



THE VOICE



OF THE GOLDEN GATE LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH #214

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO

September/October 2012

Award-winning newspaper

Vol. XLII, No. 5

EVERYTHING IS POLITICS, EVERYTHING IS RELEVANT

Election 2012 issue



Photo by Ivars Lauersons

President Barack Obama speaks by taped message to delegates at the Minneapolis convention, July 23, 2012.

Letter carrier issues at forefront

Election Day is November 6, 2012. At stake is the Presidency, 1/3 of the Senate (including a California race) and all 435 House seats. In addition, there are a number of propositions on the ballot in California, with Proposition 32 of major importance. Unlike past elections where it was easy to pretend that who won didn't matter, this election has immediate consequences to the job of letter carrier, what benefits may be taken away from us, and whether we will even have a full-time job. Congress has a number of bills in progress to fix the so-called problems of our financial burdens caused, not by the internet, but by the odious pre-payment of health care requirement of \$5.5 billion a year. Depending on who gets elected, who controls Congress and who controls the Presidency, our future as a post office has two distinct and radically different paths ahead.

With this in mind, the writers in this issue have concentrated on explaining why this election matters and why you should vote and persuade our friends to vote.

John Beaumont (page 3) calls our attention to Proposition 32, which would gut union influence in politics.

Herb Mitchell (page 3) talks about possible voter apathy and calls on our union not to forget the black vote.

Charles Gonzalez (page 4 and following) talks about the fight to save our post office from destruction and how choosing our allies and maintaining a moderate approach that will keep our public support, is essential.

Lynda Beigel (page 6) writes about how retirees are in as much danger as active carriers, and describes what NARFE (retired federal employees), an ally in our political lobbying, is doing to protect our interests.

Ivars Lauersons (page 7) mentions the immediacy of what can go wrong if the election results remove our allies in Congress. He cautions that not everything remains fixed with the post office if our allies win.

Ron Caluag (page 10) deals with how our union needs to save money in light of the declining membership in our branch.

Bill Thornton (page 12) gives a report on an honest analysis by an outside expert on what problems the post office faces and how it can take advantage of the new environment and thrive.

(continued on page 2)

HOW YOU CAN WORK ON YOUR FUTURE: ELECTION TIME ACTIVISM VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We need volunteers to help Phone Bank, Precinct Walk and do Door to Door canvassing. If you are interested in volunteering for the upcoming campaign, please call the union office and leave your name and telephone number. Call (415) 362-0214.

As a quick reminder, if you are not registered to vote, the California deadline is October 12, 2012. This is also the deadline for requesting a vote by mail ballot.

We urge you to get involved and let your voice be heard. —**Kim Truong, Director of Organization**



Photo by Lili Beaumont

*Ed Cuadra, Station J, San Francisco, and multiple-award-winning cartoonist for **The Voice**, punches out for last time.*

Election issue (continued from page 1)

Danny Urtiaga (page 13) reminds us of the multiple benefits of union membership.

Franklin Woo (page 14) talks about the NALC Health Plan and open season. Even here politics enters the picture because one party has vowed to drastically change the current Affordable Care Act, and our percentage of the premiums we pay may drastically increase.

Herb and Adrean Mitchell present

A Day at the Races

Sunday, November 11, 2012, Veterans Day

Cost: \$40. Includes premier seating in Golden Gate Fields Turf Club, Turf Club brunch (prime rib, salmon, chicken, vegetables, sides and desserts), a race program, and advice from supreme horse player, Mike Williamson. Come on out Bayview oldtimers, retirees and non-retirees, and have some fun with fellow carriers and members of the postal retiree group.

Contact: **Herb Mitchell** 707-557-0541; 415-710-3090

Adrean 415-424-9997

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- Karen Eshabarr Executive Vice-President
- Bill Thornton Vice-President
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* * *

NALC Branch 214 is on Twitter! First you need a free Twitter account which you can create by going to <https://twitter.com> to sign up, if you don't already have one. Just follow us at @NALCBranch214.

Our NALC Branch 214 Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/nalcbbranch214>. Or just type in NALC Branch 214 in the search box.\

Keep union voice alive

Proposition 32 – political wolf in sheep’s clothing

By John Beaumont,
President California State Association of Letter Carriers

Proposition 32 is being circulated across California as campaign finance reform that offers a broad-based and fair solution to curtail special interests’ control of government and returns power to the voters. **However, what this proposed legislation really does is limit the voice of union workers and create special exemptions for corporate interests.**

Proposition 32 would severely restrict union members in both the public and private sector from having a voice in our political process. This would result in working families like us not to be able to speak out on issues that matter to us all. Community issues like cuts to our schools and colleges, police and fire response times, post office closures, patient safety and workplace protections.



Proposition 32 is misleading, deceptive and full of consequences that hurt all of us. It does absolutely nothing to limit special interest influence on politics. And in fact it is **NOT campaign finance reform**, as its backers claim, since the **measure actually exempts Super PACs and corporate front groups from the same restrictions it puts on unions.** The measure also does nothing to prevent anonymous donors from spending unlimited amounts to influence elections.

Unions outspent 18 to 1

Corporations already outspend unions 18-1 in politics but that is not enough for big business. This measure would effectively clear the playing field of any opposition to their agenda of outsourcing jobs, gutting homeowner protections, slashing wages and health benefits and attacking retirement security.

