

Our role in voting



**Brian
Renfroe**

By the time that this edition of *The Postal Record* is received in homes, Election Day will have passed. While I don't know the results of any election at the time of writing this, I do know what letter carriers and the Postal Service are doing to be sure that millions of Americans have the opportunity to vote safely using the mail.

It is usually a cardinal sin to opine or report on anything before it happens or is complete. Many baseball writers have shared their experiences of nearly finishing a story in the seventh inning before the game dramatically changes in the last couple innings, rendering the story useless. But in this instance, I am

confident enough in what we have all been doing that we will indeed finish the job.

Letter carriers and NALC are uniquely positioned to play a large role in ensuring that our electoral process is fair. We all have seen excessive media coverage on vote-by-mail. There are opinions, facts, lies and any sentiment you can imagine being expressed. But one fact remains true—postal employees and letter carriers will deliver.

“Our primary goal has always been to serve our customers. During election season, we also are proud to serve our democracy.”

Due to the pandemic, a substantial increase in access to vote-by-mail took place in the last few months. We saw states accelerate transitions to voting by mail and increase the use of absentee ballots. This resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of ballots and other election-related mail for the Postal Service to process and deliver.

To get ahead of this, NALC approached the Postal Service with the idea of creating a national joint election task force that would consist of postal managers and representatives of each of the postal unions and management associations. That task force was formed in early September. NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber and I have represented NALC. The task force has met at least weekly since its formation, and developed a number of protocols, addressed

potential issues and established local election mail task forces in each facility to identify and resolve issues.

I want to thank the NALC members who have served in this role. There is no substitute for eyes and ears on the ground to see what is happening on a daily basis. These local representatives have worked cooperatively and, without question, played a huge part in our success this election season. Developing and implementing protocols at the USPS and NALC Headquarters levels can be challenging. Each state has unique requirements that our protocols must meet. The local election mail task forces, familiar with what is going on in their states, were well positioned to be sure the appropriate protocols were followed.

The entire process of voting by mail involves not just postal employees processing and delivering mail, but also election administrations in states, counties and municipalities preparing, mailing and receiving ballots. NALC has played a role in supporting these administrations as well.

We were part of a group that founded the National Vote at Home Institute (NVAHI) a few years ago. The staff assists election administrations with a number of issues. It is best described on its website, voteathome.org:

As the nation's foremost organization on mail ballot use and administration, the National Vote at Home Institute combines deep expertise on research, policy and implementation to offer resources and action plans for election officials, decision makers, and advocacy groups regardless of political affiliation. Our team is made up of former election officials, policy experts, communications specialists, process wonks, and lovers of democracy from across the country.

If you haven't visited voteathome.org, I encourage you to do so to learn more. NVAHI has played a large role in successful vote-by-mail implementation by election administrations all over the country. I've had the pleasure of serving on the board of directors for NVAHI since its inception. It has grown from a small group of mostly volunteers assistants into an organization with nearly 20 full-time employees. The work of NVAHI does not end with this election. We are excited to continue our work going forward.

Most importantly, the hard work of postal employees in all crafts is primarily responsible for the successful processing and delivering of election mail. There is no substitute for the dedication and commitment of postal employees, including us—the men and women who deliver America's mail. Our primary goal has always been to serve our customers. During election season, we also are proud to serve our democracy.