



President Young thanked the legislative delegates from New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania for the effort they made in traveling to Washington, DC, to lobby their congressional representatives.

Carriers target relief for USPS, Employee Free Choice Act

Hundreds of letter carrier activists from New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania visited Washington over the course of three consecutive weeks in late April and early May, part of an ongoing effort to win congressional support for legislation crucial to the NALC, the Postal Service and to the larger labor movement.

“Our members know that we can’t rest on our accomplishments. We can’t be satisfied with our past political successes,” said NALC President William H. Young. “Our employer is in trouble and the middle class is under siege.

“That’s why so many of our activists choose to come to Washington on their own time to lobby their House and Senate members.”

In addressing the various groups, President Young reiterated that passage of H.R. 22 is critical to the survival of the Postal Service and that it is NALC’s top legislative priority. The measure would amend the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act to allow the USPS to make payments into its retiree health insurance fund on a more affordable schedule. The change could save USPS around \$3 billion a year through 2016. At press time, nearly 300 of the House’s 435 members had signed on as co-sponsors to the bill.

Young also rejected the view of some Washington pundits and big-time lobbyists who say there is no chance for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. “There’s still plenty of reason for optimism,” he said. “Big business may be claiming victory, but it ain’t so. We just need to keep the heat on.” (*Rank-and-file letter carriers are fanning the flames for EFCA—see story, page 14.*)

New York congressional reception



Executive Vice President Fred Rolando (r) meets Rep. Christopher Lee (R-26) during the congressional reception on April 22.

New York letter carrier lobbyists spent their day in Washington on April 22, first meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill, then attending a legislative training and rap session with NALC national officers and Legislative and Political Department staff. That evening, the Empire State delegation hosted a legislative reception that featured the state’s new senator, Kirsten Gillibrand, who was appointed to fill the seat vacated by Hillary Rodham Clinton when she became Secretary of State in January.

At the New York rap session, President Young congratulated letter carriers for their role in achieving the union’s political goals over the last few years. He said increased contributions to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE), the letter

carriers' political action fund, have been a vital tool in the effort to protect letter carrier jobs, wages and benefits.

"Your generous support of COLCPE is one of the main reasons we now have a Congress and [presidential] administration that truly believes in organized labor," Young said. *(For an update on the latest Gimme 5 COLCPE fundraising contest, see page 16.)*



Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D) thanks NALC for its support when she was a House member and promises to continue to support carrier issues in the Senate, as New York State Association President George Mangold (r) and NALC Director of Safety and Health Brian Hellman look on.



Above: Rep. Paul Tonko (D-21) gives the thumb's up to letter carriers.

Below: Rep. Dan Maffei (D-25) pledges his support for carrier issues.



Above: Also attending the reception were (above from l) Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-4), Rep. Tim Bishop (D-1), and Rep. Brian M. Higgins (D-27).

Below (r): Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-14) thanks her congressional district liaison for informing her of the importance of supporting H.R. 22.



Ohio congressional breakfast



Above: President Young thanks Region 11 National Business Agent Bill Cooke for his lifetime of service to the NALC during the congressional breakfast held on May 1.

Below: NALC members from Ohio receive their marching orders during a rap session at NALC Headquarters on April 30.



Just over a week after the New York delegation came to Washington, more than 100 activists from Ohio made the trek eastward for their own legislative briefing and one-on-one chats with their representatives on Capitol Hill.

“Ohio’s in the heart of America, a solid part of what makes America work,” President Young said during a congressional breakfast May 1. “And it was your hard work, and the efforts of all your brother and sister Carrier Corps members, that made Ohio a truly labor-friendly state once again.”

The NALC leader also used the occasion of the breakfast gathering to applaud retiring Region 11 National Business Agent Bill Cooke for his many years of service to letter carriers. Cooke was first elected in 1994 as NBA for the region representing NALC members from both the Buckeye State and upstate New York.

Young presented to Cooke a flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol, a gift from Ohio 18th Dist. Rep. Zack Space.

Pennsylvania congressional reception



Freshman Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-3) addressed the Pennsylvania letter carrier delegation during the congressional breakfast held on May 7.

The union’s political advance showed no signs of slowing down as more than 300 letter carriers from Pennsylvania arrived in Washington to meet with the commonwealth’s congressional delegation May 5-7. A legislative briefing and lobbying visits were on the agenda for Keystone State carriers, as well as a rap session with national officers in the Sombrotto Building’s Hutchins Hall.

On May 7, during their congressional breakfast—Pennsylvania State Association President Joe Antal noted it was the state’s 50th annual gathering—President Young updated members on the labor movement’s efforts to win passage of the Employee Free Choice Act.

EFCA would give workers a simpler method to organize a union—automatic recognition when more than half turn in signed cards favoring a union in their workplace. It also would increase

penalties on employers who illegally interfere with organizing efforts, and provide for mediation and binding arbitration if necessary on first contracts between an employer and a new union.

Anti-union and business groups have waged a multi-million-dollar campaign against EFCA. Recently, they have based their argument on the false claim that empowering workers through organizing would hamper the economic recovery. Nonetheless, Young said that, in the current political climate, it appears the legislation, as currently written, cannot get through Congress.

“But I think there is interest in Congress in leveling this (labor-management) 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.”

California Sen. Dianne Feinstein—one of several Democrats who have waffled in their support of the bill—has proposed changing the arbitration



Above: Rep. G.T. Tompson (R-5) spoke of the bipartisan support for H.R. 22.

Right: Sen. Arlen Specter (D) explained his decision to switch parties by saying that the Democratic Party is more welcoming of political moderates, such as himself.



provision and replacing EFCA's majority sign-up component, commonly called "card check," with a system that allows employees to certify their desire to form a union by mailing their signed cards directly to the National Labor Relations Board, rather than handing them to union organizers.

Although some critics have warned the change would water down the bill, President Young offered an alternate, glass-half-full view.

"We're pleased to see there is definite, ongoing interest in this Congress for passing EFCA," he said. "And it's very fitting that letter carriers could wind up playing a big role in that leveling process" by delivering those mail-in cards.

Mail-in voting, he said, could help limit worker intimidation—a major problem with the current system that allows companies to demand a "secret ballot" election, then drag out the process while pressuring employees. (Young also reminded members that expanding the use of "Vote by Mail" for state and national elections remains a top legislative objective.)

A highlight of the Pennsylvania breakfast was the appearance of Sen. Arlen Specter, who was greeted by a standing ovation from his home-state crowd. The veteran lawmaker has been a frequent speaker at the annual gatherings, but this time was different—on April 28, he switched party allegiance from Republican to Democrat to seek re-election in 2010.

Although he has sided with organized labor many times over the years and supported EFCA last year, Specter announced earlier this year he would oppose its passage in its present form. He cited the majority sign-up and arbitration provisions as particular problems.

Specter, who noted that he stands with letter carriers on issues from contracting out to repeal of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision, stressed he understands workers' plight. He blasted the National Labor Relations Board for not doing its job during the Bush administration, saying it had "become dysfunctional and very highly politicized," and he held out some hope for compromise on EFCA.

"The Employee 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."

President Young, who recently announced he plans to retire before the end of the year, jokingly took credit for Specter's affiliation flip, saying, "The senator told me that if I retired, he would become a Democrat."

Letter carrier delegations from Illinois, Maryland and the District of Columbia were scheduled to visit Capitol Hill shortly after this issue of *The Postal Record* went to press. Coverage of those legislative efforts will appear in



Also attending the breakfast were (above) Rep. Jason Altmire (D-4), (below) Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-6), and (bottom) Rep. Charles Dent (R-15).