Proposition 32 is misleading, deceptive and full of consequences that hurt all of us. It does absolutely nothing to limit special interest influence on politics while severely curtailing working people’s ability to stand up to powerful corporate interests. The result would be a devastating tilt in power to big banks, corporate CEOs and billionaires that would cause the final death to California’s middle class. Protect your voice; protect your future, **Vote No on Proposition 32.**

Get out the vote

Four more years

By Herb Mitchell, Retiree

It’s been almost four years since history was made by having the first black man elected as President of the United States of America.

During this election season you will be asked, are you better off than you were four years ago? Is the country better off than it was four years ago? Even in the black community I have heard people say, Obama has not done anything for me.

The black vote must not be taken for granted.

Overall picture

What must be looked at is the overall picture of what is happening in this country. Anything Obama has accomplished is quite a feat considering he has to contend with a Republican controlled House of Representatives that will not compromise on any issues.

Let’s go back in history. The year is 2000. President Clinton left office leaving a budget surplus, low

(continued on page 4)



Herb Mitchell, retiree, with Branch 214 President Lili Beaumont in Minneapolis. Herb is wearing a 1982, San Francisco convention, badge along with the Minneapolis credentials.

Photo courtesy Herb Mitchell

Mitchell (continued from page 3)

unemployment and a housing boom in progress. After eight years of President George Bush and Republican control of Congress, were you better off than you were eight years before? The housing market crashed, there was high unemployment, there was a financial recession, and we were involved in two wars. It took Bush eight years to mess up this country. Let's at least give Obama eight years to try and straighten this mess out and get the country headed in the right direction.

How it affects postal workers

As a postal worker, you can see what these people (Darrell Issa and company in the House) have in store for the Postal Service and working people across the country. That alone should have all postal workers running to the polls to re-elect Obama and Democratic representatives to try and get control of Congress and move this country forward.

Black voters

I would like to touch on a point we must not forget. One thing that was critical in the last election was the high percentage of black voters who came out in droves to vote for the first black candidate for President in U.S. history. I talked with many older black that thought this would never happen in their lifetime, me included.

Voter apathy can set in fast among any group of voters. We must not assume that blacks who voted for Obama in the last election will come out to vote again. So I say to legislative officials of the NALC, and to ourselves as individuals, we must work hard to get out the black vote as we did in the last election.

President Obama is the best choice to move this country to better times in the coming years. Let's make history again by making the first black president elected to a second term. Four more years? Solidarity forever.

Branch 214 Meetings

Branch meetings, 7:00 P.M.

October 3, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
November 7, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
December 5, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Steward meetings, 4:30 P.M.

October 3, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
November 7, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF
December 5, 2012	ILWU Hall, 400 North Point, SF

Retiree social meetings, 12:30 P.M.

October 1, 2012	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
December 3, 2012	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF
February 4, 2013	740 Del Monte Ave., South SF

Tightrope solutions

Too far: left and right

By Charles Gonzalez, Field Director

There is no denying that the Postal Service has several problems; some self-inflicted and some inflicted by Congress. These problems include, but are not limited to, a managerial structure that refuses to stand up to Congress and demand that they pass legislation that will begin to create a business model that is in line with the needs of the 21st century. There is a Postmaster General afraid to point out to Congress that the Postal Service has overpaid into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) between 50-75 billion dollars, and that the annual payment of \$5.5 billion payment for future retiree's health benefits is neither necessary nor fair.



Congressional foes

These problems are complicated by the fact that there are those in Congress and in corporate America on the extreme right that are doing everything within their power to follow through with their plans to privatize the Postal Service and do away with the union jobs that it has provided. For many postal employees the main cause of the problems within the Postal Service is obvious; it is an inept postal management.

Proposed solutions must be practical

There is a risk of attempting to rectify the problems that the Postal Service faces with solutions that are as extreme from the left as are the attacks from those who would dismantle the Postal Service from the extreme right. Keeping in mind that this is only my opinion, I liken the situation that we are in to that of a tightrope walker without a safety net; lean too far in either direction and the results can be tragic. We should all be offended and deeply insulted by the attacks from the right on the hard-working employees of the Postal Service, but we should also be confident that a well-informed public will be able to filter out the lies from the truth. We cannot stop the millionaires and billionaires from spending their vast fortunes on slanted web sites and misleading television commercials, but we can do our part to make sure that the public knows the truth.

However, in these times of corporate greed and partisan legislation, when it comes to "fixing" the problems that are dragging down the Postal Service and saving our jobs in the process, the solutions need to be approached in

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Gonzalez (continued from page 4)

a way that isn't counterproductive to our ultimate goals. There are ways in which as a union and as activists that we can, and must, work vigorously to get our company back onto the path of prosperity. These include participating in massive and informative rallies to keep the public aware of our fight, and assisting our national union in funding the campaigns of legislators who are sympathetic to our cause by contributing to COLCPE, the NALC's political action fund.

Postmaster must challenge Congress

Patrick Donahoe, our Postmaster, is unable to develop the backbone that is needed to stand up to Congressman Darrell Issa and publicly demand that he allow HR 1351—a bill that would solve both the pre-funding and over payment issues—to come to the House floor for a vote, and a segment of Congress that has the destruction of the Postal Service high on their agenda. Postmaster Donahoe should publicly stand up to Congressman Darrell Issa and the Republican controlled House of Representatives and insist that the funds that are currently contained within the fund for future retiree's health benefits (45 billion dollars to date) be properly invested, thereby reducing the need for future funding. The fund already has 18 times what is needed for the amount of current retirees, and with proper funding it could be fully funded to cover all of the current employees within 20 years (Source, August 2012, Postal Record). Congress and the Postal Service should acknowledge that it is well past the time to shift to a pay as-you-go contribution system.

