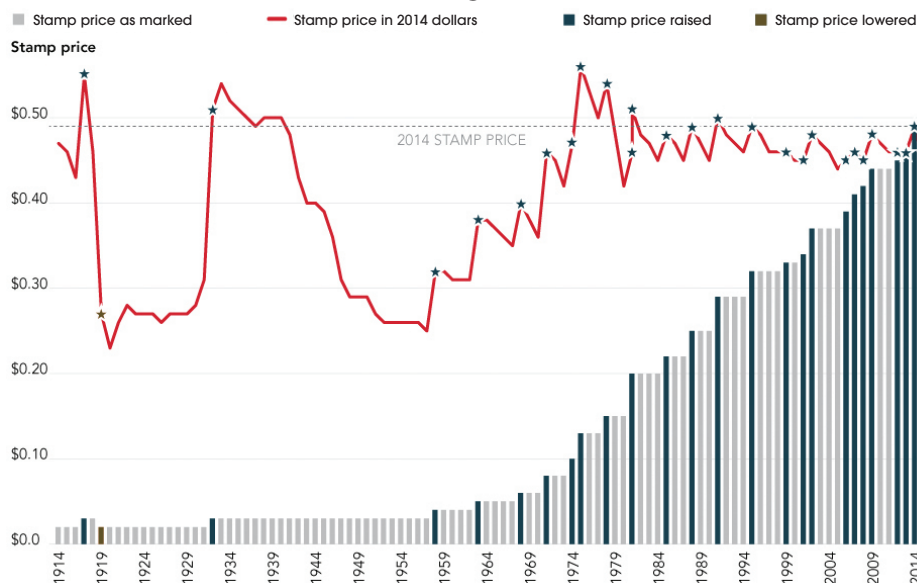
"What our coalition seeks is a reform package that's rooted in the best private-sector practices," Rolando said, "one that will stabilize the Postal Service for the foreseeable future and

let it evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of our customers."

With the price of a First Class stamp set to fall this month (from 49 cents to 47 cents) as USPS' exigent rate increase expires, the president said that "now is an excellent time for all parties concerned to have real conversations about reforms that can bring rate stability to the Postal Service for the good of the entire mailing industry."

"Lowering rates when the Postal Service has achieved modest operating profits makes little economic sense," he said.

Stamp prices haven't gone down since 1919



In fact, postage rates have rarely been reduced since this country's postal system was established more than two centuries ago. The last time rates were cut was in 1919. (See chart on page 5 for how stamp prices have changed, and chart at right to find out how U.S. postage rates compare with other countries' prices.)

Rolando noted that our consensus package aims not just for postal rate stability, but also for maximizing Medicare participation among postal participants covered by the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) as a way to reduce USPS' financial obligations to pre-fund future

retiree health benefits and to sensibly change the way the Postal Service invests its retiree health benefits fund.

Many of the coalition's proposals happen to be contained in S. 2051, the postal bill that was introduced last fall by Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), the ranking member on the Senate committee with USPS oversight. "As we've stated," Rolando said, "the Carper bill contains several provisions we cannot support, and it raises a number of serious concerns

for letter carriers and the larger federal employee community. But that said, we continue to believe that the bill is a good conversation-starter about how we can work to preserve and strengthen the Postal Service."

Elsewhere in Washington

Shortly after she took office last year, Postmaster General Megan Brennan temporarily suspended her predecessor's plan to continue closing or consolidating postal facilities in a misguided and counterproductive attempt to save money. Unfortunately, that process is set to resume this year, targeting 87 such facilities.

With that in mind, several members of the House of Representatives have introduced H.R. 4656, a measure designed to place a moratorium on current closures and consolidations, to establish a system of Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) approval of any additional planned closings and to reinstate service standards that were in place in July of 2012.

H.R. 4656 calls for data-based criteria and analysis of the impact that closings and consolidations would have on communities. If passed, the measure would allow for a public notification and comment period before decisions are made, and it would enable the PRC to set performance benchmarks.

