

Military, message, media



Philip Dine

We all know the value of having so many military veterans in our ranks, a value reflected in the contributions they make to our craft and our union, the unique experiences and perspectives they offer, and the richness they add to the fabric of the NALC at all levels.

We see it, more precisely, in the leadership they provide to our union. In their daily sense of mission on the route and their determination to overcome any obstacles that jeopardize that mission. In their situational awareness that manifests itself in dangerous situations and that so often is reflected in the annual Heroes ceremonies.

Today, I'd like to focus on another benefit—less obvious, perhaps, but no less significant—of the presence of letter carriers who are wearing their second uniform in service to our country: How it enhances our ability to communicate with the press, the public and the politicians. This merits some explanation, which I'll get to shortly, but first let's note that NALC's communications efforts are vital to everything our union aims to do, given the nature of the letter carrier job and our resulting reliance on elected officials and, by extension, their constituents.

Whether we're aiming to support—or stop—bills in Congress, to influence the national conversation or inform USPS management, or to get public officials/law enforcement to act decisively to counter the criminal targeting of letter carriers, persuasive messaging is paramount. Indeed, communicating effectively boosts NALC's efforts to achieve everything else we seek to accomplish, while subpar messaging impedes those efforts.

So, what does this have to do with our veterans? A great deal. Having so many co-workers who are wearing their second uniform in service to our nation helps in a myriad of ways; two key ones among them.

First, it boosts our credibility with, and access to, media outlets, particularly those that lean conservative. Many a time I've reached out to the latter, only to quickly hear, in a dismissive tone, "Wait, you're with a union, right?" (As in, can they please get off the phone ASAP?)

My typical reply: "Yes, we are a union. Do you have 30 seconds?"

Granted somewhat grudging permission, I continue, "Here are a few things you might not know about the Postal Service and about letter carriers: The Postal Service is based in the Constitution, it relies on earned revenue rather than

taxpayer funding, it's critical to rural areas, and more than 1 in 5 letter carriers are military veterans."

At that point, the response is usually along the lines of, "Can you tell me more?" Or, "So what did you want to discuss?"

Conversely, when a reporter working on a postal story calls, though by definition they're already interested, that interest only intensifies when they're told that USPS is the largest civilian employer of military vets. What their mind goes to is the prospect that their editor or producer will be impressed that they know this, will likely give the story better play if this additional element can be worked in, and further that the report might resonate a tad more with their audience.

Then, if we can provide the journalist with a letter carrier who fits the bill, it's off to the races.

Second, the veteran angle can prove useful when brought to bear in the voice of a letter carrier speaking at an "Enough is enough" rally or another gathering. It can be seamlessly worked into a speech along the lines of, "I've seen combat overseas, so danger isn't foreign to me, but the last thing I—or my fellow carriers—should be confronted with while delivering mail in our community is a gun pointed at us."

That not only drives home the crime/safety issue, it also offers the reporter and his viewers/readers/listeners an intriguing perspective. And, during the inevitable post-rally one-on-one interviews, journalists hoping to include an element that their competitors might not report on will likely pursue this issue in greater depth with the carrier.

If you'd like to work such an angle into your speech or interview, feel free to reach out and we can discuss ways to do so.

In closing, a salute to our members who have served so we can remain free. On a personal level, I had the opportunity for two decades to report on our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines here and abroad, from the Pentagon to the battlefield. For the past 15 years, I've had the privilege of working with you within NALC as you once again serve our nation—and my respect and admiration for your courage and sacrifice have only increased.

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Director of Communications and Media Relations Philip Dine
Managing Editor Mike Shea
Writer/Editor Rick Hodges
Writer/Editor Jenessa Wagner
Editorial Assistant Sarah Eccleston

The Postal Record (ISSN 0032-5376) is published monthly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Subscription included in membership dues. First-class subscription available for \$20 per year (contact Membership Department).

© 2025 by the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Circulation: 287,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube by going to NALC.org.

