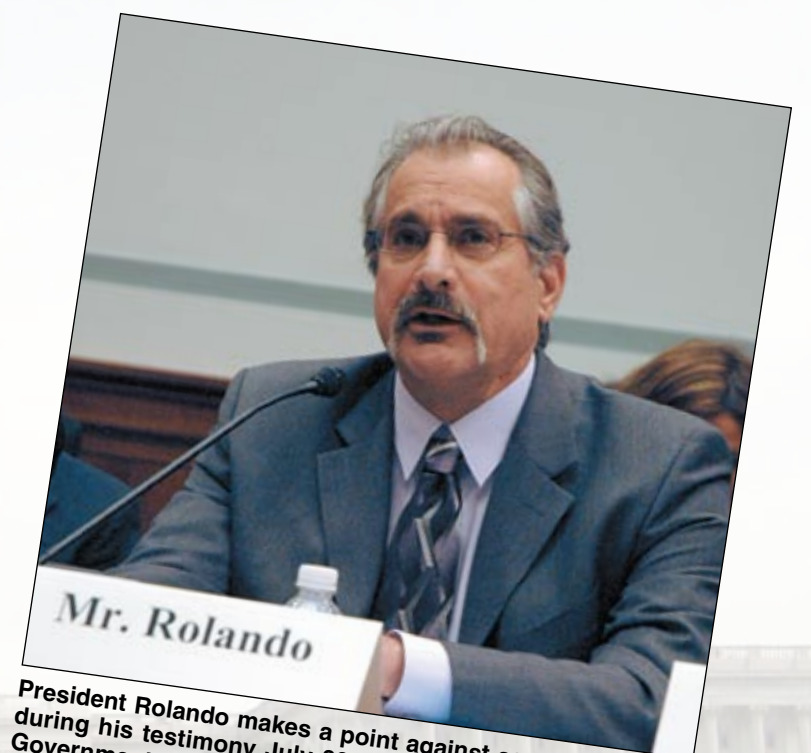


Rolando Fights for Carriers on Capitol Hill

Tells Congressional Hearings USPS Should Expand, Not Reduce, Services



NALC President assails anti-union amendments to S. 1507 in testimony August 6 before Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security.



President Rolando makes a point against service cutbacks during his testimony July 30 before House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia.

Insists Congress Not Meddle With Contract Negotiations

Opposes Committee-approved Amendment To Tilt Bargaining Towards Management

NALC President Fred V. Rolando, testifying before separate House and Senate hearings within seven days, told Congress that Postal Service plans to cut back mail delivery to five days a week were "shortsighted" and assuredly harmful to restoring the historic institution when the economy rebounds. He also assailed a last-minute anti-union amendment to Senate legislation to ease prefunding requirements for retiree health benefits as a "poison pill" aimed at giving postal management an unfair advantage in future collective bargaining.



Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE) subcommittee chair, and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) full committee chair, confer while listening to testimony by labor panel. Photo by Mike Shea.

The NALC had backed S. 1507 introduced by Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) in its original form, but now opposes the version headed to the Senate floor because of the anti-worker language added in committee at the behest of Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK). The amendment would require an arbitrator to consider the Postal Service's financial situation before issuing an arbitration award. Since arbitrators already consider postal finances, the amendment effectively elevates financial concerns over all other factors and give postal management the upper hand in collective bargaining.

"Using the short-term emergency relief legislation as a last-minute vehicle during a markup session to address long-term labor practices is short sighted, unbalanced in its nature, and is an inappropriate vehicle for such an important and labor specific issue," Rolando told the Senate subcommittee August 6.

He said the NALC is adamantly opposed to the amendment offered by Coburn, saying its inclusion serves only to upset the balanced collective bargaining procedure established by President Nixon nearly 40 years ago, which was incorporated into Postal Reorganization Act of 1970.

"During those 40 years numerous interest arbitrations have been conducted in accordance with the existing provisions of the Act," Rolando said. "I can assure you that in resolving critical collective bargaining impasses, the arbitrators and the parties have consistently examined and taken into account the financial condition of the Postal Service, along with many other relevant factors."

After hearing Rolando's testimony, as well as that of APWU President William Burrus, full committee chairman Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), Carper and Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL) indicated they were not fully aware of the impact Coburn's language would have on collective bargaining when the bill was "marked up". Lieberman asked the panel to submit a list of other areas the arbitrator should consider in reaching an award.

Supports H.R. 22

However, Rolando did testify, as he did in favor of H.R. 22 on the House side, in favor of the core provisions of S. 1507 – relief for the Postal Service from the requirement to pre-fund the massive 75 year liability for retirees' health benefits over just a 10 year period. Rolando noted that no other company in America is required to pre-fund future retirement benefits at all, much less at such an accelerated pace.

The exorbitant cost of prefunding — \$5.4 billion this year — accounts for most of the \$6-\$7 billion that the USPS anticipates it will lose this year.

In both the House and Senate hearings, Rolando urged Congress to ensure that structural changes being made in U.S. Postal Service operations due to the nation's current economic crisis — such as its study of reducing mail delivery to five days a week and its ongoing postal branch and station 'optimization' program — do not cause more harm than good over the long term to its mission of delivering mail to the American people.

"Short-term savings that undermine the Postal Service's capacity to offer new services and to take advantage of future growth opportunities such as Vote by Mail, e-commerce deliveries, and other potential uses of our incomparable delivery network would be self-defeating," Rolando added.

Rolando emphasized the NALC's long history of working with postal management to improve efficiency and adjust to change, including a new dispute resolution process, health and safety initiatives, and the automated sequencing of letter mail. He noted that the union and management are currently engaged in a joint process to adjust delivery routes in response to the steep decline in mail volume resulting from the current economic crisis.



Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) quizzes a witness during House hearing, during which the congressman concluded that the USPS consolidations and cutbacks "have the stench of privatization."

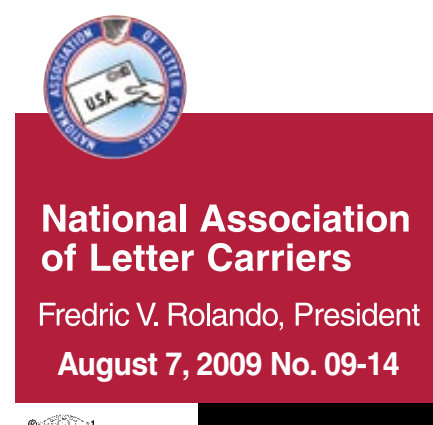
'Knee-jerk Reaction'

He told the Senate panel that the Postal Service should experiment with utilizing our "last mile" advantage in areas beyond traditional mail, whether that means conducting the Census or national polling, delivering medications or helping law enforcement in any number of ways.

"There are endless opportunities for the Postal Service, but it will never be able to take advantage of them if we begin closing our doors and limiting our services to our customers as a knee-jerk reaction to a temporary and fixable problem," Rolando said.

"That is why we must be careful with branch and station consolidations and reject drastic proposals like the elimination of Saturday delivery," Rolando added. "The cost of lost opportunities from service cuts and other operational changes must be recognized."

During his House testimony, Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) questioned Rolando on whether



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100 Indiana Ave. NW Washington, DC 20001-2144 202.393.4695 www.nalc.org

'Poison Pill' Amendment Must be Removed; Letter Carriers Need to Contact Senators

President Rolando has called on all e-Activists and other NALC members to immediately contact their senators and ask them to help remove the anti-worker amendment from S. 1507 when it comes up on the Senate floor after the Labor Day recess.

He bluntly called the arbitration amendment a "poison pill" that makes it impossible for NALC to support the bill as long as the provision remains in it. The measure would give management an unfair advantage in the event of a bargaining impasse in negotiations on a new contract that triggers binding arbitration.

"It is very disappointing that committee members would interfere with postal collective bargaining and seek to put a thumb on the scale in favor of postal management in the next round of bargaining," Rolando said. "We will lobby to eliminate the amendment from the final bill and we're committed to resisting its inclusion in any legislation that emerges from Congress."

Rolando Elected AFL-CIO Vice President; Executive Council Hails Young's Tenure

NALC President Fred Rolando on July 28 was elected an AFL-CIO Vice President and member of the 11 million-member labor federation's Executive Council following the resignation of past NALC President William H. Young.

Noting Young's departure, the Council passed a resolution praising Young as "a leader not only of the NALC but of the entire union movement," adding that he served as vice chair of the council's Community Partnerships Committee and as a member of both its Executive Committee and Political Committee.

It noted that in 2008, under Young's direction, more than 300 Letter Carriers members and staff were sent throughout the country to help elect a president and Congress on the side of working families and that Young personally joined NALC staffers and officers as volunteers at AFL-CIO headquarters for the Labor 2008 phone bank.

It also praised Young as one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the Employee Free Choice Act.

"On behalf of the 11 million members of the AFL-CIO throughout the country, we thank our good friend and brother Bill Young for everything he has achieved for the Letter Carriers and the AFL-CIO, and we give him our very warmest wishes for many happy years of retirement," the resolution concluded.

Bernal, Birkett Appointed RAAs in Regions 10 & 5

President Rolando has appointed, effective August 3, two new Regional Administrative Assistants to fill vacancies in Regions 10 (Dallas) and 5 (St. Louis).

Javier J. Bernal, 49, of Branch 283 in Houston, Texas, was named RAA in the Dallas Region (Texas and New Mexico) to fill the spot of Kathy Baldwin, who was elevated to National Business Agent following the retirement of Gene Goodwin.

Michael J. Birkett, 53, of Branch 257 in Dubuque, Iowa, was named RAA in the St. Louis Region (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas) to fill the position of Nicole Rhine, who was appointed National Assistant Secretary-Treasurer when George Mignosi was elevated to Vice President.

Bernal, a graduate of the NALC's Leadership Academy, Class 7, served as a shop steward for 19 years in his home local and also was a DRT certified Step B and an NALC advocate. He joined the Postal Service in 1982 following a stint in the U.S. Navy.

Birkett, president of the Iowa State Association since 2003, served three years with the U.S. Army Military Police before joining the Postal Service in 1984. He quickly became active in the NALC and served 10 years as branch president, among other posts.

Mutual Benefit Association Issues Poster of Products

The NALC Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) has issued a new poster in applicable states that reflects life and annuity products available to NALC members and their families.

Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren noted that the MBA was established at the 1891 Detroit Convention as a fraternal organization offering life insurance protection to members.

"Since that time, MBA has provided thousands of NALC members and their families with financial security and the peace of mind of just knowing that they have coverage through their union," Warren said.



instituting a five-day week of delivery should be "off the table."

'Down a Dark Road'

Rolando said that while it obviously has an effect on NALC members, it deals more importantly with the institution of the Postal Service.

"I believe that's a short-sighted response, five-day delivery," he said. "I think they (USPS) are going down a totally dark road to respond to the crisis. What we need to do is expand the business. You can look at going from six to five-day, and if you need some money next year, you go to four-day, to three-day, to two-day. It's just dismantling."

"We do not need to destroy the Postal Service to save it," Rolando said in concluding his Senate testimony.