NALC has not taken a position on this bill but applauds its co-sponsors for keeping postal issues in mind as this legislative session continues.

There are, however, three resolutions before the House that have the full backing of the union.

Sample Domestic Letter Stamp Prices (in USD)



Philadelphia letter carrier is NALC's 1st LPO, more

In February, NALC President Fredric Rolando named Philadelphia Branch 157 letter carrier Edward Morgan as the first legislative and political organizer (LPO) to work with the NALC's Legislative and Political Affairs Department.



Morgan

Morgan has served as a branch steward, congressional district liaison, trustee and web editor. He is a graduate of Leadership Academy Class 18. In addition, Morgan has led get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts in the Philadelphia area as part of the AFL-CIO's labor-to-labor election program during the 2012 and 2014 cycles. Last fall, he assisted in developing and executing NALC's first-ever network activist training, where he coached nearly 200 letter carriers from across the country on how to get active—and stay active—on the legislative and political fronts.

Morgan will be working with state associations and legislative and political activists across the country.

The Legislative and Political Affairs Department also added Travis Van Horn as a legislative communications assistant at NALC Headquarters in March. Before coming to NALC, Van Horn worked on two ballot measures in Oregon to pass marriage equality and provide undocumented immigrants with driver's licenses, in addition to helping elect a state representative in the state's most contested race in 2014. Most recently, he worked with trade associations, coalitions and Fortune 500 companies in an account support role with a boutique public affairs firm specializing in health policy. He holds a B.A. in political science and is currently a candidate for an M.A. in political communication.



Van Horn

As this *Postal Record* was being prepared, 229 House members had signed on as co-sponsors of H.Res. 54, Rep. David McKinley's (R-WV) resolution calling for restoration of service standards to the July 1, 2012, levels. H.Res. 12, Rep. Sam Graves' (R-MO) measure calling for preservation of six-day mail delivery, had 230 co-sponsors, while H.Res. 28—Rep. Susan Davis' (D-CA) resolution calling for continuation of door delivery of mail for all residential and commercial customers—had 181 co-sponsors.

“While it’s true that these resolutions are non-binding and do not carry the force of law,” Rolando said, “it’s still crucial to get as many of our representatives as possible to sign on to them, because it puts them on the record as supporting the postal issues important to letter carriers and other postal employees.”

Letter carriers in the news media

Idaho State Association President John Paige's letter to the editor of the *Idaho Statesman* ran on March 6. It also ran in Twin Falls' *Times-News* on Feb. 25.

Carmel, IN Br. 888 President Ronnie Roush's recent letter to the editor has run in four Indiana newspapers: on March 1 in Fort Wayne's *Journal Gazette*, on Feb. 23 in Loganport's *Pharos-Tribune*, on Feb. 21 in the *Kokomo Tribune*, and on Feb. 17 in the *Evansville Courier & Press*.

Kansas State Association President Andy Tuttle's letter to the editor of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* ran on Feb. 29.

Find links at nalc.org under “Postal Facts” to these and other examples of what reporters and commentators are writing and saying about the Postal Service, and how NALC members and leaders are making their voices heard. **PR**



Ohio congressional delegation visit

Letter carrier activists from the Ohio State Association were in Washington, DC, March 2-3 for their annual visit to lobby their congressional representatives on behalf of all Buckeye State letter carriers regarding issues of importance to them and to the NALC as a whole. On March 2, the activists gathered for a legislative briefing and strategy session led by NALC Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Kori Blalock Keller. The briefing was followed by a rap session led by NALC President Fredric Rolando. Later that evening, the state association held a reception for its congressional delegation, and they heard remarks from Ohio Rep. Bill Johnson (R-6th), Rep. Tim Ryan (D-13th) and Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-11th). The next day, the activists visited the Capitol Hill offices of several of their House and Senate representatives.



Rep. Bill Johnson



Rep. Tim Ryan



Rep. Marcia Fudge