



Massachusetts Rep. Stephen Lynch (r), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, asks a question of the panel of postal labor leaders. Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz (l) joined in the discussion.

# Wrong medicine could kill USPS

Young attacks  
new calls for  
five-day delivery  
from management

**D**iscarding much of his prepared testimony and showing flashes of strong emotion, NALC President William H. Young told the House subcommittee that oversees the Postal Service that USPS leaders have the wrong prescription if they think cutting mail delivery to five days a week would cure the Postal Service's economic problems.

In fact, he warned, that is exactly the kind of medicine that could weaken and perhaps kill the patient.

The elixir to get the Service on the mend, Young said, would be passage of H.R. 22, the bipartisan legislation to reduce the pre-funding obligation of USPS for retiree health benefits, and legislation to make the Treasury pay for military pension benefits earned by postal employees. Current law shifts the cost of these benefits onto the Postal Service.

"This is not the time to undercut public and mailer respect for, and reliance on, the Postal Service by reducing service drastically and counterproductively to five days a week," Young said. "The nation's mailers have diverse needs and business is conducted six days a week in America. In general, they want six-day delivery, need six-day delivery, and expect six-day delivery."

The NALC president's statements at the March 25 hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia came after both Postmaster General John E. Potter and USPS Board of Governors Chairman Carolyn Gallagher asked the panel earlier in the day for congressional authority to cut back mail delivery to five days a week.

In a daylong hearing, the subcommittee heard from a variety of witnesses. Along with President Young, they included the presidents of the three

other postal craft unions and representatives of the management associations.

## Six days is the law

Federal law now requires the Postal Service to deliver mail six days per week. Young testified that if the USPS does not provide such comprehensive service, "someone will demand the right to do it (deliver mail on the sixth day), and that will only add to the Service's woes."

In laying out NALC's case for H.R. 22, Young told the lawmakers, "We are not looking for a bailout. We are not looking for a government handout or a loan or a subsidy or a tax break." Rather, he said, "We are looking for the ability to use the Postal Service's own money to get over a cash flow crunch."

Young said more than 200 House members have signed on as co-sponsors of H.R. 22, authored by Reps. John McHugh (R-NY) and Danny Davis (D-IL), including nine of the 11 members of the subcommittee. (The number of co-sponsors was nearly 260 by mid-April.)

Saying "my members are plenty angry," President Young charged, "The financial elite of this country, aided and abetted by misguided deregulation, have trashed our economy, and the historic recession we face threatens the jobs and well-being of 700,000 postal families.... Nothing we did, nothing the Postal Service did, and nothing the postal industry did caused this crisis." In fact, he noted that the NALC was working to aid the Postal Service even before the recession turned into a crisis by speeding up route adjustments that saved hundreds of millions of dollars.

He said letter carriers know something about helping out in a crisis, about steadiness when there is panic in the air, about sharing, and about sacrifice. Letter carriers, he reminded



the representatives, didn't panic when anthrax contaminated the mail stream. "They continued to do their jobs in a very frightening environment," Young said. Thanks to that steadfast service, "there was no public panic and eventually things returned to normal."

Similarly, when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, it was not until letter carriers reappeared on the streets that a sense of normalcy returned and public anxiety began to fade, he said. And, when the Department of Homeland Security needed a way to distribute medication in the event of a biological attack, letter carriers stepped up, volunteering to do the job under the Cities Readiness Initiative.

### 'We need your help'

"We do these things because we accept our role in society," he said. "We are the men and women trusted by

America to deliver their mail. We come to you now because the Postal Service is in trouble and we need your help."

Young said that before Congress considers drastic—and ultimately counterproductive—measures such as moving toward five-day delivery or redefining "universal service," it should take other steps to strengthen the Postal Service, starting with passage of H.R. 22.

Americans "may not appreciate AIG traders scurrying off with multimillion-dollar bonuses, using the taxpayers' hard-earned money," Young said, "but they do appreciate their letter carrier, earning his middle class salary, paying her taxes, raising their children in their community—and faithfully delivering their mail every day." ✉

See the NALC website, [nalc.org](http://nalc.org), for the full text of President Young's prepared testimony as submitted to the subcommittee.

**President Young warns the subcommittee against authorizing the Postal Service to go to five-day delivery service.**

## Other union presidents' views:

"There is no desire, and it is certainly over Congress' dead body, that they'll get a five-day delivery. Mentioning those things sucks all the oxygen out of the discussion while we are collectively fighting as hard as we can to get H.R. 22 passed."

—APWU President William Burrus



"I think there needs to be some streamlining in middle management. We've got too many people that are not actually handling the mail telling people that are handling the mail what they need to do and how they need to do it."

—Rural Carriers President Don Cantriel



"One thing I caution that you should not do is go to five-day delivery. I think that would ... drive people to the Internet. The first time ... your credit card bill goes late, they are going to say, 'The heck with this, I can go online and do all that stuff and save myself some postage.'"

— Mail Handlers President John Hegarty

