

Why elections matter to us



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Nothing is more polarizing than politics. While this has always been true, it seems that 2020 has brought it to another level. We are in the middle of a presidential election. We still, unfortunately, are living in a pandemic that almost no living American has ever experienced, and certainly no letter carrier has experienced the way it has affected our jobs. As if that wasn't enough, the short- and long-term future of the Postal Service has become the lead story on nearly every news outlet. This confluence of events and circumstances is unique and unprecedented from a letter carrier's perspective.

The outcome of the presidential election and other races that will be decided in November will have a significant impact on the future of the Postal Service and our jobs. Most letter carriers are aware of the need for funding for USPS to sustain us through the pandemic. Most letter carriers also are aware of the need for postal reform for our long-term sustainability. Such reform must center on addressing the mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits. These are the largest issues facing us right now, but they are not the only effect that a presidential administration or Congress can have.

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You have likely seen, in this issue of *The Postal Record* or elsewhere, that the NALC Executive Council unanimously endorsed Vice President Joe Biden and Senator Kamala Harris in the 2020 presidential election. There has been and will be much more written about why Joe Biden will be the better president for letter carrier jobs. Though I strongly agree, as evidenced by my vote on the Executive Council, I am not going to do that here. First, I think we all should remind ourselves why any administration affects our jobs, and therefore why NALC endorses a candidate.

The Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 established a structure for USPS and the Postal Accountability and En-

hancement Act of 2006 made changes. The Postal Service has a much more complicated management and oversight structure than a postmaster general and other headquarters executives. This management structure is chiefly responsible for the operations of USPS, but there also are governance, oversight and regulatory arms.

The first is the United States Postal Service Board of Governors. The board oversees the USPS, much in the same way as corporations employ a board. Among its responsibilities are choosing a postmaster general and directing Postal Service expenditures, reviewing its practices and engaging in long-range planning. The board also sets policies on nearly all postal matters and addresses issues such as service standards.

The board is made up of nine governors, appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. No more than five governors can be members of the same political party. The postmaster general and assistant postmaster general also are members of the board. The president and the Senate choose the people who have a very large influence on USPS, and therefore our jobs.

The regulatory arm of the USPS is the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). The PRC regulates issues such as postal rates and provides transparency and accountability for USPS operations. It is composed of five commissioners, each of whom is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

The USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with improving the Postal Service's bottom line through independent audits and investigations. While many letter carriers are familiar with the OIG field agents, there is a large group in the Washington, DC, area that focuses on larger USPS issues than ones you may see locally. The inspector general is chosen by the USPS Board of Governors.

As you can see, the president and the Senate are responsible for choosing the people who have the most influence over the present and future of the Postal Service. Of course, Congress also has broad authority over USPS. It is important that people in all of these positions share our view of providing efficient and robust service to the American people and work toward sensible postal reform that addresses the pre-funding mandate and gives us the operational flexibility to grow our business. The future of the service we provide to our customers and our jobs will be at stake this fall when we exercise our right to vote in our democracy.