

# Why the progress?



Philip  
Dine

**T**he news on the postal reform front is nothing short of remarkable.

At a time when a myriad of domestic and foreign issues loom, a key legislative measure that NALC has advocated for many years has passed the House, is being considered by the Senate and is likely to get to the White House, where President Biden plans to sign it into law.

Moreover, in an era of intense partisan discord where lawmakers seem more intent on denigrating—and even destroying—the other side than on serving the national interest, and often seem incapable of agreeing on whether it’s raining outside, representatives passed postal reform in overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion.

That they did so is, of course, good for us and the U.S. Postal Service. And, it is good for the public, the economy and the country as a whole.

**But why is this happening? What led Washington politicians to overcome the raging acrimony and reach across the aisle? Why, facing high-profile problems of inflation and immigration, schools and mandates, crime and voting rights, plus heightened tensions vis-a-vis Russia and China, did they work so hard toward postal reform?**

Lengthy questions. Short answer:

You.

You have delivered the mail on your route while so often finding the time and energy to deliver the message while off your route.

I have watched for years as you changed the national conversation about postal matters, punctured misleading conventional wisdom, informed the public and the politicians about the facts. Including the central fact—that postal red ink doesn’t signify an institution rendered obsolete by the internet, but rather an artificial crisis stemming from the 2006 pre-funding mandate.

Here’s why that matters in terms of public opinion—and, ultimately, political action: We all know of the high public approval of the Postal Service. But that has little practical import if those who depend on USPS and hold their letter carrier in high esteem think that technological progress has devastated the Postal Service. What are they to do, dismantle the internet?

But when Americans learn that the red ink instead reflects flawed public policy, their path to action is clear—they can ask their representatives why lawmakers have inflicted a manufactured crisis on an indispensable institution; why, if pre-funding future retiree health benefits is a good idea, doesn’t any other entity, public or private, have to do it; and how legislators plan to address it.

You have provided the public with other vital information as

well, through your thousands of op-eds and letters to the editor, conversations with newspaper reporters, discussions on radio and interviews on television. You have disabused people of the false notion that their taxes fund USPS. You have let folks know that the Post Office is in the Constitution, because the Founders knew the pivotal role it would play in uniting this vast nation. You have informed Americans that the Postal Service is the top civilian employer of military veterans; that letter carriers conduct the largest single-day food drive in the country and perform daily acts of courage and compassion on their routes; that an affordable means of communication is as critical for residents of rural areas and small towns as for urban dwellers. These elements appeal to lawmakers across the political spectrum.

**This has been an NALC-wide effort, from rank-and-file members to regional leaders and national officers at Headquarters, with President Rolando at the helm and getting our voice out through countless national publications and TV and radio outlets over the past dozen years. But I would argue that his actions in a second sphere have been equally important.**

Many organizations operate in top-down fashion, especially regarding communications, hoping to keep the message on target while speaking with a unified voice.

We didn’t have the luxury of playing cautiously. We were up against those intent on privatizing the world, including our employer; a few politicians obsessed with dismantling the public postal service while many legislators prioritized non-postal issues; USPS leadership that at the time sought to reduce delivery days; and media outlets that rarely delved seriously into the topic and, intentionally or not, perpetuated common myths.

We needed to inform the public of the facts, influence the pols both directly and through their constituents, and educate the press.

And so, we had to take a chance—by relying on those who are respected in their communities, large and small, throughout the country; knowledgeable about the topic; and close to the local and regional media outlets most trusted by everyday people.

With this backdrop, President Rolando had the wisdom, the foresight and the trust to unleash NALC’s greatest asset—America’s letter carriers.

And here we are.

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