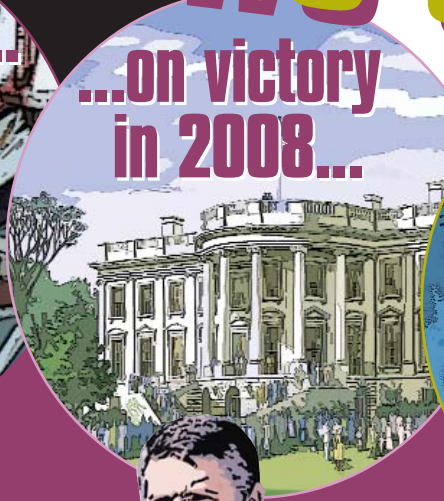


# Where we stand...



**F**or institutions, as for individuals, there are moments when it is appropriate to pause and assess our progress. These times of reflection, brief though they may be, provide an important chance to calibrate our goals and gather our resolve for the next challenges on our journey together. The National Association of Letter Carriers has reached such a point, a plateau from which we can look back on our achievements, in collective bargaining and in the political arena, and look ahead to mountains we must yet climb. The following pages offer some food for thought—about improving the work life of letter carriers, about the importance of political activism for ourselves and our nation, and about opportunities to expand our postal service to the American people.

## On the crest of success, the NALC looks ahead

**O**ver the past five years, America's union letter carriers have struggled mightily and achieved greatly. On Capitol Hill and at the bargaining table, on the workroom floor and in national-level grievances, NALC members have chalked up a substantial record of success.

An intensive legislative effort in 2005 and 2006 capped a dozen-year campaign for postal reform legislation, breaking 30-year-old legal bonds and establishing a new legal framework for postal operations that holds the promise of solidity and growth in the 21st century.

The adoption of the Dispute Resolution Process and its full implementation since 2002 has resulted in a reduction in the total number of grievances and the virtual elimination of the arbitration backlog that plagued the old grievance process for nearly two decades. When local labor relations have reached incendiary animosity, the joint NALC-Postal Service Intervention Process has doused the flames and helped restore a cooperative spirit.

The tentative 2006-2011 contract agreement—before the membership for ratification as this article was prepared—provides not only substantial economic benefits in terms of pay raises and continued COLAs, it also includes historic job security provisions banning contracting out of existing letter carrier jobs and abolishes the use of casuals, creating an all-bargaining-unit workforce for the first time ever.

"This is a record we can all be proud of, because we built it together," said NALC President William H. Young. "Thanks to our legislative activists and the solidarity of rank-and-file letter carriers across the country, we have passed milestones of accomplishment that once looked impossibly distant."

And, he added, "We did it while delivering nearly one trillion pieces of mail—that's trillion, with 12 zeroes—over the past five years."

### New contract

Ratification ballots had not been counted when this issue went to press (*see page 14*). Nonetheless,

anecdotal evidence suggested the new National Agreement would be approved by a wide margin, setting in motion the next wave of challenges for NALC's leadership. Memorandums of Understanding included in the agreement establish committees or task forces to deal with several national-level disputes, including subcontracting and route evaluation (*see next page*).

Discussing the MOUs, President Young said, "We agreed to try to work these issues out cooperatively, labor and management, rather than turn them over to an arbitrator—although that remains a final recourse."

Young said letter carriers played a critical role in the final approval of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, signed by President Bush last December 20. "Our grassroots activists kept the pressure on for months—for years—and we developed legislation that gives the Postal Service some legal elbow room to be competitive in this new era of communications," he said.

That same sort of pressure on the issue of contracting out propelled the USPS back to the bargaining table, Young added.

### What's next

There is no time to rest now, just enough to catch our breath. NALC members face a full agenda—continued pressure on postal management at all levels to respect both the rights of carriers and the provisions of the contract; a variety of legislative initiatives, from fine-tuning the postal reform law to promoting voting by mail; and an all-out effort in 2008 to change the balance of political power in Washington from the privileged few to the many who work hard for a living (*see pages 12-13*).

