

Spread the message and build our voice in Washington



**Fredric V.
Rolando**

NALC has a great tradition of political and legislative activism. For the decades before we won full collective-bargaining rights in 1970, we worked hard to make our voices heard in Washington when legislators and presidents made decisions about our jobs, our pay and our lives. Now that we have collective bargaining, it is easy to dismiss the importance of political action and to forget how it has helped us over time.

Consider what we have gained by mobilizing politically and legislatively over our history. We fought and won the eight-hour workday and pensions for federal employees

within 30 years of our founding in 1889. We overcame the restrictions of the Hatch Act (which barred federal employees from participating fully in our democracy) to secure pay hikes and protect six-day delivery multiple times from the 1930s to the 1950s—through grassroots action. Through collective effort, in the 1960s, we lobbied for health insurance coverage and achieved legal recognition of our union in the workplace. And we won the right to collective bargaining in 1970 after the Great Postal Strike by working with allies in Congress. Since then, we've fought off privatization and service cuts while defending our benefits and our employer in round after round of attempted budget cuts, fights that continued right on through 2017—and that will resume in 2018 as well.

Not one of these victories happened by itself. It took a strong collective voice and unity in our membership across partisan political lines. And it took the financial resources of our political action committee (PAC) to educate policymakers on the issues important to us and the Postal Service—and, most importantly, to elect friendly politicians in both parties to Congress. Today, we are proud to have one of the most influential PACs in the labor movement and the largest political fund among federal employee unions. But the threats we face have never been greater, and the need to build up our resources and capacity has never been more urgent.

Last year's federal budget targeted the Postal Service and our retirement benefits for massive cuts—cuts that were rejected by just enough supporters in Congress, from both sides of the aisle. We expect more of the same from this year's budget battles. The best way to stop these attacks is to elect more friends to Congress in November 2018. That's where the Letter

Carrier Political Fund comes in—we use it to make campaign contributions to pro-letter carrier legislators and to help mobilize support among our members and voters in other union households through get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts (see story, page 20).

This month, as is our tradition each year in the February *Postal Record*, we honor and recognize those in our union who help carry on the activist tradition. In these pages, we list the names of all the members who make voluntary contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund. There are thousands of names. I want to thank each and every one of you who is listed. You know, as I do, the importance of our political fund.

The challenge now is to educate our members about the legislative risks we face and our means of responding. If our activists and contributors do this important work, I am confident that our members, no matter where they fall on the political spectrum, will understand the value of the PAC. They'll also understand that our political diversity is a strength, not a weakness. We don't need huge PAC contributions from any one member, just a few dollars from a larger percentage of our membership.

It is not a hard sell, to be honest. I know from experience that when letter carriers learn about the legislative threats to our jobs, benefits and future, they voluntarily give. When they understand that our collective-bargaining rights are given by Congress and can be taken away by Congress, they will contribute to our PAC. When active and retired members find out that there are powerful political forces in America trying to slash our health and pension plans and to gut programs like Social Security and Medicare, they will see the wisdom of deducting a few dollars per pay period for the LCFF.

I know that not all letter carriers are inclined to get involved in politics—and that there are diverse political opinions in our diverse union. That's fine, because we need to reach politicians of all stripes—and there are many other ways to do your part to influence Congress and other policy makers to protect our common interests. You can download the NALC Member App and take part in NALC's grassroots activism. You can write or visit your senators and representatives to ask them to support the Postal Service, letter carriers and federal employees. You can speak up in the media, both traditional and social media, to defend USPS and its vital role in the United States.

Giving to our PAC is just one way for members to contribute to our collective defense. The important thing is for everyone to do their part. If we educate our members about the issues and our means for taking action, they can decide on their own how to get involved. In the meantime, don't forget to thank the members listed in these pages for helping to defend us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fredric V. Rolando'.