

## National Business Agent's Report

*Mike Weir*

August 2008

I am writing this article just prior to my traveling to Boston for an Executive Council meeting and the National Convention. The theme of the convention, as detailed in President Young's Biennial Report in the July issue of the Postal Record, is Restoring the Promise; Rebuilding the Dream. This is a reference to the NALC's dual goals of rebuilding the middle class and strengthening the Postal Service, both of which would enhance our ability to protect letter carrier jobs, wages and benefits. Given the current state of the American economy and the pundits' predictions for the future, we certainly have our work cut out for us to achieve these goals. Still, we have never backed down from a challenge; and, more often than not, we have been successful in our efforts. This time around, all of us will have to contribute in order to maintain that tradition of success.

Regardless of how Fox News is trying to spin the story, this country is definitely in a recession. And despite what John McCain's economic guru says about people being whiners and just experiencing a "mental" recession, working families are struggling to make ends meet while the American Dream slips away for their children and they feel powerless to turn the tide. Shifting our priorities from corporate greed to workers' needs is essential to putting our country back on track. And we do have the power to accomplish it, if only we will band together and exercise it.

The AFL-CIO has hit the ground running early in this campaign, putting in place the organizational network for door knocks, phone banks, rallies, leafleting, etc. to educate working families on the real issues and to get out the vote in November. NALC will be working shoulder-to-shoulder this Fall with our brother and sister trade unionists as we release activists in the battleground states and mobilize Carrier Corp volunteers. We have an historic opportunity to strengthen the worker friendly majorities in Congress and put a worker friendly president in the White House. We must not squander this chance for we may not have another for years to come.

So, do not be taken in by slick sound bites and staged photo ops. Focus on the reality you deal with on a daily basis and the impact that the policies of the last eight years have had on your friends, neighbors and 95% of your fellow citizens. Be a positive force for change; volunteer in the fall campaigns to help turn our country around. And, above all else, vote



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November 4<sup>th</sup> for yourself, your family, your friends and fellow workers, and for a new beginning; one that actually honors the traditional values and beliefs embraced by the Founding Fathers and embodied in the Constitution.

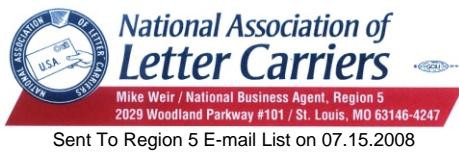
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There have been a number of rumors circulating regarding "early outs." Certainly, we are not experiencing the best of times in the Postal Service, and I can understand why carriers may be more inclined to look at retirement as a viable option right now. However, as we always emphasize in retirement seminars, do not base your decision to retire on an emotional reaction to the job; rather, consider carefully the economic ramifications for yourself and your family for the rest of your life. With regard to the rumors, we have been notified that the Postal Service is seeking OPM approval for VERs (Voluntary Early Retirements); but, as of this writing, we have no information on the particulars of these "early outs." My understanding is that VERs will be offered to clerks, mailhandlers and supervisory personnel first; after which, they will be provided for letter carriers, rural carriers, maintenance and motor vehicle employees. VER packages and annuity estimates will be mailed to all eligible employees. We will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

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I am pleased to announce the recipients of the 2008 Charles J. Coyle Scholarship Awards. They are: Erika Miller, daughter of Branch 1412 member Sonya Miller from Garden City, KS; Nicole A. Seifert, daughter of Branch 366 member Katherine M. Seifert from Joplin, MO; Samantha Post, daughter of Branch 1278 member Stephen L. Post from McCook, NE; and Shandi Rene Thomsen, daughter of Branch 69 member William Thomsen from Sioux City, IA. We have already deposited the \$1000.00 checks with the colleges of their choice. As usual, we were very impressed with the quality of the students' characters and academic credentials. Their knowledge and understanding of the importance of unions, as reflected in their essays, gives me hope that the future leaders of our country may actually share the values and concerns of working men and women. We wish them all the best in their academic endeavors and beyond!

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