"With the tools we have, our grassroots organization and nearly 300,000 dedicated members, I am confident we can keep climbing the mountain ahead of us," President Young said.

"Any journey is easier with good company, and there is none better than letter carriers together," he said. ☒

# Looking for solutions to persistent problems



It's not surprising the memorandums of understanding that restrict subcontracting included in the tentative 2006-2011 National Agreement have drawn great attention, but other MOUs related to long-standing disputes also are important to letter carriers' future.

"The subcontracting issue was a major concern from the opening day of bargaining and we never let go of it," NALC President Bill Young said. As a result, upon ratification, the MOU titled "Re: Subcontracting" protects all existing city carrier work from contracting out through November 2011 and also ensures that nearly all growth in new deliveries in more than 3,000 offices with only city delivery—covering some 90,000 routes—will go to city carriers.

Another MOU creates an Article 32 Committee to study postal outsourcing, focusing on the assignment of new deliveries, particularly in offices where city and rural carriers work side by side. While the committee is at work, there will be a moratorium for at least six months on contracting out in any office that employs city carriers.

But President Young emphasized the agreement also includes pre-arbitration resolutions of several long-standing national-level grievances—all on terms consistent with the objectives the NALC sought in pressing the disputes. They include the so-called third-bundle case, the dispute over USPS' use of COR (Carrier Optimal Routing), and the conflict over DOIS, the Delivery Operations Information System (see pages 129-134 of the tentative agreement for details).

Joint task forces and study committees created by MOUs in the agreement will tackle some of the thorniest issues still dividing NALC and postal management. They include:

- ◆ A joint task force on **Flat Sequencing System** work methods, which will consider alternative work methods for handling mail in an FSS environment.
  - ◆ A joint work group established as part of the **third-bundle settlement**, which will review different ways of handling three bundles of addressed and/or unaddressed mail on park-and-loop and foot deliveries.
  - ◆ An **Alternative Route Evaluation Process Task Force**, which in addition to its named objective will also explore aspects of the minor route adjustment process.
  - ◆ An **Arbitration Task Force**, created by a 2002 MOU, is renewed to find ways to improve administering the arbitration process, addressing such questions as a centralized scheduling center and procedures used to compensate arbitrators.
- Executive Vice President Fred Rolando discusses these MOUs and study groups in greater detail in his column on page 22. ☒

as a third bundle, when DPS letters and casual mail (flat) and non-DPS letters constitute the first and second bundles.

The parties agree that:

1. The March 21, 2006 MOU did not provide the Postal Service with the right to require letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries to carry pre-scheduled addressed mail as a third bundle.

2. The parties' prior agreements for carrying third bundles were not modified in any way by the March 21, 2006 MOU. These prior agreements include the following two circumstances:

a. pursuant to the 1991 "classified address mail" agreement, which allows the placement of such unaddressed mail on the bottom of the appropriate mail bundle; and

b. in accordance with the 1992 memorandum providing for the DPS composite work method, which includes residual letters, DPS letters, and flats.

Case Q95N-JQ-C 0618952 arose as a result of handbook modifications indicating that city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries will be required to carry up to three bundles of mail.

Notwithstanding the above agreement, the parties recognize that the Postal Service and its employees have an obligation to the American public to provide cost effective quality mail services. We also recognize that the changing nature of the mail (i.e., decreasing First-Class Mail volume, increasing parcels and increasing automation) necessitates changes in our work methods. Therefore, the parties further agree that:

1. In accordance with the recognition stated in the above paragraph, effective with the signing of this agreement the parties agree that city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries who currently carry three bundles will continue to carry as a third bundle, within weight restrictions, Enhanced Carrier Route (ECR) and walk-in weight sequenced letter or flat mailings. (We note that these mailings will cover coverage of the total active residential addresses of 75% or more coverage of the total number of active deliveries on a route.)

