

# All hands on deck



**James D. Henry**

**“All hands on deck”** is an idiom used as a call for the immediate assistance of everyone present. “All hands on deck” is also a metaphor for “all present should be ready to fight!” Everyone must be involved, and everyone has to help without exception, usually because it is a serious situation that emerges and needs urgent attention. It appears as if we—the NALC members, letter carriers and employees of the United States Postal Service—have entered a period where the aforementioned call to action is ever relevant.

During the month of February, the current White House administration alluded to the possibility of making some drastic changes to the United States Postal Service. The changes included but were not limited to relieving the Service of its independence and implementing changes that would undoubtedly affect employee stability, services and the viability adversely. The looming threat of potential privatization and/or dismantling of the Postal Service requires all of us, our family and friends, and everyone to be vigilant and active. Collectively, we must combat any and all efforts to do away with the Postal Service as we know it today. The changes proposed by the administration, and the manner in which the changes are proposed to be executed, require an act of Congress and not a mere executive order.

Surely there is plenty of room for improved management of the USPS. There are multiple things that we, as a union, may disagree on, and those matters of reform can and will still be resolved simultaneously. However, what we should not, and cannot, do is sit idle when there is an existential threat to an institution older than the United States itself and our livelihoods. Whether you view the threat as unlikely, possible, probable or imminent, it’s a credible threat that commands our attention, determination and resolve to preserve the United States Postal Service. Let us hope that Congress as a whole is equally determined and has the resolve to prevent, in my view, a very unwise decision to remove the USPS’s autonomy.

I’m a firm believer that letter carriers should be industry leaders in wages, benefits and working conditions! We have traditionally been the example and standard to which our sister unions within the USPS have aspired to. In 1970, the wildcat strike occurred. It was letter carriers who led the way to gain and obtain better pay, benefits and working conditions that ultimately benefited all postal employees. We are being called upon once again to rise up, stand up and show up for the benefit of us all!

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We must undertake the fight on two fronts and win! We must insist on a living wage for all letter carriers now and in the future. We must rally the support of our customers and Congress to preserve and protect the USPS. One individual, one sector, one act cannot achieve the goal. It will and does require a collective fight from everyone.

**This moment requires all hands on deck. Count me in!** I know I can count on you to be in this fight.

