



National Association  
of Letter Carriers

William H. Young, President

May 15, 2009 No. 09-09

# NALC Bulletin

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## Specter Tells Pennsylvania Carriers He Seeks 'Middle Ground' on EFCA

### Cross-over Lawmaker Gets Standing Ovation; Ohio Legislative Activists Also In Washington



Legislative activists from Ohio and Pennsylvania were the latest NALC delegations coming to Washington to lobby on Capitol Hill. In top row (l-r) Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA), a supporter of H.R. 22, said he was open to continued dialogue about EFCA legislation; Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-PA), on board both H.R. 22 and EFCA, thanked carriers for their support in winning a House seat; and Sen. Arlen Specter (D-PA) says he wants compromise language in a new EFCA bill. Also pictured is Pennsylvania President Joseph Antal. In bottom row, Ohio NALC State President Tony Heitic speaks; part of the breakfast crowd at the Ohio delegation's annual congressional affair in Washington, as President Young, r, outlines the union's latest legislative positions.

(Photos by Mike Shea and Joe Conway).

Hundreds of letter carriers from Ohio and Pennsylvania rolled through the halls of Congress in early May pressing for passage of H.R. 22 to help ease the Postal Service's financial problems and enactment of the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) to aid all workers across the nation.

As is common with most delegations of state legislative activists that visit Washington, both states hosted congressional breakfasts. The highlight this year was the appearance at the 50th Pennsylvania Congressional Breakfast on May 7 of Sen. Arlen Specter, who as a Republican stood side-by-side with letter carriers on most critical issues, often angering many in that political party.

Specter has been a frequent speaker at the annual gathering, but this time was different, having switched only 10 days earlier from Republican to Democrat as he seeks re-election in 2010. Although he has sided with organized labor many times over the years, Specter has indicated he would oppose passage of EFCA in its present form.

In remarks before Specter spoke, President Young said that it appears that EFCA legislation — which the NALC strongly endorses — cannot get through Congress as it is currently written.

**"But I think there is interest in Congress in leveling this playing field," Young said. "When you build up the middle class, the upper class moves up as well. I am encouraged that if we work together, we can get a lot of things done."**

Specter, who received a standing ovation from his home-state carriers, noted that he has been with letter carriers on every issue from contracting out to pension offset to windfall elimination legislation, even as a Republican.

**"The Employees Free Choice Act is a matter where we're working hard to find some middle ground where we can get some legislation," Specter said. "There is no doubt that there is an imbalance with a lot of jobs being sent overseas and with pensions in jeopardy and with health care at risk."**

Specter added that he works well with the two Senate stalwarts of EFCA, Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA).

He also assailed the National Labor Relations Board for not doing its job, saying "they've become dysfunctional and very highly politicized."

Specter, who has Hodgkin's Disease and has dealt with several bouts of chemotherapy, said that his health is coming along well.

"I'm at the top of my game and I'm full of vim, vigor and vitality and I really appreciate all the support you've given me in the past," Specter told the Pennsylvania carriers. "We're getting into the election season and we've got another tough battle coming up and I'm ready, willing and anxious to take on all comers and continue to come to these breakfasts for as many years as you'll invite me."

## Young Says Postage Rate Increases Yet Another Reason to Pass H.R. 22

In a national press release on the day first-class postage rose to 44 cents, President Young explained that frequent postage rate increases — while necessary for the U.S. Postal Service to function effectively this year — can be delayed or even avoided in the future if Congress is willing to help.

"Six-day, universal mail delivery in the United States remains the best postal bargain in the world," said Young. "Despite the economic climate, letter carriers and other postal employees are working hard to maintain top-rate service for all Americans while adjusting to the many technological changes in the communications field."

But Young said the rate hike should not have been needed, at least not at this time.