2. The parties will establish a joint work group to examine the various methods of mail delivery on park and loop and foot deliveries. The objective of the work group will be to develop safe and efficient delivery methods for handling three bundles of addressed and unaddressed mail on routes with these types of deliveries. The work group will develop appropriate memoranda in the current DPS letter format and it will complete its mission within sixty days of commencement and it will complete all its work on park and loop and walking deliveries will be required to carry three bundles using methods from the work group, unless management determines that fewer than three bundles will be used. If the work

group does not reach agreement within sixty days, all city carriers on park and loop and walking deliveries will, unless otherwise determined by management, be required to carry three bundles. The individual city carrier will determine whether to carry the third bundle on the run or in the satellite. Where discussion of the work method, the third bundle must meet the requirements of paragraph 1 above.

3. The parties agree that under no circumstances will city letter carriers on park and loop or foot deliveries be required to carry more than three bundles.

This agreement resolves and closes all outstanding disputes at all levels of the grievance-arbitration procedure concerning city carriers on park and loop or foot routes being required to carry three bundles. The parties will meet at the appropriate level on all held issues to determine if they involve other issues. If a grievance comes to determine if they involve other issues, these issues will be addressed pursuant to Article 12 of the National Agreement. Please sign below to agree to resolve these disputes and remove these cases from the national arbitration docket.

Darryl Tuttle  
Vice-President  
Labor Relations  
U.S. Postal Service

William H. Young  
President  
National Association of  
Letter Carriers (AFL-CIO)

July 26, 2007

Mr. William H. Young  
President  
National Association of Letter  
Carriers (AFL-CIO)  
100 Indiana Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001-2144

Re: Q95N-JQ-C 05022530  
Oliver Nelson  
Washington DC 20260-4100

Dear Mr. Young:

Re: with our representatives met at the Interim Step to discuss the above-referenced grievance.

After reviewing this matter, the parties agree to resolve this dispute based on the following:

The Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS) is a management tool for optimizing a carrier's daily workload. The use of DOIS does not change the letter carrier's reporting requirements.

President Young, right, during testimony July 25 before a Senate Homeland Security subcommittee hearing on implementation of the postal reform law. At the table with him are (l-r) Mail Handlers President John Hegarty and Rural Carriers President Donnie Pitts.



# Gearing up for 2008,

With 2007 still in play

**L**ooking ahead to the 2008 national elections, NALC political leaders from around the country were heading to Washington in late September for grassroots campaign training, while letter carriers continued to press Congress to act this year on issues of vital concern.

In one area, political activism was temporarily put on hold—efforts to advance floor action to curb contracting out delivery work by the U.S. Postal Service. NALC President Bill Young told key subcommittees of both the House and Senate that the union hopes to work out the subcontracting conflict cooperatively. But, he said, the NALC is ready to reach for the legislative “big stick” if talks with the USPS prove futile.

On the broad political front, President Young has called the state legislative chairs, the new cadre of state legislative liaisons, and other front-line political activists to the nation’s capital for workshops and briefings September 24-27. The training is part of the groundwork for an unprecedented NALC effort to elect pro-worker candidates in 2008.

“The past six-plus years have taught us that ‘almost’ simply isn’t good enough in electoral politics,” Young said, referring to the razor-thin margins of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. “Last November, we saw important progress when Congress changed hands. Now we must solidify those majorities and capture the White House if we hope to begin to recover from the sickening effects of this administration.”

Toward that end, the NALC has arranged for a group known as Camp Wellstone—named for the late populist Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone—to present its best-of-its-kind grassroots training program to the activists’ gathering in September. Those letter carriers will carry the knowledge back home to multiply the impact and spur local participation as the 2008 campaign heats up.

NALC’s grassroots operation is being augmented by three programs established by President Young.

The newest is his “Give Me 10” appeal, asking members to pledge 10 hours of campaign work next year. Registered participants receive the distinctive NALC Activist T-shirt (see your branch president for details).

