

2025 National Postal Forum



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A large part of my work at NALC Headquarters is keeping track of trends and developments in the larger shipping and mailing industry, and where USPS stands within it. These observations help inform how NALC engages with the industry on Capitol Hill and in collective bargaining. One way I gain this insight is by attending the National Postal Forum (NPF) each year.

NPF is a large conference, held in collaboration with USPS leadership, that brings together thousands of people from the industry for educational sessions, a large trade show and networking events. This year's NPF was held outside Nashville, TN, at the end of April—in the time between Louis DeJoy's departure from his position as postmaster general and the naming of a new candidate.

The fact that the future of the leadership of the Postal Service, and the status of the agency itself, was unknown at the time made for an unusual gathering. The uncertainty caused by DeJoy's abrupt departure brought more people to the forum than had attended in decades. More than 5,000 people from the industry came to hear from postal leadership.

Educational sessions at the forum are primarily held by USPS leadership, and this year's topics ranged from high-level overviews of the network changes being made based on the Delivering for America (DFA) plan to detailed classes about the design of election mail envelopes aimed at local and state election staff. I attended sessions about what is being done to keep letter carriers and mail safe (electronic locks to replace Arrow Keys, high-security collection boxes and Postal Inspection Service investigative operations targeting organized crime); new parcel product offerings meant to attract new package business, which will be critical to the future financial stability of USPS (including a new Same-Day USPS Connect service in certain parts of the country); and the redesign of certain post offices in high-traffic areas around the country (opening up certain lobby access 24 hours a day, self-service kiosks, new post office box services and rapid package drop-off stations). Overall, these sessions emphasized that the Postal Service is continuing its implementation of the DFA despite leadership changes.

Other educational sessions were held by individuals from the industry and also covered a wide range of topics. I attended several sessions about the use of



artificial intelligence (AI) in the postal network. One session covered the use of AI and robotics in sorting facilities, and another covered the use of AI in last-mile routing. While it seems that this technology is still years away from having a siz-

able effect due to the investment needed to begin such a project and the sheer amount of data needed to do so, they are two topics that will almost certainly affect the postal workforce in coming years, and it was informative to hear the perspective of those who want to implement these changes.

While walking through the exhibit hall, talking with people in the educational sessions and attending the forum's networking events, I heard a range of opinions about the Postal Service and its operations. But one sentiment stood out: unease about the future of USPS leadership. Some mailers and shippers voiced concerns about the momentum of the DFA and hoped that new leadership might change course. Others, often small e-commerce shops, said they have welcomed the Postal Service's efforts to create new products and services that help them run their businesses.

Ambiguity about the future of USPS leadership was not the only source of uncertainty. Many international shippers spoke about the unpredictability that new tariffs and changes to de minimis tax exemptions have entered into the network. At the time, it seemed unclear what the impact would be, but many expected shipping costs to rise, possibly negatively affecting volumes and also prompting shipping routes to potentially change.

Despite all this uncertainty, NPF highlighted a statistic that NALC cites frequently. With 640,000 employees, USPS is at the center of the \$1.92 trillion mailing industry that employs more than 7.9 million Americans (5 percent of all jobs nationwide).

To be quite honest, I went into the forum this year expecting to feel worried about the future of our industry. There are certainly threats to worry about—the use of AI to speed up jobs, the ability of USPS to successfully turn its network changes into new business, and the specter of privatization, to name a few.

Instead, the forum was a reminder that so many depend on the Postal Service, both the entities that send and those that receive. I hope other attendees left with that reminder, too, and understand what's at stake.