The well-intentioned extreme solutions

There are those amongst us with solutions that are, as some might say, too far "left of center", and while very well-intentioned, the path they suggest that we take to these solutions may be, as stated above, counterproductive to our cause, and may even assist our foes in accomplishing their goals by turning public opinion against us. This is why, at least in this writer's opinion, we cannot afford to be too extreme in the way that we go about working out these problems. As unionists and activists, our causes are already considered by our foes on the right as left-leaning, and we should not shy away from this distinction, for it is our working class that has built our nation into the great society that it is. While we are well-aware that there are those in Congress and in Corporate America on the extreme right that are working 24/7 to dismantle the Postal Service, we should also understand that there is also a danger in being too extreme in how we attempt to reach our goals. I will explain why I consider being too extreme in our battle just as dangerous as being too far right later in this article.

Ideals versus reality

The above stated opinion should not be interpreted as being opposed to the ideals of the left; quite to the contrary, it is undisputed that most of us in the working class share the ideals of equality, fairness and shared prosper-

We walk a tightrope to offer solutions.

ity. However, we must be very aware of the power and the forces that we are up against as we move ahead in our shared battle for the goals that every working-class person deserves. We are up against billionaires and millionaires like the Koch Brothers and Congressman Darrell Issa. Congressman Issa's overall wealth is estimated to be as much as 400 million dollars, and the Koch Brothers' wealth is over 200 billion dollars; so there should be no mystery as to where their loyalty lies.

Public opinion on our side

Our union, on the other hand, does not have the money that these millionaires and billionaires have, but we do have, because of the special bond that we have created with them, public opinion on our side. We have had this special bond and public support for quite some time, but this, like many other things in life, is not guaranteed. The public, just like any other group, can be influenced and swayed. In these times of economic instability and joblessness, all it might take is a well-funded and slanted web site or television commercial to have the public view unions as a sanctuary for bloated pensions and an over-paid workforce. As hard-working union employees of the Postal Service, we know that the image that is presented by the far right could not be further from the truth. But all one has to do is visit the slanted and distorted web site that was created by Congressman Issa (Save the Post Office) to see the comments that are submitted by some of the general public that has been misled by the lies that are contained in his web site.

Make public aware of artificial financial burden

One might ask, how can we fight the well-funded tactics that those on the right have used against us? The answer to this should be ingrained into the minds of most letter carriers, particularly if you are an e-activist. We need to make the public aware of the unfair burden that the Postal Service has been forced to pay ever since the passage of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006. While as employees of the Postal Service we are reminded daily of burden that the passage of this law has imposed upon our institution, I have found in my daily interactions with friends and family that the general public is for the most part unaware of the needless payment into a fund that is already funded well beyond any

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What can change after retirement

Other retirees, non-postal, on our side

By Lynda Beigel, Retiree

Martha Raup and I attended the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Assn. (NARFE) Convention in Reno, NV August 26–30, 2012, Martha as a delegate from San Francisco Chapter 65 and I from Marin Chapter 400.

What was the convention like? Very much like every convention, a cycle of lobbying for one's position on issues. In this case the issues were replacing the by-laws with an equally awkward set, making the organization less accessible to its membership; making progress expanding membership; and interpreting progress as increasing use of technology to reach people via robo-calls and interactive websites.



Postal employees become federal retirees

Monday's keynote speaker was John Barry, Director of the Office of Personnel Management, which controls retiree affairs of all federal retirees, including postal workers. He cited his advances—doubling hiring of telephone personnel by hiring 12 new people, using rehired retirees to mentor new employees, and a goal of 60 day only delay for processing claims.

President Obama issued an Executive Order to modernize hiring—5 steps in the adjudication process have been eliminated, vets and the disabled (often both in the same individual) are being hired. He flattered NARFE by crediting us with successful lobbying for a Roth IRA option in the TSP. He is very proud of the 0.08% administrative overhead costs in the FEHBP which currently covers 8 million individuals. Congress and our own lobbying efforts must “Do nothing to compromise its broad risk pool,” says John Barry, by allowing groups to pull out of the program.

Legislative matters

Wednesday began with an excellent talk by NARFE Legislative Department Director Julie Taigen who pointed out “We are political, but not partisan.” She pointed out that unless and perhaps even if Congress raises taxes, federal employees, including postal, will be in the front lines of those on the losing end, with potential increases in health care premiums, loss of COLA, etc. The good news is that the current Senate will not pass the House/

Ryan budget, but the November election could bring us bad news in January. Effectively, the Senate requires 60 votes for passage on most issues and does not get it with the parties refusing to cooperate for the people. And “everyone needs to be concerned about postal reform” because loss of service, to our homes or on Saturdays, affects everyone.

Letter carriers, join NALC legislative network

It is crucially important we join the NALC (though Julie spoke of NARFE) legislative network, on-line if we have it, by telephone and/or mail if we don't. One of those will work for each of us! And that we involve our families in action, because if we lose ground, they lose too!

