

# Remember—the best defense is good offense



*William H. Young*

**O**ur National Training Conference and Rap Session in Las Vegas was a tremendous success. The turnout was superb; the workshops were both excellent and well-attended; and the spirit of solidarity, despite the hard times we face, was uplifting. The fact that it was the last national gathering I will lead as your president made it poignant for me as well. I announced that I would be retiring this summer after more than 30 years of union service and more than 40 years of postal employment. My reflections on the past, however, will have to wait. I will remain focused on the future of our union and the future of the Postal Service every minute of every day that remains in my tenure.

Let's face it, with an economy in deep recession and the Postal Service suffering—just as every other enterprise in the country is suffering—the future is more than a little bit fuzzy right now. Mail volume plunged by more than 14 percent in the second quarter of fiscal year 2009 (January to March) as the full spectrum of mailers slashed their postal budgets in the face of tightening credit, rising unemployment, faltering retail sales and the continued meltdown in the mail-intensive financial and real estate markets. The result? A massive \$1.9 billion quarterly loss for the USPS and the promise of more pain to come.

**You know that our union has never** shied away from a battle. We don't roll up into the fetal position and let fate take its course. Instead, we defend our members' interests by taking positive action, with our eyes not on next week or next year, but on five, 10 or 15 years down the road. That's why we've taken the lead to preserve the viability of the Postal Service in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

The Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process that we recently modified to help the Postal Service survive through the rest of 2009 is a perfect example. We have

acted responsibly to adapt to the downturn in mail volume while winning new rights to help shape the daily flow of our members' work. It's not easy, but thousands of branch leaders across the country are doing a fantastic job to help preserve the long-term job security of America's city letter carriers.

On the legislative front, we have used our political muscle to mobilize a huge bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives to co-sponsor H.R. 22, a bill that will provide USPS much needed financial relief in the years to come. Without the NALC and the other postal employee organizations, that simply would not have happened.

**Our next task is to effectively engage** the Obama administration to back our efforts to strengthen the Postal Service, both in the short term and the long run. In the short run, we seek to convince President Obama to actively support H.R. 22. Beyond 2009, we are committed to finding new uses for the most efficient last-mile delivery network in the world, starting with competitive services through Customer Connect and Vote by Mail, but also looking to new and innovative ways to use the Postal Service's assets to serve the American people in ways that go beyond traditional mail.

Getting the White House to focus on the Postal Service won't be easy. It has several five-alarm fires on its hands—from the mortgage crisis to the mess on Wall Street to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the collapse of the American auto industry—so putting our issues high on the "to do" list will be difficult. Meanwhile, the Postal Service will be whispering in the administration's ear about five-day delivery and other short-sighted solutions. But we have the grass roots networks, the financial resources (thanks to your support of COLCPE), and the skills and vision to prevail.

As long as we remember that the best defense is a good offense, I have no doubt that the future will be bright for the greatest union in America and the men and women it proudly represents. ☒