

# Regional rules



**Philip  
Dine**

**W**e've discussed the value of using local media outlets to get our message out. Though they lack the reach and prestige of national news organizations, they often are better vehicles for communicating with the public.

National outlets are seen by many people we need to reach as remote from their lives. Local media tend to be more trusted; familiar with—and to—the folks and organizations and communities they report on, their reporters liable to be standing next to you in line at the grocery store. The downside, of course, is the limited audience.

An attractive option exists in between. Regional media outlets are an overlooked resource in reaching large numbers of folks in targeted markets.

Not overlooked, however, by letter carriers.

**At a key moment for NALC, letter carriers have tapped into regional outlets in states with populations (and senators) we need to inform and influence.** Smart and quick work at all levels of our union has made that happen. Consider just a five-day stretch last month.

On Aug. 2, Texans awoke to a *Dallas Morning News* Sunday edition featuring an A1 (journalese for the front page) story. It wove together the value of the Postal Service and letter carriers, Texas voices extolling USPS, and Washington policy debates in a way that put the stakes in bold relief. The headline alone emphasized much of what we want to get across: Senate, seniors, businesses, essential agency.

The *Morning News*, influential also in Oklahoma and Arkansas, largest newspaper in the South and in any red state, is the country's sixth-largest daily newspaper. Why the story, why the great play? Largely because Region 10 National Business Agent Javier Bernal and Dallas Branch 132 President Kimetra Lewis, assisted by Houston Branch 283 President Willie Ferguson and Recording/Financial Secretary Perla Garza, provided the reporters with Texas small-business folks eager to discuss USPS's indispensable role. Javier and Kim also were quoted to great effect, as was NALC chief of staff Jim Sauber.

Three days later, a last-minute request by Florida's largest paper, the *Tampa Bay Times*, for a local letter carrier to interview about how his or her job has evolved with the pandemic and with recent operational changes, sent several NALC folks into action. Executive Vice President Brian Renfro reached out to Region 9 NBA Lynne Pendleton, who provided Tampa Branch 599 member Michael Williams. The Army veteran/reservist was interviewed late that evening after finishing his route. His engagement on short notice allowed the paper, among the country's dozen largest, to run a prominent story

on the hard work and valor of letter carriers that also featured Jose Estavez of West Coast Florida Branch 1477, a Navy veteran.

Told almost entirely through an NALC perspective, the story also quoted Florida State Association President Al Friedman and Branch 1477 President Joe Henschen. "After the story ran," the latter said, "residents were saying 'Hi' to letter carriers, telling them how proud they are of them. That's what the letter carriers I represent are telling me on the workroom floor. They were just overwhelmed with the support of the community."

A day before the Dallas story, the Allentown (PA) *Morning Call* did a story on postal operations and delivery issues, quoting NALC's statement on service issues in a manner that demonstrated our commitment to the public and to timely delivery, and benefiting from information provided by Region 12 Regional Administrative Assistant Brian Thompson. It, too, ran on A1, paired with another postal-related story on mail-in ballots—a powerful one-two punch in Pennsylvania's third-largest newspaper.

**So, in short order, impressive teamwork by letter carriers** provided several million people in key states—and their representatives, fully aware of what their constituents had just read—with helpful coverage by trusted news outlets.

That was followed by another regional tour de force, when—with deadline looming at an ABC TV affiliate in Pittsburgh, Branch 84 President Ted Lee stepped up to discuss delivery matters. The sense of mission and public service demonstrated by this Air Force and National Guard veteran resonated among a key audience in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and northern West Virginia—all the more because the reporter was known to viewers for his four decades covering Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, President Rolando helped drive coverage of USPS's quarterly financial report, with several outlets highlighting his comments emphasizing the need for pandemic-related federal assistance. The same day, he was quoted in an Associated Press story run by newspapers around the country, noting our concern about delivery issues.

**Thanks to a breadth of talent and initiative unmatched in the labor movement, this is a union clicking on all cylinders when it matters most.**

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