I learned from Julie that NARFE is on Twitter with its “Thank a Fed” program and on Facebook. “Protect America's Heartbeat”—that's federal employees and retirees—has its own website. NARFE has become the “go to” people among the 30 organizations in our political coalition—which includes the NALC—whose motto is “America Counts on US.”

Disaster relief

Steve Bauer, Executive Director of the FEEA disaster relief and scholarship programs, a retired federal employee and life member of NARFE, brought us up to date on that front.

Long term care information

Thursday morning Long Term Care program administrator LTC Partners' CEO Paul Forte pointed out the insurance has coverage for family caregivers, as well as nursing homes, that acceptance of new individuals is not automatic, and that “there's no guarantee in any insurance program” that premiums will not increase or coverage decrease and apologizes to those who were misled in the initial offering. This is partly because the program is self supporting. His advice: do not over-insure or fail to take advantage of provided benefits.

How to get new members

Next was Secretary Elaine Hughes to describe our progress in Marketing Membership. The Power Point presentation showed graphically that 1982 was the year we grew, thanks to the Reagan administration and Congress, to nearly 500,000 members. But that spurt of largely 55-year-olds—our members—has aged and not been replacing itself through a new benefits loss scare! So we are down to 275,000 (and our chapter has lost 1/3 of its member strength) of a possible 5 to 8 million potential base, and attracting new members is crucial. NARFE is using Google and trade shows to acquire prospects as well as continuing OPM mailings and now also purchasing lists. We are trying to get the GSA to cooperate on Pre-Retirement Seminars and to get EAP and HR departments to assist in recruiting.

Voting your interest

Your vote matters, a lot

By Ivars Lauersons, Editor

When you vote this November you will be determining your future in a more direct way than in any other elections. You can vote for those who want to continue the post office with your full-time job guaranteed, or for those who want to dismantle the post office as we know it and eliminate your full-time job with such so-called reforms as 5-day delivery and closing post offices.

The platform of the Republican convention urges that the post office be reduced in size and essentially privatized. The Democratic platform urges reform, but basically the retention of the post office as we know it.



Choice is clear

There is no mystery about choice. You have read in **The Voice** about Congressman Darrell Issa's bill to gut the post office, including eliminating collective bargaining. It has gone nowhere for the moment because it is so extreme that even Republicans in the House have been reluctant to support it. This bill is part of the present day Republican Party's attack on unions and federal workers. If there is a continued Republican controlled House, a new Republican Senate, and a new Republican President, we will have no friends in government to protect our interests. We can then say good-bye to the post office as we know it, and also say good-bye to a large number of our jobs. If 5-day delivery passes (and the elimination of T-6 position), it could soon become 4-day delivery and the end of our 40 hour jobs. Could you support your family as a part-time employee?

Retired employees not automatically safe from changes

And don't think that if you are retired, or plan to retire soon, that this does not concern you. The Republican attack is on active and retired federal workers and their pensions, cost-of-living provisions, and share of health care costs. Once you retire, you are not a special "postal" retiree, but simply a federal retiree, one of those overpaid bureaucrats.

As carriers in our branch you are under daily pressure by management to speed up and do the impossible. We are concerned about what will come out of the arbitration of our contract. Right now what is urgent, and what is in your self-interest, is to vote in November. Consider the importance of who is in Congress to represent you,



Photo by Herb Mitchell

First place winner Lili Beaumont holds plaque awarded by President Rolando at onstage ceremony.

and vote for members who are friends of the post office preferably. Think of who is President. Not only you, but your colleagues, family and friends should take this November's vote very seriously.

Your vote this November, unlike previous ones, can have immediate consequences. It does matter very much who gets elected. Please vote.

Voice wins awards

The Voice won a number of awards in the publication contest of the 68th biennial NALC convention held in Minneapolis, MN, July 23 – July 27, 2012.

In the "Best Editorial or Column" category, President Lili Beaumont won first place for her front page Sept/Oct 2011 article, "Disaster if 5 day delivery happens". (See photo above.)

For the "Best News or Feature Story" category, Executive Vice-President Karen Eshabarr won an honorable mention for her front page July/August 2011 article, "A show of solidarity".

Former multiple winner, Ed Cuadra won an honorable mention for his cartoon on page 9 of the July/August 2010 issue. Ed Cuadra is retiring this year. (See photo page 2.)

The Voice itself also won an honorable mention for "General Excellence (large branches)".

We congratulate the winners and thank all our writers for their informative and provocative pieces covering the daily insults to carriers and analyzing the long term issues affecting the post office.

We also thank Frank Brayton of DC Typography who handles the technical details and then gives the layout of text and photos the professional look.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Alonzo Emmanuel Burns** (TE SF)
- Ignacio Bello** (Regular 151 Mendell)
- Sandie Chu** (Regular Steiner Station)
- Rita Eufemia** (Regular 151 Mendell)
- Bernardo Garcia** (Regular 151 Mendell)
- Mee Kung** (Regular 180 Napoleon)
- Gladys Pineda** (Regular 151 Mendell)
- Ka Weng Wong** (TE 180 Napoleon)
- Lauren Wong** (Regular 151 Mendell)
- Ying Zhuang** (TE SF)

Alonzo Emmanuel Burns, Ka Weng Wong, and Ying Zhuang were all signed up by Field Director, Charles Gonzalez.