The name “Give Me 10” is a play on the successful “Gimme 5” campaign to generate automatic contributions to COLCPE, the NALC political action fund, which continues to attract new donors with its Super Bowl contest (see *inside back cover*). And the e-Activist Network for quickly alerting members to crucial legislative developments is approaching its initial goal of 150,000 total registrants—a mark set so high it seemed nearly impossible.

## Contracting out

The e-Activists were important in the legislative campaign to block contracting out—an effort that also brought the USPS back to the bargaining table and resulted in a tentative contract agreement that includes two important memorandums on outsourcing.

In an August 3 e-Activist message, President Young said, “Thanks to the hundreds of activists who phoned, wrote, or visited their members of Congress, we saw a quick response from Congress to stop the USPS from going any further with the expansion of CDS (Contact Delivery Service).”

“Make no mistake about it,” he said, “it was the overwhelming response from Congress that brought the Postal Service back to the table.”

Young said he had asked lawmakers to hold up on “any floor action until the close of the six-month moratorium” called for in one of the contract MOUs. “At that time, I believe NALC will be in a much better position to offer our guidance on whether a legislative fix is needed or not, and if so, what it should entail.”

In the meantime, he asked union members to contact their House and Senate members to co-sponsor H. Res. 282, urging the USPS to abandon contracting out, and S. 1457, to ban contract delivery except in the most rural areas. ▶



Young speaks with Sen. Tom Carper (l, D-DE) and Sen. Susan Collins (r, R-ME) before the hearing.

Appearing before Congress just before the August recess, Young reiterated NALC's position that contracting out of city delivery work is a public policy matter and also explained the MOUs in the tentative contract then being voted on by members.

Young testified July 25 before the Senate Homeland Security subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the Postal Service. The preceding week, the NALC leader spoke to the House subcommittee that oversees the USPS (*see August Postal Record, pages 18-19*).

### Gloves come off

He opened his Senate testimony by acknowledging Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE), who chaired the hearing, for his work toward final passage of postal reform legislation last year. "Quite frankly, the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act would not have been enacted without the leadership of Senator Carper," Young said.

Then, with the niceties covered, Young took off the verbal gloves and lambasted the growing trend in

both the private and public sectors to outsource work to contingent, low-wage, no-benefit contractors.

"At a time of so-called prosperity, the ranks of workers without health insurance or pension protection have surged into the tens of millions," he said. "Even as Wall Street profits have exploded, wages on Main Street have stagnated and middle-class living standards have eroded. The federal government, and the United States Postal Service, should not contribute to these disgraceful trends by adopting an outsourcing strategy."

Outsourcing is "misguided as a business strategy," he said, warning it would damage the brand of the Postal Service by undermining America's trust in its services—services provided by NALC letter carriers with skill and integrity.

Young told the Senate panel that deciding who works for the Postal Service, and under what legal framework, is a matter that must be decided based on the public interest. He applauded Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) for his bill—S. 1457, the Mail Delivery Protection Act—to limit outsourcing to traditional Highway Contract Routes. ☒

## Legislative priorities

These are some of the legislative priorities for the NALC as Congress returns from its August recess.

### Voting by mail

Expansion of voting by mail will both increase participation in our democracy and reinforce the important role of the Postal Service in American life. While voting procedure is largely a state issue (*see page 12*), NALC supports two pending pieces of federal legislation:

✓ H.R. 281, by Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)—The Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act would guarantee every citizen the right to a "no-excuse" absentee ballot in federal elections.

✓ S. 979 / H.R. 1667, by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Rep. Davis—The Vote by Mail Act would provide federal grants to states and municipalities to help them establish vote-by-mail systems.

### WEP/GPO

NALC continues to work to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, which unfairly reduce Social Security benefits earned by retired letter carriers. H.R. 82, which would erase both provisions, has 324 co-sponsors. Nonetheless, last year the legislation failed to get the 218 votes needed to bring it to the floor. Opponents of repeal argue the cost is too high, and NALC is exploring the possibility of a phase-out to defuse those objections.

