

# Delivering democracy for America...and ourselves



**Fredric V. Rolando**

the Postal Service to conduct local, state and national elections. We deliver voter registration materials, polling place notifications, sample ballots, campaign materials and, increasingly, voting ballots themselves.

In the 2018 midterm elections, more than a quarter of all votes cast were sent by mail. And with the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting every aspect of our lives, the Postal Service's role in U.S. voting has spiked along with infection rates across the United States. During the party primaries this year, election officials across the country, Democrats and Republicans alike, have turned to us to provide our fellow citizens a safe and secure way to exercise their right to vote.

A new analysis from the National Vote at Home Institute (NVAHI) shows that half of all primary voters—29 million and counting—voted by mail in dozens of states. In states including Alaska, New Jersey and Maryland, state election officials shifted to 100 percent vote-by-mail elections for the first time. The Postal Service and its employees have saved democracy during this pandemic.

**About this, letter carriers and other postal employees can feel great pride. But we need to do more than just feel proud. We need to do two other things. First, we must fight to make sure that vote-by-mail options are available to all Americans in November, when the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to peak as cold weather and the influenza season force us indoors. And second, we need to make an early plan to take advantage of vote-by-mail or other safe voting options in November.**

NALC is already doing its part on the first front. We helped found the NVAHI, which we highlighted in the May issue

**T**he Postal Service has always been crucial for our democracy. Our national commitment to freedom of the press and democratic debate made the Post Office essential from the very beginning of our country. The Federalist Papers, essays drafted to convince the states to ratify the Constitution, were disseminated through the Post Office. Absentee voting began during the Civil War, with the votes of union soldiers far from home securing the re-election of Abraham Lincoln.

Over time, the postal role in elections has only grown. Today, some 8,000 election boards across the United States rely on

of *The Postal Record* with an interview with its CEO, Amber McReynolds. She and her team are the nation's go-to experts on mail balloting; they have been working with dozens of states to expand vote-by-mail in this year's elections.

But you can urge your representatives at all levels of government to make sure mail ballots are available in November. Even as we have lobbied for financial assistance to the Postal Service, we've also been working with coalitions to secure additional funding for state and local election officials in the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, challenging the Senate to follow the House's lead on such funding.

On the second front, it is important for every NALC member to decide this month how you are going to vote safely in November. Make sure you are registered to vote, and then make a plan to vote safely. Voting by mail or taking advantage of early voting options are great ways to minimize the risk of voting during a pandemic—as front-line workers, carriers understand this risk better than most. Do what you can to avoid standing in long lines on Election Day, indoors and in crowded spaces. In most states—now including Michigan, Pennsylvania and Virginia, thanks to our partnership with NVAHI and others—you can apply online or through the mail to vote by mail (or absentee) this fall, without any excuse needed. Many states are sending out mail ballot applications automatically. Other states require you to apply—or allow absentee voting only under certain circumstances (based on your age, your health or your inability to get to the polls on Election Day, etc.).

The time to find out what the rules are in your state is *now*. Don't wait until deadlines pass. To find out the rules in your state, and to request a mail ballot, visit the website of your secretary of state or state election board—you can find the links for your state at [voteamerica.org](http://voteamerica.org) or [vote.org](http://vote.org). But don't stop there—make sure your family members, friends and neighbors know about vote-by-mail this year, too. As a letter carrier, you are a respected expert on vote-by-mail—use your knowledge to make voting safer this year for all Americans.

**Given the public health crisis and the serious recession our country now faces, the 2020 election is shaping up to be the most consequential election in our lifetimes. Next month in this magazine, NALC will make an endorsement in the presidential race based on the issues our members face as postal employees and as workers, knowing full well that all of you will make your own decisions based on the issues most important to you. The vital thing is that you vote—and that you vote in the safest way possible. Let's deliver democracy to everybody this year, including to ourselves.**