Minneapolis Delegates

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Lili Beaumont | David Mabalatan |
| John Beaumont | Carol Maggio |
| Angela Bibb-Merritt | Herb Mitchell |
| Jun Buccat | Doy Mitra |
| Mike Callahan | Alex Munguia |
| Ronaldo Caluag | Val Palattao |
| Ghan Ghee Chang | Eldridge Pooler |
| Simon Dang | Martha Raup |
| Juan Dominguez | Rafael Rodriguez |
| Karen Eshabarr | Vicki Sawicki |
| Tony Gallardo | Karen Schuler |
| Sheila Gardner | Cathy Simonson |
| Larry Gerigk | Harry Singh |
| Charles Gonzalez | Eduardo Sobalvarro |
| Rico Hapa | Andrew Taylor |
| Luis Herrera | Bill Thornton |
| Arnold Jones | Arnold Tiletile |
| Kaming Lau | Kim Truong |
| Ivars Lauersons | Art Ubungen |
| Norma Leonardo | Dennis Urutiaga |
| Stan Lew | Dave Welsh |
| Frances Lopez | Mike Williamson |
| Bradford Louis | |

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Photo courtesy Herb Mitchell

Branch 214 delegates at Minneapolis national NALC convention, July 2012.

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Membership decline

Are we currently financially safe?

By Ron Caluag, Secretary-Treasurer

As soon as I got elected as the Branch 214 Secretary-Treasurer last election, **The Voice** editor asked me if I wanted to write an article. My response was that I first needed the experience/knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of this position, since this was my first time taking over this position (I was Field Director in the previous term). I feel ready to write my article now thanks to the guidance and support of former Secretary-Treasurers Karen Schuler, Cherry Vargas, John Beaumont, current Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Jun Buccat, Pres. Lili Beaumont and EVP Karen Eshabarr. So here it is.



I was amazed with the duties and responsibilities of being the financial officer of Branch 214. It is a responsibility that involves mostly the financial aspects of this branch in addition to other duties like membership updating and billing, meeting minutes taking, grievance handling, etc.

Trying to save money for branch

When I accepted this position, I had no clue of what my responsibilities were but I have from day one had a primary objective, to try to save money to cope with the declining members in our branch. Please note that the

The Postal Service is not hiring career employees.

Postal Service is not hiring career employees. In 2008, we had 2035 members, and as of August 3, 2012, we are down to 1540 listed members. The decline is so drastic without any hope of recovering. The decline will continue on if things do not turn around for the better.

During the beginning of my term January 2012, I was tasked by our President, Lili Beaumont, to dissect the budgeting and by-laws of this branch to look for savings. I said to myself back then that this is a perfect opportunity to reach my objective. I thank President Lili Beaumont in prioritizing this issue early on in our term, and knowing that this is going to be a difficult and unpopular issue to tackle, but she did not hesitate in trying to save this branch.

Savings available without loss of core representation

Based on my investigation, I found out that the branch could actually save around \$100,000 per year. The six month budgetary items could be reduced to approximately \$36,000 annually. By-laws changes amount to more or less \$80,000 annual savings. The reductions are based on declining membership and will in no way affect our strong grievance work.

Process moving ahead

I presented these findings to President Lili Beaumont for advice and approval. She then created a By-laws Committee consisting of all present full-time officers and CSALC President and Branch 214 member John Beaumont to look at the proposal. The committee unanimously voted to present the proposals (after some tweaking and adjustments) to the Executive Board and at the March 2012 branch meeting.

I presented the PowerPoint presentation at the March 2012 Branch Meeting (PowerPoint slideshow is available to view under the "Resources" section of our Branch website <http://www.nalcbayarea.com>).

I had a primary objective to try to save money due to our declining membership.

This is only a proposal the Branch 214 leaders are putting out to try to act now to prepare the branch for any thunderstorms heading our way due to declining members. It is up to our members to vote to implement these proposals or turn it down at a future branch meeting and after the By-laws changes have been first published in **The Voice**. Our options are very limited; prepare our branch now by passing these proposals for any possible future financial meltdown due to declining members, or wait until it actually happens.

Where are we now after the March 2012 PowerPoint presentation?

For the past 6 months, the Budget Committee consisting of myself, Assistant Secretary Treasurer Jun Buccat, and Trustees Karen Schuler, Cathy Simonson and Juan Dominguez, reduced the budgetary expenses of the branch by \$25,000 (period of April 2012 to September 2012) compared to the previous 6 months budget (October 2011 to March 2012). It includes reductions in the following expenses (but not limited to) Assignment Time/Paid Time Services, Building/Office Utilities, Computer Expenses, Affiliate Dues, Conferences, etc. Based on our savings projections, the branch will be able to deposit around \$20,000 to our money market account by the end of September 2012. This is the account that we are

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Caluag (continued from page 10)

banking on to be our shelter just in case it starts raining.

How about the By-Laws changes?

Currently we are drafting a savings of approximately \$80,000 per year. It will reflect savings through By-Laws changes. Union members like you need to vote to adopt and/or implement these proposals. The proposal covers the full-time officers and part-time positions, elections and conventions. Once ready, the by-laws change proposals will be posted in **The Voice** newsletter and be voted on by members in a union meeting.

As you can see, there are opportunities to save for the survival of Branch 214. We have to make some sacrifices

Gonzalez (continued from page 5)

other fund of its kind, public or private (currently 45 billion dollars). This fund is, and deserves to be, the envy of any other fund of this nature.

