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NALC'S ROLANDO: TRUMP BUDGET 'A MISSED OPPORTUNITY' ON POSTAL REFORM

WASHINGTON (PAI)—Republican President Donald Trump's budget for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1 represents "a missed opportunity on postal reform," Letter Carriers President Fredric Rolando says.

And rather than join "a bipartisan consensus" among unions, lawmakers, postal management and the mailing industry to improve the USPS' finances, Trump's "budget recycles outdated and counterproductive proposals -- to slash service, attack postal employees and raise rates on business mailers -- that will be met with universal opposition," he predicted.

In the spending plan for fiscal 2018, Trump's Office of Management and Budget proposed cutting \$2.807 billion from the USPS, a finding that mystified the union. That's because the Postal Service is self-sufficient on its operations – delivering letters and parcels.

USPS only runs in the red, technically, because of a 10-year-old mandate that it prepay \$5.5 billion yearly in future retirees' health care costs. The bipartisan consensus Rolando referred to includes legislation to either eliminate or reduce that financial drain.

Rolando explained USPS is recovering from the Great Recession "thanks to the e-commerce boom." He added "the Postal Service is now delivering seven days a week" for parcels and high-value mail, so "now is not the time to curtail delivery days or reduce door delivery.

"We remain hopeful that we can work with the White House on sensible reform that's good for business, labor and the American public," said Rolando, whose union represents 210,000 city and suburban Letter Carriers.

Trump's OMB takes a different view. It projects that USPS cuts, starting with the \$2.807 billion in fiscal 2018, would actually represent the agency paying \$27 billion over a decade to the Treasury for employee retirement programs and \$46 billion in overall savings.

Trump's budget also calls for "ensuring the Postal Service fund existing commitments to current and former employees from business revenues, not taxpayer funds." It now does that, NALC and other postal unions point out.

To achieve profits, Trump's OMB wants to give the Postal Service "operational reforms," such as cutting how often mail is delivered, letting USPS "leverage its resources by increasing collaboration with state and local governments," shifting to centralized and curbside delivery instead of individual mailboxes, "enhancing Postal Service governance to ensure sound financial management," and giving USPS new flexibility to raise postage rates.

All that would both pay the retirees' health care costs and "improve the Postal Service's financial position by \$47 billion over 10 years," the Trump budget blueprint says. And Trump wants to cut USPS contributions for workers' health and life insurance by \$33 billion over the next decade.

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