**"Future postage rate increases could be delayed or even avoided on a regular basis if Congress would act to rescind some of the onerous financial shackles imposed on the Postal Service by the previous administration," Young said.**

Young said Congress should pass and send to President Obama H.R. 22 to correct the payment schedule for pre-funding retiree health benefits of postal employees, which currently costs USPS more than \$5.5 billion a year. The legislation would save the Postal Service an average of \$3.5 billion a year by adjusting the pre-funding schedule, and allow those funds to be used for day-to-day postal operations.

No other government agency or major corporation has such an onerous and unnecessary retiree health benefit funding obligation.

In addition, Young said Congress needs to rescind the requirement that the Postal Service pay retiree benefits for employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) for the years they served in the U.S. military. That change alone would save the Postal Service billions of dollars.

### Postal Service Reports \$1.9 Billion 2nd Q Loss

The Postal Service reported May 5 that it ended the second quarter of its fiscal year (Jan. 1–Mar. 31) with a net loss of \$1.9 billion due to the effects of the recession, long-term financial pressure and continuing erosion of mail volume. Mail volume during the quarter was 43.8 billion pieces, down 14.7 percent from the same period a year ago.

"The economic recession has been tough on the mailing industry, and we have seen an unprecedented decline in mail volumes and revenue that continued to accelerate during the second quarter," PMG John E. Potter told the Board of Governors, adding that the Postal Service is aggressively realigning costs and developing incentive programs to increase mail volume.

## NALC HBP Announces Huge Room Rate Reduction For Health Benefit Seminar in Las Vegas in October

The Flamingo Las Vegas hotel, recognizing the tough economic times, has reduced the special NALC room rate for the upcoming October 18-21 NALC Health Benefit Seminar.

The original room rate was \$129 per night. The new rate is \$55 for weekdays (Sunday–Thursday) and \$105 for weekends (Friday and Saturday). Individuals must place their reservations by July 18 to take advantage of the new, lower rates. After that, the rate will revert to \$129 per night.

"This year's seminar will be the official 'kick-off' of our 60th Anniversary celebration," said Director, Health Benefit Plan Timothy O'Malley. "We hope you will join us in Las Vegas this coming October for this informative seminar and see what the NALC Health Benefit Plan has to offer for 2010!"

## Young Appoints Bledsoe, Wittenburg As Business Agents in Regions 4 & 7

### Tillman and Karnopp Named Regional Administrative Assistants

President Young has elevated two regional administrative assistants to the positions of National Business Agent to succeed retiring NBAs Wesley Davis in Region 4 (Denver) and Ned Furru in Region 7 (Minneapolis).

- Roger W. Bledsoe, 48, a member of Branch 458 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was appointed by Young to succeed Davis, who is retiring after more than six years as NBA for Region 4, which covers Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

- Christopher E. Wittenburg, 48, a member of Branch 28 in St. Paul, Minnesota, was named to succeed Furru, who is retiring after four years as NBA for Region 7, covering Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.



Roger Bledsoe



Chris Wittenburg

**"All members of this union are indebted to Brothers Davis and Furru for their dedication and determination in representing the interests of letter carriers for many years throughout much of the heartland of America," Young said. "Their experience and leadership will be missed, but I am confident that we have two excellent individuals to continue their work."**

Young also appointed **Ray M. Tillman**, 53, of Branch 642 in Boulder, Colorado to replace Bledsoe as Region 4 RAA, and **Jason A. Karnopp**, 33, of Branch 9, Minneapolis, Minnesota, to replace Wittenburg as Region 7 RAA.

Before being appointed an RAA by President Young in December 2006, Wittenburg was vice president of St. Paul Branch 28 and was a member of the first class of the NALC Leadership Academy. He also trained as an NALC arbitration advocate and served as a shop steward, branch assistant secretary-treasurer and head of several branch committees.

Bledsoe was named RAA in Region 4 by former President Vincent R. Sombrotto in September 1998. He served on the Dispute Resolution Team (DRT) for the Oklahoma District and was branch secretary for the Oklahoma City branch. Bledsoe also served as a branch trustee, shop steward and arbitration advocate.