Postal problems not caused by internet, I tell them

We should use each and every opportunity that we have to tell anyone that is willing to listen to the truth about what is happening to the Postal Service, why we are in the situation that we are in, and what is needed to correct these problems.

I finish off this conversation by telling them that the Postal Service is self-sustaining, and has not used one cent of tax-payer money for over 30 years.

Downsizing affects more than postal employees

We should also be pointing out the fact that a reduction in the services that the Postal Service delivers—a key part of HR 2309—will not only needlessly increase unemployment numbers amongst postal employees (an estimated 120,000, many of them veterans), but that it will have a “domino effect” on other mail-related industries, such as printers, e-commerce and the delivery of medications through the mail. The list of services that will be affected can go on-and-on; a “domino effect” that could be totally avoided with proper legislation. Think of the domino effect of a General Motors bankruptcy and the chain of suppliers of auto parts as an example.

Not all tactics help save the postal service and our jobs

I have spent the majority of this article explaining how we can attempt to counter the attacks from the right. This brings me to the portion of the article that could possibly offend some of my union brothers and sisters that feel that tactics such as occupation of post offices and hunger strikes are what are needed to change the direction that the Postal Service is on. While these public demonstrations may bring attention to the misguided direction that

that are not easy and/or popular but these decisions ultimately rely on your decision as union members of this great branch.

Are we currently financially safe and stable with the declines of union members?

Ultimately the membership will vote on the proposed savings.

My answer to that question is definitely a NO but there is a solution to this in which all of us, the union members can resolve!

the Postal Service has decided to take, they do not necessarily deliver the message that we as letter carriers need to deliver to the general public. Our main focus as letter carriers and union activists should be to make sure that our customers continue to receive the top-quality service that they have received for over 200 years, and to ensure that the Postal Service is able to maintain the workforce

The post office has not used a cent of taxpayer money in 30 years.

necessary to provide this service. If we can do this, we stand a much better chance of continued public support. As I stated earlier, most of us share the ideals of fairness and equality, but we do not necessarily agree on what is needed to accomplish these goals.

Voices at the national convention

There were even some of our union brothers and sisters at this year’s national convention in Minneapolis that urged the delegates not to endorse Barak Obama for president; which begs the question; would they prefer the anti-union, job-killing, right to life team of Romney & Ryan? It was disappointing when President Obama indicated that the elimination of Saturday delivery could be an acceptable solution to the problems that are facing the Postal Service, but this was clearly a misunderstanding of the importance of and the need for this important delivery day. However, there should be no misunderstanding the intent of those on the extreme right.

We are by virtue of our working-class roots leftists and liberals, and while we are certainly opposed to the underhanded tactics of those who would kill the Postal Service, we must keep our wits about us. Cooler minds and rational thinking should prevail if we are to maintain any chance of winning the fight that we are engaged in.

NALC proposals

Postal Service business model that works

By Bill Thornton, Vice President

The recent NALC Convention featured the appearance of Ron Bloom with a no-holds barred look at the state of the post office in the 21st century. Ron Bloom was recently involved in the federal bailout of General Motors and Chrysler, saving them from bankruptcy.

In October 2011 the NALC had retained Ron Bloom and Lazard, the renowned international financial advisory firm, to analyze and present a viable model for the continuing existence of the Postal Service. Lazard and its senior professionals have extensive experience in



the reorganization and restructuring of troubled companies and have advised debtors, creditors, equity constituencies and government agencies in numerous complex financial reorganizations. The Lazard report was released on April 17, 2012 and is entitled "Delivering Change to Revitalize an American Icon."

What is being proposed by NALC President Rolando and Lazard/Ron Bloom is a response to the Postal Service downsizing of the Postal Service. This idea of growing the business is in sharp contrast to the "shrink to survive" policies of the current postmaster.

President Rolando said, "Our efforts will be fact-based, non-political, non-ideological, and focused on the continued provision of universal service to the public and the preservation of hundreds of thousands of good middle-class jobs. We are confident that Lazard and Mr. Bloom—both of whom have extensive experience helping to revitalize numerous large and complex business enterprises around the world—can provide valuable assistance to all stakeholders who share our commitment to maintaining and growing this vital national resource."

Uniqueness of post office network

The Postal Service is the hub of a \$1.2 trillion mailing industry that employs eight million American workers centered on its unique 'last-mile delivery network.'

Successful revitalization of the U.S. Postal Service requires a strategic business plan that leverages the unmatched reach of its network, legislative action to relieve it of obligations no other business bears and shared sacrifice from all stakeholders, says Lazard.

"In private sector restructurings, successful turnarounds

are generally premised on a strategic plan that aims for a sustainable and viable enterprise and (ii) a management team and governance structure that is capable of executing that plan. These two elements are developed first and then the necessary capital is secured. Unfortunately this legislation (S.1789) provides the Postal Service with capital without either of these two elements being in place. Even worse, by adopting the Postal Service's proposals to reduce the quality and value it provides to American households, it may actually accelerate the Postal Service's decline."

Some proposals

Among many specific proposals, such as growing the parcel post business, was one that the Postal Service should be able to raise stamp prices, which are among the lowest among developed countries. Currently, the post office can't increase postal rates faster than the rate of inflation under a 2006 law that provided commercial mailers a rate cap they had long sought. Legislative action would be needed on this and an expansion of products and services the post office could provide.

Legislative action is also needed to address the burdensome Congressional mandate requiring USPS to pre-fund retiree health care for the next 75 years in just 10 years.

