

Keep it; it's yours



Fredric V. Rolando

Thanks to thousands of NALC activists and our partnership with the other three postal unions, we delivered a strong message on Columbus Day across the United States. The Postal Service is not for sale—it belongs to the American people and should not be sold off to the highest corporate bidder. Our rallies in hundreds of congressional districts got tremendous coverage in the media and helped us draw a line in the sand before the White House releases its task force report. We will not accept privatization of the Postal Service, and we will fight to preserve it as a public service for the country.

That's also the message in a new video advertisement we co-produced with the American Postal Workers Union (APWU). It provides a sharp and humorous reminder to the public of what's at stake in the debate over privatization. (Go to nalc.org to view it.) The advertisement, which we have distributed through our social media platforms, will help us fight back. I urge all of you to share it with your families, friends and neighbors—the final tag line in the ad says it all: “The people’s Postal Service—keep it; it’s yours.”

In our public campaign, we have focused on how important the Postal Service is to our economy and our country. It's the heart of a \$1.4 trillion mailing industry that employs 7.5 million Americans in the paper, publishing, advertising, e-commerce and shipping sectors. It is an invaluable part of the nation's economic infrastructure—our only truly universal communications system, a key part of our financial payments system and an invaluable network for distributing consumer products and prescription drugs, and an essential service for our elections—which increasingly rely on vote-by-mail systems. In short, a strong and universal Postal Service is an essential utility for our economy and democracy—and because it guarantees affordable service for Americans, it is also an engine for equality and fairness.

All of this is true and all of it is important to share with the public at large for the debate that will occur when the president's task force report is issued in the weeks or months ahead. That is what we must do together.

Of course, our stake in the future of the Postal Service is not just what's best for the country—it's also personal. Our jobs, our workplace rights and our standard of living are

at stake in this debate, too. Educating ourselves on these personal stakes is important. A privatized Postal Service would not just expose letter carriers and other postal employees to commercial pressures resulting from the need to satisfy profit-hungry shareholders. It also would subject us to the dangerous and deeply destabilizing trends in the U.S. labor market. As a result of technological change and the spread of anti-worker public policies advanced by powerful corporations and dark-money billionaires, middle-class jobs are under assault in our country.

Consider our sector. On the one hand, thanks to the e-commerce boom, delivery and warehouse jobs are among the fastest-growing positions in the economy. On the other hand, the quality of these jobs has deteriorated. Policies that make union organizing difficult, if not impossible, and powerful companies such as Uber and Amazon that use technology to make most new jobs low-wage, part-time and “flexible” positions with no prospects for career advancement are the norm. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article noted that warehouse jobs have gone from paying above-average wages 30 years ago to below-average wages today, thanks to trucking deregulation and a sustained assault on labor unions. A privatized Postal Service would try to achieve the same results for delivery jobs.

If you doubt me on this point, read an amazing article that ran in *The Atlantic* magazine in June. The title says it all: “I Delivered Packages for Amazon and It Was a Nightmare.” It describes the horrendous conditions facing so-called Amazon Flex delivery workers, who must compete against each other to get two-and-a-half-hour shifts that pay wage rates that vary from day to day. The jobs provide no benefits, no rights and no representation. There are no work-hour guarantees or overtime, and the daily pay is a fixed lump sum, even if it takes more than two and a half hours to complete the deliveries. The drivers must use their own vehicles (at no cost to Amazon), buy their own gasoline and pay their own parking tickets. If they get injured, there is no workers' compensation. If they are “deactivated” (i.e., fired), they get no explanation and have no way to appeal—and they are not eligible for unemployment insurance. That is truly a nightmare—and, unfortunately, an employment model that many powerful companies want to foist on all American workers. A privatized Postal Service would surely try to do likewise.

So we will fight to save the Postal Service and the good jobs it makes possible. Let's keep both; they're ours.

A final note: I want to thank all the members who voted in our national union election. I am grateful and honored to be given the privilege of once again serving as NALC president. I will do my best to advance the interests of all the members of our great union.

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