### Another Successful Food Drive!

## In Time of Economic Distress Letter Carriers Deliver Again!

### Some Branches Report Record Collections; Final National Total to be Released June 1



Photos (clockwise from top left) show Deltona, Florida Branch 1091 food drive coordinator Lynne Pendelton immersed in her truckload of food; at Garden Grove, California, Branch 1100 members (l-r) Raul Gonzalez, Nate Sowell and Frank Nguyen move the food; Cathy Gagne of Connecticut Merged Branch 20 fills a truck with goods; and Spirit Lake, Iowa Branch 3463 President Ken Henderson and carrier Crystal Blair handle some nice poundage for the drive.

Preliminary reports from across the nation indicate that city letter carriers, rural carriers, other postal employees and volunteers scored another triumph in 2009, collecting millions of pounds of food for community food banks, pantries and shelters despite the dismal economic climate that has adversely impacted most Americans.

Among the branches that have already reported in their poundage, a number reflect all-time highs, with others showing the effects of the poor economy.

"The preliminary numbers are phenomenal," John Herr, a drive leader in Indiana's Boone and Hamilton Counties for Branch 39, told the *Indianapolis (IN) Star*, adding that it was a record-setting year.

In Albert Lea, Minnesota, Scott Pirsig, coordinator for Branch 718, said a new record was set there this year, too.

"In the situation we are in economically, for people to step up and give more than ever really makes a statement that people are looking out for their neighbors," Pirsig told the *Albert Lea Tribune*.

**The deadline for all reports to be received at NALC headquarters is May 26. The final, official national total will be announced on Monday, June 1.**

NALC President William H. Young thanked all letter carriers and other postal employees and volunteers for the hard work they put in to make the drive a success.

"Letter carriers, more than any other workers, see first hand how the sagging economy has hurt so many families throughout the nation," Young said. "We are eye witnesses to their despair every day."

**"This union is proud to be able to help these struggling families get through the summer months, and we are especially thankful to our brothers and sisters represented by the National Rural Letter Carriers Association for pitching in and including so many of their routes in this drive."**

Young expressed appreciation to the union's national partners in the drive — the U.S. Postal Service's Priority Mail, Campbell Soup Company, Valpak Direct Marketing Systems, United Way of America and local United Ways, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions, the Feeding America food bank network and our longtime friend, cartoonist Bill Keane. Young said he was also thankful to Valassis Communications for the Red Plum circulars, and to the Harlem Globetrotters, actors David Arquette and Courteney Cox, and celebrity host Ryan Seacrest for their promotional support of the effort.

**Additional coverage and photos of the 2009 food drive will be seen in future NALC Bulletins and the June and July issues of the Postal Record.**

### Send in Totals!

Branch coordinators should return the official results form immediately to NALC headquarters so the national total can be tabulated and branch results published in the Postal Record. **Results must be received at NALC Headquarters by May 26** by mail, fax to (202) 737-1540, or e-mail to [vonbergen@nalc.org](mailto:vonbergen@nalc.org).

**If you fax the results, make sure to mail in a copy also.**

## Still No Fifth COLA Accumulation

Despite a modest increase in the Consumer Price Index for April for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) released on May 15, there is still no projected accumulation for the fifth regular cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) period under the 2006-2011 National Agreement, nor any projected accumulation toward the 2010 retiree COLA.

The fifth contract COLA is to be based on inflation as determined by the CPI-W between January 2009 and July 2009. As announced previously, there was no pay adjustment for the fourth COLA period.

**There will be no further adjustment during the 2006-2011 contract period until the CPI-W exceeds the 644.303 mark recorded last July. The CPI-W for April was 619.344.**

There also was no accumulation yet toward the 2010 retiree COLA following release of the April CPI-W by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The 2010 retiree COLA will be based on the increase in the average CPI-W between the third quarter of 2008 and the third quarter of 2009.

The projected accumulation toward the 2010 COLA for Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) participants stands at 1.5 percent through April. FECA COLAs are applicable only in cases where death or disability occurred more than one year prior to the adjustment's effective date.