The suggestion of shared sacrifice from all postal stakeholders, rather than one-sided employee sacrifice, raised hackles among some delegates at the convention, as if we are not already sacrificing. But realistically, there will have to be sacrifices in a struggling company.

A union response to the postal "shrink to survive" policy was offered.

Cuts in the number of employees and reductions in services alone can neither save the Postal Service nor enable it to adapt to the evolving needs of the American public and postal customers, both business and residential. Rather, they could destroy it by driving customers away and further reducing revenue.

Rolando decries cut in service

The Postal Service requires a business plan based on a fundamental rethinking of the institution, top-to-bottom changes in its operations and culture and a first-rate management team and corporate governance structure to ensure that the plan is effectively executed. In particular, "it's a terrible mistake for Congress or the Postal Service to rely on massive cuts in service to deal with the Service's financial difficulties, which are real," said Fredric V. Rolando, president of NALC. "Yet that's exactly what they are doing. The Postal Service does need basic

(continued on page 14)

Agreement as brothers and sisters

The state of the union

By Danny Urtega, carrier, Visitation Valley Station

A few years ago, I recall watching a grade-B type of movie called “The Last Rodeo Star”. The beginning of this saga has a not-so successful cowboy on the rodeo circuit hitch-hiking to his next competition. He is picked up by a big rig truck driver, who right away begins a conversation by saying something to this effect, “well, the working man is being sent to hell in a hand basket by the unions and liberals who are set in their ways of doing things.” The trucker proceeds for the duration of the



ride expounding on this sentiment. As the aspiring rodeo competitor approaches his drop-off point, the driver finishes off by saying “yeah, with all this cock-eyed scheme of things, I’m sure glad that I’ve got my pig farm business on the side to fall back on”. To this, the hitch-hiking cowboy comments, “pig farmer?.

This driving job must pay pretty well” “Oh yeah,” replies the outspoken rigger, “we have a good union”.

Saying it somewhat tongue in cheek, over the last few years, unions have taken a bashing of sorts from members and non-members alike. Having been a union activist for years, I have conversations addressing what I strongly feel about this unsubstantiated opinion that unions are a problem.

“We have a good union”, the rigger said.

And I find it even more appalling that we must represent outsiders. My good friend, letter carrier Rich Cairo, had an interesting and direct resolution confronting this issue. It failed to get off the ground because of possible liabilities our union might find itself subjected to. Our postal service union, like all other federal unions, are required to represent scabs. Other union people shake their heads in disbelief when I tell them of this practice.

Questions from union members

On the other hand, certain members bring up the question, “what has our union done lately to address those in power that abuse their authority?” To this I only need say, check out the large payouts on overtime grievances that have been resolved. The diligence our stewards in this area show what the union does.

At the higher level, there is the ongoing matter of arbitration regarding our contract. Our union has not abandoned this matter by any means and is working on our behalf.

As a federal union, unfortunately, we must represent scabs.

This is not to say that I have been in complete agreement with everything our union has taken a stand on. Higher regional pay was an issue we fought for while the rest of the national delegates stood against us. The unanimous vote against DPS at a national convention was dismissed by then President Vince Sombrotto. So much for the will of the membership in some matters.

Some recent setbacks

Most recently, brother Bradford Louis submitted a resolution for a debate between President Rolando and Postmaster Donahoe, which was not fully supported by our local Branch 214. (The Branch supported the main idea, but differed on the exact wording.—Ed.) It was one

Look at large overtime payouts to see what the union has done for us.

of our own that called for the question on the floor debate before more could be heard. I’ve experienced the negative feeling for the “call for the question” during our resolution against racial profiling at the 2010 state convention in Anaheim.

At the convention in Minneapolis, sister Angela Merritt-Bibbs was to speak for support of the Trevon Martin case. It was also cut short by a call for the question. I can half-way understand the calling for the question in the two aforementioned matters but I can’t understand at all our union denying a fuller debate regarding brother Louis’ resolution. This was a golden opportunity to make a point for our cause, not that Donahoe would have accepted the challenge. All the same, this would have put the craft’s position in a better light to the public. We have nothing to hide. Now we’ll never know.

Sometimes I also disagree with what the union stands for.

Having expressed my discontent on this stand by our union however will not deter me from being a supportive union member. It is still looking out for our better interests. Our existing membership should take that to heart and non-members to their heads. In solidarity.

NALC HBP is preparing

2012 FEHB Open Season dates announced

By Franklin Woo, NALC Health Benefit Plan Representative

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had officially announced the dates for the 2012 FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits) Open Season which will run from Monday, November 12, 2012 through Monday, December 10, 2012. Of course, these dates could be subject to change by OPM. You may ask, “what would this period mean to me?” Please read on.

FEHB (Federal Employees Health Benefits) Program: You may enroll in, change or cancel an existing enrollment in a health plan under the FEHB Program.



Personal Note: It is with high hope that you would consider joining your own union health plan, the NALC Health Benefit Plan, for 2013. Please accept our invitation to check out the NALC HBP packet during the upcoming Open Season.

FEDVIP (Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program): You may enroll in, change or cancel an existing enrollment in a dental or/and vision plan(s) under the FEDVIP Program.

FSAFEDS (Federal Flexible Spending Account Program): You may enroll in a flexible spending account - a health care or/and dependent care account, under the FSAFEDS Program.

