

Reckless chaos amidst a deadly pandemic



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In August 2020, perhaps for the first time since the Great Postal Strike of 1970, the Post Office finds itself at the center of the media universe, at the crossroads of politics, election planning and legislative maneuvering. NALC and the other postal unions are in the eye of this storm—where we are the chief defenders of our members, the Postal Service and our democracy—and the country is rallying behind its beloved Postal Service to make sure, among other things, that it can handle the flood of mail ballots expected to be cast during the pandemic.

The swirl of recent events has been extraordinary. President Donald Trump unleashed a political firestorm by launching a months-long sustained attack on the Postal Service and vote-by-mail—and then threatening to veto any COVID-19 relief legislation providing funds to the Postal Service. Of course, ensuring that the Postal Service can weather a historic pandemic should have nothing to do with state decisions on whether to expand vote-by-mail as a public health measure. We've pushed back, defending the security of vote-by-mail and challenging his contention that the Postal Service lacks the capacity to handle a surge in mail ballots. We produced a fact sheet on the 2020 general election rebutting all of this, and distributed it to Capitol Hill, the media, the labor movement and a range of public-interest groups. We also are participating in a joint task force with USPS and the other postal unions to address the challenges of our expanded role in the 2020 election. We will work to ensure coordination with state and local election officials so that ballots are handled in a timely manner.

On top of all that, a combination of old and new initiatives, directed locally or from postal headquarters, have resulted in a variety of reckless operational changes that have created chaos in delivery units and made our jobs more difficult and less efficient. Most of these initiatives are counterproductive and needlessly disruptive, and they have left letter carriers feeling angry, frustrated and embarrassed over the resulting delay and non-delivery of mail. And all of this is occurring amidst a deadly pandemic.

On a daily basis, our members bring a sense of normalcy to neighborhoods and communities throughout the country as their customers deal with the personal, economic and social effects of the seemingly endless COVID-19 pandemic. Ameri-

ca's appreciation of the Postal Service has never been greater, and our customers recognize that we are driven by our pride in providing timely service and our compassion for their well-being. But as letter carriers courageously perform their duties, there is an inevitable fear and anxiety inherent in having daily contact with co-workers and the general public during a deadly pandemic. Our members just want to come to work and be able to deliver the mail to their customers in a safe, efficient and timely manner—and then go home safely to their families. They should and must not be exposed to senseless and disruptive initiatives.

On a daily basis, we are forwarding reports of delays and non-delivery to USPS so it can account for, and correct, continued incidents of delays or non-delivery. We will continue to do so until all of the operationally generated incidents are resolved. We will take whatever internal or external steps are necessary to ensure that the level of service our customers rely on is not compromised. National-level grievances have been filed on both the Expedited to Street/Afternoon Sortation (ESAS) and the Sortation Equipment Reconciliation (SER) initiatives.

As of this writing, the ESAS program is being terminated, and the SER program is on hold while we continue discussions. The management structure of personnel and communication for city delivery has been changed with the recent USPS organizational restructuring. Through these new lines of communication, we fully expect to see an end to unilateral management initiatives, which would allow us to utilize our established joint task forces to effect meaningful changes in the areas of safety, service, workplace climate, contract compliance, efficiency and growth.

We also are in constant communication with members of Congress on both sides of the aisle regarding the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, a COVID-19 relief bill that would provide \$25 billion in financial aid to USPS to offset the effects of the pandemic, ensure high-quality service and provide hazard pay for our members and other front-line workers. After the Senate shamefully left Washington for a summer break without addressing the HEROES Act, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the House of Representatives back to Washington to pass the Delivering for America Act (S. 8015), a stand-alone postal bill that provides the \$25 billion in pandemic relief to USPS, along with measures intended to ensure quality service during the upcoming election. (Visit our website or use our Member App to follow the latest news on this legislation.)

For NALC, the bottom line is clear: We will do whatever it takes— at the bargaining table, in the halls of Congress, in the courts, in the streets and in the media—to protect the health, safety and job security of our members, and to defend the Postal Service and its essential role in American life.