

## Leading by example



**Philip Dine**

**R**ecent weeks have produced impressive examples of NALC's unrelenting efforts to get the message out about the U.S. Postal Service and the value of letter carriers—instances that stem from the contributions of members at all levels of the union. And, further, that often involve teamwork.

A good illustration of the latter involves President Rolando's letter to the editor of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. It explained the source of postal red ink and called on lawmakers to address pre-funding, while also highlighting the value of the universal network.

The letter, under a great headline ("The value of the US Postal Service") and a colorful photo of mail trays, re-

butted an editorial that called for privatization and blamed employees for the red ink—even asserting that this constituted a reason to ban government employees from unionizing.

The *Review-Journal's* circulation of 167,000 makes it Nevada's largest newspaper, four times bigger than the next, so debunking that editorial was critical. Moreover, President Rolando's message reached everyone of influence in Nevada, including those who represent the state in Washington, DC.

**The alertness of a couple of letter carriers, one active and one retired, made that possible.**

Christopher Wilson of Las Vegas Branch 2502 notified us in real time of the misleading editorial; he noted that the newspaper is owned by a billionaire who is a major national political donor ("...just to give you a little background on what kind of editorial board you are dealing with.").

Simultaneously, a letter arrived from John Marek, a retired letter carrier from Victorville, CA, whose local newspaper, the *Daily Press*, had run the *Review-Journal* editorial. A member of San Bernardino, CA Branch 411, he wrote to us that he hoped residents would be given "the true story," and added, "I was a regular carrier from April 1956 to November 1990. It was a privilege to deliver the mail..."

Asked later why he felt it was important to reach out, Wilson, who has carried mail for 15 years after serving six years in the Navy, replied: "I think it matters because readers were only getting one side of the story about the financial issues, and the paper was using the financial problems to push privatization."

And Marek, who spent four years in the Air Force before starting his route and joining NALC 63 years ago, noted that reading the misleading editorial "irked me to no end," so he acted to generate a response.

Facilitated by the vigilance and media savvy of these two

carriers, our president crafted a letter that informed folks in tens of thousands of households.

Just one day later, President Rolando had a lengthy commentary in the Sunday edition of the *Morristown (TN) Citizen Tribune*. In this case it responded to a positive editorial on the Postal Service—a reminder that good coverage, bad coverage, or even no coverage, offers an opening for us to weigh in.

His Tennessee op-ed piggybacked on the paper's editorial by adding more information about the value of USPS and of letter carriers (including the food drive) as well as about pre-funding and postal finances. The paper gave his piece great display and a nice headline: "The value of the U.S. Postal Service cannot be dismissed or overlooked."

**Along with getting our own voice out through letters and commentaries, you've also recently influenced what others write or broadcast; a couple of examples follow.**

Chicago Branch 11 President and National Trustee Mack Julion was interviewed by Chicago's WGN-TV for a story on postal vehicle fires. Julion skillfully addressed the issue while getting across NALC's commitment to the safety of letter carriers.

Meanwhile, an author and historian named William Lambers, a resident of Cincinnati who has written widely about issues of food and hunger, penned a commentary piece prior to our food drive that ran in newspapers in Buffalo, NY; Peoria, IL; Fredericksburg and Culpeper, VA; Casper, WY; and Columbus, OH. The article mentioned President John F. Kennedy's commitment to fighting hunger, quoted President Rolando and highlighted our food drive.

And so, when Lambers sought information about the 27th annual food drive's results, we readily complied, and President Rolando commented on the success of NALC's 2019 effort. That produced another helpful commentary piece, this one landing on the History News Network as well as in three Ohio newspapers.

**We have here a variety of topics, of types of media outlets, of reporting and commentary, of contributions from union leaders and rank-and-file carriers, of geographic diversity—all spurred by attentiveness and commitment. In short, a typical performance by letters carriers as you continue to lead, by example, the communications efforts of the U.S. labor movement.**

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