### Medicare Part D

The new Medicare drug benefit program allows employers that provide prescription drug coverage for retirees to apply for a Part D subsidy. The Bush administration has turned down the Postal Service's application for the subsidy, worth about \$200 million annually. Postal unions and management associations are working with House and Senate members to find a way to override the administration's opposition.

# Rush's judgment not impaired by facts

**C**onservative radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh never lets the facts get in the way of a good rant, and so it was when he sprayed a shot of anti-union vitriol toward the presidential preference poll in last month's *Postal Record*.

"You're looking for, quote, unquote, fairness and balance here," Limbaugh told one of his "ditto-head" callers discussing the NALC candidate survey, "and you only find that at the Fox News Channel."

Limbaugh's mouth started running based on misinformation delivered by a self-described "conservative" letter carrier who told him the NALC had excluded Republicans and solicited responses only from Democrats (see transcript at right).

Not so, President Bill Young said in a letter to Limbaugh asking for an on-air correction.

"NALC sent its issue survey to all announced candidates for President in May, Democrats and Republicans alike. Seven Democratic candidates responded, but not a single Republican candidate did so," Young wrote. The story accompanying the survey results and the preference postcard made clear that all candidates were contacted several times and urged to respond.

Young said he was disappointed none of the GOP candidates bothered to answer. "The fact is we are a democratic union. Our members will guide which candidate to support for President," he wrote. "But I don't know how Republican candidates expect to win the support of hard-working letter carriers when they lack the courtesy to respond to a simple issue survey." ✉



**'It just makes you mad'**

(transcript of August 7 broadcast from rushlimbaugh.com)

**RUSH:** ...Nice to have you on the program. Welcome.

**CALLER:** Rush, mega dittos.

**RUSH:** Thank you.

**CALLER:** I'd like to start off by saying hello to my nephew who is in Fallujah. But then I would like to tell you that after all this talk of the Fairness Doctrine, I picked up my copy of the National Association of Letter Carriers magazine, and inside were all the presidential candidates, all five of them. There wasn't a Republican to be found. They were all Democrats, and—

**RUSH:** Well, of course! It's a union!

**CALLER:** I understand that, but you would think that they would at least go to the Republicans and say, "What are your views on these five topics that we have here?"

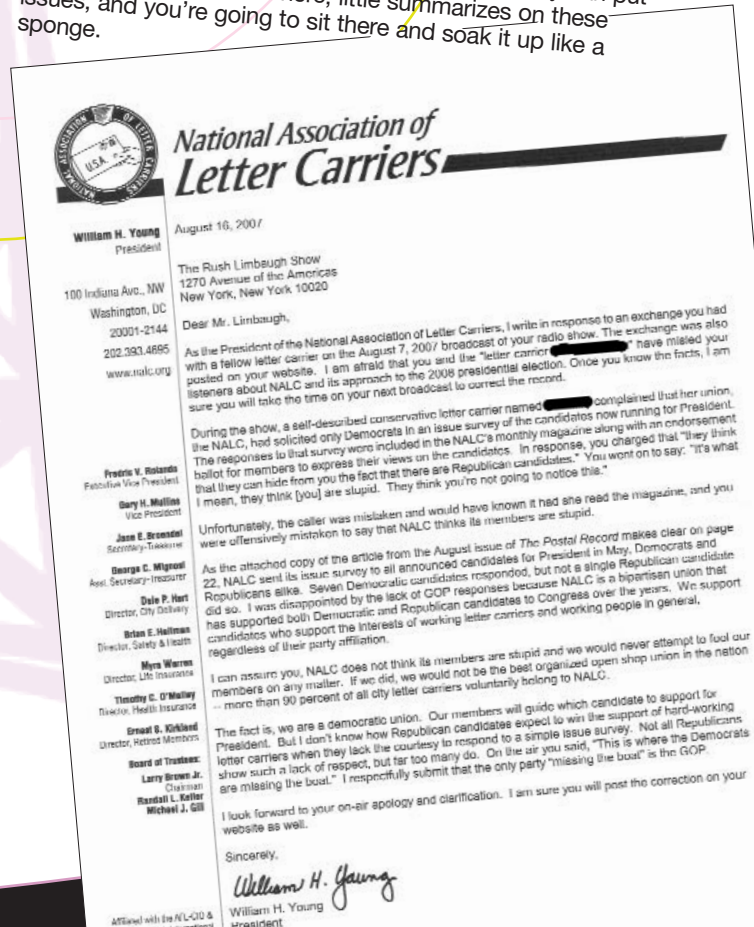
**RUSH:** No, the Republicans don't have any views that are worth anything, no, no, no. You're looking for, quote, unquote, fairness and balance here, and you only find that at the Fox News Channel.

