

Great strides, but more voices must be heard



William H. Young

I am pleased to report that the NALC and the nation's letter carriers have taken two big steps towards our stated goals in the past few weeks.

We took our first stride forward on the contentious issue of route adjustments. Your national officers know very well the deep interest that all letter carriers have in fair route adjustments. So I have made this a priority in NALC's efforts to forge new, groundbreaking agreements with postal management.

NALC and the Postal Service have executed three memorandums of understanding which will move the parties toward a new approach on route adjustments (the full text of the MOUs appears on pages 18-21).

First, we reached an interim agreement on minor route adjustments that provides a fair adjustment process and thus should eliminate many of the disputes in the field. Local parties are given the option of developing their own, mutually agreeable minor route adjustment process which need not be limited to Section 141 of the M-39.

A second memorandum sets forth procedures that local parties can use to settle disputes related to the October 2002 Briggs Award. That decision prohibited management from inspecting routes on all six days of the count and inspection week.

With these agreements in hand, the parties were able to move toward a larger goal—a joint NALC-USPS process to evaluate and adjust city letter carrier routes. A third memorandum establishes a national joint task force that will forge ahead toward that goal. Fred Rolando, NALC Director of City Delivery, is now arranging the task force's first meetings with the Postal Service.

Flexibility must be a key objective as we design the new route process. When route adjustments are necessary we must have the capability to adjust them fairly and quickly. Carriers want fair adjustments and USPS claims it wants the same thing. Given this common goal, I am optimistic the parties can reach a satisfactory resolution.

NALC's second significant step was the House and Senate passage of CSRS funding legislation, which President Bush has promised to sign. This is a huge victory for the Postal Service and NALC, for the law will wipe out billions of dollars in future USPS debt payments. Letter carriers understand that this bill will provide all the Postal Service's stakeholders with the time they need to determine the future shape of postal reform. At the same time, we also understand that this legislation alone will not save the Postal Service.

As delighted as I am to report these achievements, I must point out that too many of our members sat on their hands and failed to heed the union's call for action. To build a record of success we must motivate a great many more members to make their voices heard. Your future is on the line. You cannot simply sit on the sidelines and expect others to take care of you.

This summer the President's Commission will report its recommendations for changing and revitalizing the U.S. Postal Service. Your union has been deeply involved with this process from the beginning. I arranged to testify in Chicago on April 29 about why the Commission should keep its hands off our collective bargaining process. I cannot persuade them alone. NALC will need thousands of members to back the union's position.

We have assembled a list of 3,000 legislative volunteers. We must increase that list to 50,000 before the Commission releases its report. I have asked the National Business Agents to spearhead this legislative organizing effort. We will call on you to help directly in this endeavor. Please give whatever time and effort you can, for even a single letter or phone call adds strength to our cause. We must assemble a massive throng of volunteers and we must do so in a hurry. Will you sign your name to the list of union volunteers? If you care for your job, is there any other choice? ☒