

We need better participation



**Lew
Drass**

The results of the national NALC election are in. The majority of those of you who voted decided to keep me around for another term of office. I want to thank each of you for your vote. I also want to recognize my opponent and let her and her supporters know that I hold no ill will toward anyone and plan to do my best to serve all the members well during my next term of office.

Elections quite naturally divide voters based on their support for one candidate or another. This is especially true when there are contentious races for national business agent such as we had this year in Regions 2, 4 and 9. Now that the members have decided the outcome, it is time for all of us to come back together and re-

member that we are all on the same side.

This responsibility falls first and foremost to the successful candidates who must now lead without holding grudges or ill will toward those members who opposed them in the election. This responsibility also extends to the unsuccessful candidates. While losing an election that you think you should have won is a bitter pill to swallow, you have to respect the members' wishes and do what you can to help the winning candidates be successful. Anything less just shows that you were running for the wrong reasons in the first place.

After all, this is not about individuals. We should never take our eye off the ball. Our purpose as a union is to represent letter carriers by negotiating wages and benefits at the bargaining table, enforce our rights and benefits under the current contract, and protect our rights and benefits in the halls of Congress. Our adversary/opponent at the bargaining table and in the grievance procedure is management. Our adversaries/opponents in the halls of Congress are those politicians who do not support letter carrier issues.

Low turnout

The most discouraging factor of the national NALC elections for me was the low voter turnout. Fewer than 22 percent of those members who were eligible to vote actually cast a ballot. That is slightly down from the 2014 national NALC elections where we had fewer than 25 percent cast a ballot.

The question is, "Why do so few members vote in national NALC elections?" One could argue that it is because of all of the new letter carriers we have. It is true that we have a little fewer than half of us who have 11 years or less of to-

tal experience working for USPS. I do not think that is it. In my experience, local mail ballot NALC elections usually have around 66 percent of ballots cast by members. That has not changed with the influx of newer letter carriers. This kind of voter turnout says that most letter carriers recognize that the results of local elections directly affect them. That is absolutely true, too.

I think the answer to the low voter turnout when it comes to national NALC elections is the silent majority (members who want to go to work every day, deliver their routes while providing great service to our customers, keep The Man off their back, get back to the office each day, clock off and go home to their family, but end their participation with the NALC by paying their dues) who do not exercise their right to vote, do not believe that the outcome of these elections really affect them. Nothing could be further from the truth. I wish everyone could see this as clear as I do.

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Continuing the fight

The activists who are elected to serve as resident national officers, national business agents and national trustees directly affect everyone, active and retired, who belongs to NALC. In the next term, we will continue the fight to enforce our current contract, bargain for a new contract (negotiations begin in June of next year), and fight for bipartisan legislative issues such as preventing privatization of USPS, maintaining cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for our retirees and our collective-bargaining rights for active letter carriers, not to mention a host of other issues that are controlled by law. These are tall orders and we will need your support.

When it comes to NALC elections, Vince Sombrotto always said, "Trust the members. They always know best." For those of you who do not know who Vince Sombrotto is, he was our national president for 23 years (1979-2002). I think that anyone who knew him would agree that he was a very wise individual.

By the time you read this, the national midterm elections that will determine the balance of power in this country will also be done. The outcome of these elections will begin a new journey to convince the politicians who are elected from both parties to support letter carrier issues. Will you be there to help?

In closing, I want to take this opportunity to wish all of you and your families a happy Thanksgiving!