According to OPM, it will provide FEHB and FEDVIP premium rates for 2013 in early October 2012. **Participants can find specific Federal Benefits Open Season information on the OPM website (<http://www.opm.gov> in late October 2012.**

New for 2013 FEHB Open Season: Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC): As a result of the Affordable Care Act, FEHB plans (including the NALC Health Benefit Plan) will provide a summary document detailing information about health plan benefits and coverage on their websites. This summary of the Benefits and Coverage (SBC) document will help FEHB enrollees better understand their coverage and allow them to easily compare different plans and plan options.

The SBC will include information on the following:

- cost: deductibles, co-payments, coinsurance and out-of-pocket limits.
- coverage: covered services, examples of covered services and excluded services.

- rights: rights to continue coverage and grievance and appeal rights.

The SBC will have a disclaimer indicating that the plan brochure remains the official statement of benefits.

Plans (including the NALC Health Benefit Plan) will provide information in their Open Season materials to their enrollees about where to find their SBC on their website as well as how to obtain a **paper copy** (brochure) of the SBC.

I am hoping that the above information will be helpful to you in preparing for the upcoming Open Season (Nov. 12 – Dec. 10, 2012). It's really not that far away... in the blink of an eye, it will be time for you to consider giving the NALC Health Benefit Plan a try for 2013!

Thornton (continued from page 12)

rethinking, but not heavy-handed, ill-considered slashes in employees, facilities and delivery services.”

The Postal Service's “Plan to Profitability” has some reasonable assumptions and proposals, like repeal of a Congressional mandate that, since instituted, has led to a massive diversion of \$21 billion of Postal Service revenues into a fund for future retirees' health benefits.

“The Postal Service's proposed modifications — termination of Saturday delivery, a significant curtailment of ‘to the door’ delivery, and other reductions in service standards — could easily reduce demand by an amount equal to the alleged cost savings being discussed,” a Postal Service witness recently acknowledged at a Postal Regulatory Commission hearing that the combined effect

Use of the network, legislative relief and shared sacrifice can offer survival of the post office.

of all the proposed cuts could reduce mail volume by 10 percent, offsetting almost all of the intended savings from the cuts.

In a subsequent open forum at the convention there was some criticism of Ron Bloom with an emphasis on the fact that he was from Wall Street, his use of the term “shared sacrifice” and his record in the General Motors bankruptcy/restructuring, derogatorily referred to as a “bailout” and “crony capitalism” by critics on the right. The criticism from a few delegates indicated that auto workers were getting bum deals post- General Motors restructuring (wages, etc.)

Richard Trumka, head of the AFL-CIO, speaking at the convention, said: “They are hiring again in Detroit”. What's wrong with that?



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NALC retiree update

Branch 214 NALC retirees meet every other month at Grace Covenant Church, 740 Del Monte Avenue in South San Francisco from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. A buffet lunch is provided by Branch 214 and the parking is also free.

Information shared at August lunch

At the August 6th meeting, we started with the pledge of allegiance, secretary's and treasurer's report and an introduction of each retiree (name, which station they worked at and how long they have been retired: total of 192 years!). The Chairman shared information from NALC National President Frederic Rolando; how 700 of our brother and sister APWU Motor Vehicle workers in California are going to be reassigned; why Fed Ex and UPS want the USPS to survive and prosper, and why Speaker of the House, John Boehner, believes there is no postal crisis. Branch officers in attendance shared information from the just completed NALC national convention in Minneapolis, and even though the USPS failed to make its \$5 billion payment, medical benefits to retirees will NOT be affected.

Lynda Beigel shared information about the possible closing of Bayview Station. We have received the good news that Bayview Station will not be closing.

A moment of silence was observed for Theotis Riley of Station A, who recently passed.

A \$3 per ticket raffle was held: half of the money went to the Retiree fund and three members each won \$8.

**The next meeting will be on
Monday, October 1st.**

Hope to see you there!

*Peter H. Deutsch
Chairman, NALC Retirees*

Not set in stone

What to do in "the commitment process"

By Lili Beaumont, President

Most carriers must provide daily to their supervisor their leaving time based on the mail volume on their route for that day. Once provided, it is inferred that the leaving time stated by the carrier is "set in stone" or "committed" hence the management name, "the commitment process." In some cases, carriers clock in at 7:30 a.m. and are required to give their "commitment" by 7:35 a.m. when



not all the mail is up until 8:30 a.m. Management's goal with this "commitment process" is to get the carriers confirmed on their leaving time as early as possible so that they in turn can establish how much time to pivot the carriers on "undertime."

Carriers cannot provide a commitment if they do not have all of their mail to them at the time they are asked for their leaving time. Furthermore, this "leaving time" is only an estimation because any event can alter it. Carriers have a right to change it at any time after they have provided it to their supervisor. They also have a right to see the volume reports for their route each day.

If not all of the mail is up when the supervisor approaches to get their leaving times, carriers should inform their supervisor that they may not have undertime since they do not have all their mail yet. If management still insists to pivot, that carrier should complete a PS Form 3996 and write in Box J "pivoted on route#__ for __# hours. Supervisor was told I did not have all my mail before pivoted (time pivoted). Pivot turned into off-assignment overtime". If all of that doesn't dissuade management, then obtain copy of the PS Form 3996 submitted requesting overtime/auxiliary assistance. Give it to your shop steward so that he/she can begin a grievance investigation for you.