**CALLER:** Well, Rush, there are a lot of us letter carriers out here that are conservative, so they're not getting their message across, if that's what they're trying to do.

**RUSH:** Who, the Republicans aren't, or the Democrats aren't?

**CALLER:** The Democrats.

**RUSH:** Look at you. You're a conservative Republican letter carrier, you've got a lot of them out there, you open the magazine that you get, it just makes you mad. It's not going to make you more prone to support these guys. This is where the Democrats are missing the boat. They think that they can hide from you the fact that there are Republican candidates. It's what I mean, they think they're stupid. They think you're not going to notice this. They think they can put these five candidates in there, little summaries on these issues, and you're going to sit there and soak it up like a sponge.



# 'We Deliver Democracy'

## NALC promotes vote-by-mail initiatives

**T**he campaign to assure every eligible voter has the option of voting by mail, one of the NALC's top legislative priorities, was the object of a major push during the summer conference of the National Association of Secretaries of State.

The annual event took place in July in Portland, Oregon, a state where voting by mail has boosted voter turnout in general elections beyond 80 percent—more than 50 percent higher than the national turnout in the last presidential election.

Voting is controlled by state law and efforts to promote voting by mail are concentrated on state-level officials—like the secretaries of state—and state legislatures. NALC, the Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union were among the groups that helped sponsor the conference as a way to promote voting by mail.

"Unfortunately, too many Americans don't vote and as we have seen in recent elections, that can be poison for our democracy," said NALC Vice President Fred Rolando, who joined a panel discussion during the three-day meeting. "People want to vote, but they often find it too difficult to make it to the polls on Election Day."

Rolando, who also serves on the board of the national non-partisan Vote By Mail Project, listed a few of the ways a vote-by-mail system could relieve voter hardship.

"No long lines for voters," he said. "No confusion about where to go to vote. No malfunctioning voting equipment. Increased ballot integrity through signature verification. Lower election costs. The ultimate paper trail—a real paper ballot."

Rolando also addressed the fears of those who worry about voter fraud, stressing the trustworthiness and unrivaled reliability of letter carriers. "In 2007, for the third year in a row, the USPS was rated as the most trusted agency in the federal government," he said. "The Postal Service has already won the trust of our customers and we believe that trust can easily be extended to voters and election officials."

Appearing with Rolando on the conference panel were APWU Executive Vice President Cliff Guffey and Vote By Mail Project Executive Director Adam Smith. Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and USPS Postmaster General Jack Potter also spoke during the three-day conference.

"Mail is a smart choice for elections," Potter said, adding, "We are committed to providing election officials with the information necessary to meet their election mail needs."

### Voters are ready

Surveys have found voters are ready to embrace voting by mail, but driving the necessary changes through the thicket of state politics is proving to be a challenge. One angle of attack is to expand opportunities for absentee voting by making it easier for voters who are unable to go to the polls on Election Day to request a mail ballot.

In Washington, NALC President Bill Young said the union is ready for the state-by-state struggle to win voting reforms that will encourage voting by mail and greater participation in our democracy.

"The last two presidential elections have shown that every vote counts—but not every vote is counted," he said. "Too many people don't get a chance to cast a ballot, for a lot of reasons. They might have a sick child or they might discover their name is left off the voting rolls. With vote-by-mail, people can count on having their ballot delivered to their door by their letter carrier and securely returned to be properly counted."

