

National Business Agent's Report

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I am writing this article in the middle of October due to the deadlines for the various newsletters in Region 5. However, by the time most of you read it, the November 4th elections will have been decided. At this moment, the polls and the current trends seem to indicate that working men and women will have a stronger voice in Washington, DC beginning in January of 2009. Of course, the only poll that really matters is the result when all the votes are counted (assuming that all the votes are actually counted); so from now until election day, we will continue to work hard to ensure that leaders are elected who will prioritize the needs and concerns of working families over those of the multi-national corporations and the monied interests. Regardless of the final outcome, I want to take this opportunity to thank all the active and retired letter carriers, their families and friends and the auxiliary members who put so much time, effort and money into campaigns at the local, state and national levels. Any success that we have achieved during this election cycle is directly attributable to the passion and energy that they brought to the door-knocks, phone-banking, hand-billing, etc. In particular, I want to commend the State Presidents who were involved in coordinating many of the activities, and the union activists who were released into the field to work with the AFL-CIO to educate working families on the issues and to get out the vote on Election Day. They took a significant leadership role in mobilizing letter carrier involvement as well as working closely with other unions to ensure additional participation at the various events.

I can personally attest that working with the AFL-CIO during an election cycle is an interesting and rewarding experience. To work for something you believe in, to actively seek to achieve your goals is certainly preferable to passively accepting your fate. And when you know that your efforts, in some small way, contributed to a positive outcome, there is a feeling of fulfillment that is difficult to express. If you did not volunteer in this year's election efforts, I strongly recommend that you seriously consider doing so at the next opportunity. Each of us has certain fundamental rights as citizens of this great country, but we also have the responsibility to ensure that the values and benefits of our democratic society continue to apply to all of our fellow citizens, not just the privileged few.

Despite recent efforts to address the financial mess created by the economic policies of the past eight years, it is clear that the current recessionary cycle will not be resolved anytime soon. This does not bode well for the financial well-being of the Postal Service which, of course, translates into challenges for letter carriers and the NALC. Last month, I detailed some bizarre policy decisions that were being pursued in one of the districts. I had assumed that these were just the concoctions of a rogue mentality, until I heard of the "delivery strategies" being touted by the USPS second-in-command for FY 09. This individual has developed ideas in the past which have caused nothing but



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problems and cost the Postal Service considerable money. His most recent brainstorm involves having full-time casers and full-time deliverers. In other words, he wants some carriers to spend 100% of their workday in the office, while others spend 100% of their time on the street. There are numerous issues associated with this concept, not the least of which is that it would require a flagrant violation of the National Agreement. President Young was quick to denounce this latest unilateral plan to address our financial woes. He was just as quick to point out that, over the past several months, we have been working toward a joint, "mutually acceptable approach to delivery issues." A new procedure for evaluating and adjusting routes is clearly the best approach to addressing declining mail volumes and the subsequent loss of revenue. We will continue to pursue that approach as long as we have a willing partner.

Local management's many and varied violations of the National Agreement in response to the current recessionary cycle have provided a plethora of topics for regional Fall trainings and next year's Rap Session. We will be offering branch leaders advice and information on how best to deal with these issues in discussions with management and/or through the grievance procedure. The Rap Session is scheduled for February 21 - 22, 2009 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in downtown St. Louis. The room rate is \$95.00 plus tax; and, as always, there is no registration fee. The cut-off date for reservations is 1/20/09. We expect our usual crowd of 300 plus, so book your rooms as early as possible. The phone numbers are: 800-925-1395 / 314-621-8200.

If you have a son or daughter who is a senior this year and plans to attend college next Fall, be sure that they apply for the Charlie Coyle Scholarship Awards. Their application must be postmarked no later than December 31, 2008. If you need additional information, please contact us at the regional office.

November 11 is much more than just another day off work. Remember and honor the service of our veterans on Veterans Day! In particular, keep our soldiers who are serving in war zones in your thoughts and prayers for their safe return to their loved ones. And have a Happy Thanksgiving! Hopefully, when we gather with family and friends for the annual feast this year, we will have even more to be thankful for as we look forward to a new administration in Washington, DC and renewed hope for a better future for us and our children.

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