

Our approach



Philip Dine

With all that's going on in Washington politically and with what looms legislatively, getting out our message has rarely been more important. So this is a good time to discuss some of the concepts that undergird our efforts in the Department of Communications and Media Relations.

This column has several goals: offering some insight into our thinking, assisting those of you already engaged in this work, and encouraging others to join in. As we know, communications isn't a Washington-centric effort. Nobody influences the members of Congress quite like those who hire and fire them: their constituents.

So, with the proviso that these aren't "how-to" tips but rather guiding concepts, here goes.

The value of local media—Many unions focus on high-profile media outlets, thinking they're getting prominence and clout. But here at NALC, we aim to influence, not impress, and we understand that it takes a mix. Getting our views across in a national newspaper, for example, reaches lots of people. But doing so in a regional paper may have more impact. The old saying that "all politics is local" applies in its own way to journalism. The closer a newspaper is to its readers, the more trusted it typically is by them and the less likely they are to dismiss it as a mouthpiece for a political ideology or party. In fact, there's often an inverse relationship between the size of a paper and its perceived credibility. We get our views across in a respected mid-sized paper, say 75,000 readers, and we've struck gold—the readers take it seriously, yet it's large enough that the state's (or even region's) major political figures will read what we've said.

With that in mind, consider President Rolando's recent efforts over just nine days. He explained the value of letter carriers, USPS' finances and the way forward in the *Current-Argus*, a rural newspaper in Carlsbad, NM. He had a two-day run—online and in print—with San Jose's *Mercury News*, California's second-largest newspaper and among the country's half-dozen biggest. That was followed by suburban Chicago's *Daily Herald*, Illinois' third-largest paper, and the smaller *Herald-Bulletin* of Anderson, IN.

In these instances, he piggybacked on a prior superb piece, so-so piece or misleading piece—in other words, turning *anything* into an opportunity—to present our views.

A thousand voices—Some unions channel their messaging entirely through a national officer or two. They aim to build up the prestige of those top official(s) while assuring unifor-

mity of message. In so doing, however, they sacrifice labor's top asset—the vitality and power of a unified rank-and-file. As President Rolando often says, our strength lies in our diversity—both political and geographic. We are fortunate that our membership is informed, is trusted, practices a common craft—and is willing to help get the message out. Just as with national vs. local media, at NALC we recognize the value of having national officers and local letter carriers pitching in.

And so, we're all well-served by the recent efforts—and impressive geographic sweep—of Topeka, KS Branch 10 member Nicole Hodge; Idaho State Association President John Paige; San Mateo, CA Branch 1280 Executive Vice President Sandra Dieffenderfer; Carmel, IN Branch 888 President Ronnie Roush; New Jersey Merged Branch 38 letter carrier Pricipelina Mendes; San Angelo, TX Branch 1203 letter carriers Jeremy House and Jerry Moran; Central Maine Merged Branch 391 letter carrier Adam Hall; Kenosha, WI Branch 574 member Debra Zacionc; Sioux Falls, SD Branch 491 letter carrier Tim Durham; Oswego, NY Branch 190 member Larry Woods; Philadelphia Branch 157 member Paul Weidman; South Bend, IN Branch 330 member Joe Zanker; and Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member Renee Gronowski.

Positive and focused—We don't berate or argue—we explain and persuade. We don't weigh in on workplace squabbles but rather on policy, legislation and USPS' value. We have the public's respect and we have the facts on our side—so we present the information clearly and cogently and consistently. And by so doing, we continue our remarkable saga of changing the national conversation.

Human touch—This is key, both in approaching a news outlet and then in what we write or say. When we speak directly with the editorial page editor before submitting a commentary, for example, we exponentially increase our chances of being published—and we build a relationship for the future. And when we illustrate in what we write how average folks are affected—by showing, for example, the number of private-sector mailing industry jobs in your state that depend on the USPS—our message moves from theory to practical resonance with readers and their elected representatives.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
 Managing Editor Philip Dine
 Designer/Web Editor Mike Shea
 Internet Communications Coordinator
 Joe Conway
 Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
 Editorial Assistant Jenessa Wagner

The Postal Record (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2017 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