Oregon was an appropriate venue for the secretaries of state to discuss voting by mail since the state in 1998 became the first in the nation to do away with traditional polling places. In fact, the change was instituted by voters themselves, who approved a citizen-proposed ballot initiative to adopt

Vote by Mail was a hot topic at the summer conference of the National Association of Secretaries of State. Pictured at the conference are (from l) Adam Smith, executive director, Vote by Mail Project; NALC Executive Vice President Fred Rolando; Bill Bradbury, Oregon secretary of state and Vote by Mail Project board member; and Portland, Oregon Branch 82 President L.C. Hansen.



From l: President Young with members of Branch 11 Chicago at the AFL-CIO presidential debate; joking with AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka; and talking with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney.



## Executive Council eyes politics, contract

**N**ALC President Bill Young has called a meeting of the NALC Executive Council in Washington September 10-14, when the union leaders are expected to consider the possible endorsement of a presidential candidate as well as other administrative and policy matters.

Assuming the tentative contract is ratified as expected, the council will review plans for implementing its provisions and holding a national training session for local and state leaders later this year. The 28 members of the council are the 10 Resident National Officers based in Washington, the 15 regional National Business Agents, and three National Trustees.

As this issue went to press, presidential preference postcards from the August issue of *The Postal Record* continued to arrive in Washington. The cards asked rank-and-file letter carriers to indicate which of the seven candidates who responded to an NALC questionnaire should get the

union's endorsement (*related story page 11*).

"We will review those cards as we consider whether to make an endorsement now and, if so, who that would be," President Young said. The Council ultimately will decide the issue.

On the political front, Young attended the AFL-CIO Executive Council meeting in Chicago that coincided with the federation-sponsored August 7 nationally televised presidential debate. At a session after the debate, the AFL-CIO leadership—including Young, who is a federation vice president—decided to defer backing a specific candidate. It has made early endorsements in the past, but never this far ahead of the general election campaign. The group agreed, however, that individual member unions should consider themselves free to endorse now if they wish.

While in Chicago, Young met with members of Chicago Branch 11, who attended the debate at Soldier Field (*pictured above*). ☒

vote-by-mail for all elections by a landslide 70 percent "yes" vote.

Today, Oregon is a shining success story for vote-by-mail, with a whopping 86 percent voter turnout in the last presidential election, compared with just over 55 percent nationwide. As a result, vote-by-mail has spread beyond Oregon's borders over the past nine years. At last tally, 26 states were considering some form of vote-by-mail initiative.

Several Portland Branch 82 letter carriers were on hand at the NASS conference, operating a "We Deliver Democracy" information booth and answering questions from conference participants. They included Branch President L.C. Hansen, Secretary-Treasurer Linda Smith and Congressional District Liaison Kevin Card, as well as Region 2 National Business Agent Paul Price and Jimmy Williams, former Region 2 NBA and retired NALC Executive Vice President, both Branch 82 members. Also participating was Political Director Tucker McDonald of NALC's Legislative and Political Department.

### A federal boost

Generally, voters across the country have the option of either going to the polls to vote on Election

Day or requesting a mail-in absentee ballot beforehand. In many jurisdictions, however, voters requesting an absentee ballot are thrust into a bureaucratic labyrinth.

Help may be on the way. In January, Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) introduced the Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act, which would amend the "Help America Vote Act" that addressed some of the problems exposed by the "dangling chad" election of 2000.

The Right to Vote by Mail proposal notes that only 28 states currently allow for "universal absentee balloting"—in other words, any voter may ask for a mail-in ballot, no explanation necessary. The bill would mandate that all states allow "no-excuse" absentee balloting, which should give busy voters more time to consider their choices, along with the convenience of receiving and returning their ballots via the U.S. Mail. (The federal government cannot directly order states to adopt a total vote-by-mail system like the one in Oregon.)

As *The Postal Record* went to press, 62 House members had signed on as co-sponsors and the bill had been sent to the Committee on House Administration for review. ☒