



NALC's legislation— What are YOU doing?

As every member should know by now, the NALC has placed great emphasis on our legislative initiatives. There are many reasons why we have stressed the importance of ensuring that every member is legislatively active. Of course, the first and foremost reason at this time is postal reform. But as important as postal reform is, there are many other pieces of legislation of great importance to all postal employees.

While many active employees continue to ignore legislation such as the Windfall Elimination Provision, the Government Pension Offset and the Premium Conversion, legislation, their ignorance may come back to haunt them the day they become a retiree. No matter which retirement system you are enrolled in, you will begin to be penalized upon retirement unless we amend legislation now pending. Employees enrolled under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) as well as those enrolled under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) will suddenly find themselves being taxed on their health insurance premiums. Active employees currently pay their health insurance premium with pre-tax dollars! So, support HR 994 and S 484!

And prepare yourselves for another surprise if you are a CSRS retiree. Think you will supplement your retirement annuity with Social Security benefits? Guess again! Regardless of how you earned it, your Social Security payment will be reduced because you also collect a federal annuity. There are a few exceptions, but most letter carriers do not qualify for them. To make matters worse, it affects your *spouse's* benefit as well! So, support HR 1690 and S 619, too.

Still taking a blasé attitude about our legislative awareness campaign? It is time to get on board, folks. Unless you get off your rumps and get involved, you will always be fed crumbs.

Mid-term elections are fast approaching. The way I see it, you have a choice. You can sit back, do nothing, and continue to get what falls your way, or you can follow the lead and get active politically and foster change.

The WEP, GPO and Premium Conversion bills that affect us all continue to languish in committee, destined to rot there without change. You cannot leave it up to a handful of retired union activists like Murray Ross, Carl Bernacky, Norm LeFrois and Doug Gulley to do all the work for you. Continuing to ignore the many pleas I have made in this column

to get politically active gets you squat! You **must** get on board or we will continue to lose the battle.

I periodically receive letters from frustrated retirees complaining that their Social Security benefit is being stolen from them by WEP, or they are unhappy paying tax on their medical premiums, etc. When I search the record of those members, I almost *always* find that they are *not* signed up as an e-Activist nor have they *ever* donated a dime to COLCPE. How do you expect to get the job done? You may not like the system, but, for now, it is all we have.

Since our retired members are not fully responding to our calls for action via *The Postal Record*, it could be that they are not reading it, or they *cannot* read it because of vision or other problems. In that case, local directors of retired members hold the key to reaching out to our 87,000 retired members and their families.

Active directors such as Don Anderson of Branch 9 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Clarence “Smokey” Smekofski of Branch 28 in St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as Don DeCoste of Branch 1071 in Miami, Florida, and Gene Markey of Branch 1477 in St. Petersburg, Florida, have had enormous success keeping their respective branch and state retirees informed on current issues and participating in local endeavors. They have also managed to keep them *politically* motivated and have seen much success in their letter-writing and voter registration efforts.

I have to applaud the efforts of retirees across the country, like the ones mentioned, for their vigilance, and I urge all local branches to get on board. There is a lot of work to be done for our retired members and those who will be retired soon.

Every branch across the country should have a director of retired members. If your branch does not, urge it to get one. In these days of shared services, they will prove to be an extremely valuable asset. Armed with the new NALC Retirement Manual, local DRMs and local branch officers can provide valuable assistance to those members planning to retire and those already retired. But even more importantly, branch DRMs should serve as an additional liaison to local retirees. Providing a place to meet, and armed with the necessary tools, the DRM can motivate retirees to take action both locally and legislatively to turn things around for the members of this union. ☒