

# Old friends, New friends



The election of Barack Obama as president and a large batch of new members of both the U.S. House and Senate caused celebrations not only in the United States but around the world. The dramatic outpouring of emotion was the culmination of a long campaign based on the twin themes of hope and change. Letter carriers contributed to that victory in many ways, including their contributions to the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education, the political action fund known as COLCPE.

This fifth annual special tribute issue of *The Postal Record* recognizes the active and retired members whose donations to COLCPE made a real difference in the NALC's effort to get the country back on track and to begin rebuilding the middle class. Prominent among the thousands of names in this issue are your brothers and sisters who answered the call to "Gimme 5 for COLCPE" by setting up an automatic contribution of \$5 per pay period or monthly annuity, or more.

# COLCPE helps keep focus on important carrier concerns

**N**o group is better at making friends than letter carriers. It comes with the job. Serving the same routes day after day, week after week, we come to regard many of our customers and patrons as friends, and they begin to count on us as well. It's what makes letter carriers "friendship experts."

In fact, "friendship" goes to the very heart of the National Association of Letter Carriers—a labor union comprised of men and women of every race and color, size and shape, faith and philosophy, who understand that we must work together in order to protect our interests and our middle class way of life.

Accomplishing that goal is much easier when we collaborate—with our co-workers, with our employer, and with our representatives and leaders in Washington. Forging friendships with Congress and the White House has been a mainstay of NALC's survival throughout our union's nearly 120-year history.

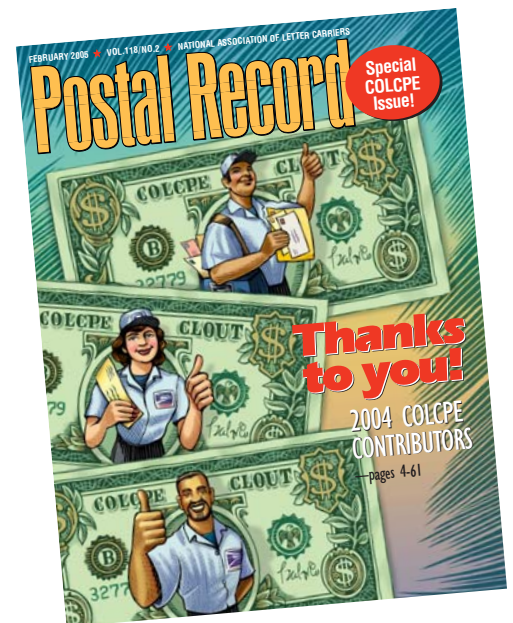
This past January, like many Januarys before, we bid goodbye to some old friends (and quite a few old enemies) while we welcomed a large crop of friends, both old and new, to Capitol Hill and to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. NALC members can be justly proud of the important role we played in creating the new, larger, labor-friendly majorities in the U.S. House and Senate—and in the historic victory of President Barack Obama.

"We went all out in the 2008 campaign," NALC President William H. Young said, "and our success rested on a very solid foundation—COLCPE."

The Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education—COLCPE (pronounced *COLE-sep*)—was among the scores of political action committees (PACs) that came into existence following the campaign finance reforms of the 1970s. The 34-year-old fund draws 100 percent of its money from the voluntary contributions of members of the NALC, the NALC Auxiliary, and a few other related groups. (Federal law specifically forbids the use of members' dues money for any political purposes.)

Over the years, thousands upon thousands of active and retired letter carriers have given to COLCPE—by mailing in an occasional check, by dropping in a donation during a special branch fundraiser, or by one of three forms of automatic giving: payroll allotment, annuity deduction or electronic fund transfer.

Beginning in 2005, President Young directed that the February edition of







*The Postal Record* should serve as a special thank-you for your tremendous support for COLCPE. Members who keep track of these special issues cannot help but notice that the listings have grown larger every year.

Last fall, donations to COLCPE made it possible for more than 300 activist letter carriers to be released to work on the AFL-CIO's Labor 2008 get-out-the-vote campaign. That was nearly double the number our union released for Labor 2006 and far more than many other unions two or three times larger than NALC.

COLCPE also paid for those special blue T-shirts worn by the Carrier Corps, the thousands of members who pledged 10 hours or more of their off-the-clock time to walk precincts, hand out fliers and make phone calls, all in an effort to make sure labor's voice would be heard loud and clear in the 111th Congress and in a new presidential administration.

And COLCPE funds helped cover the campaign expenses for the election (or re-election) campaigns of our friends in both the Republican and Democratic parties last November.

"All that time and money sure paid off, didn't they?" asked President Young. "Everywhere you looked on the campaign trail last year, you saw letter carrier blue, and it wasn't unusual to find our members putting in a full day's work, then clocking out and hitting the neighborhoods and phone banks for hours more, to encourage our friends and neighbors to vote."

The result? We now have Barack Obama, a true friend of labor, in the White House and solid labor-friendly majorities in Congress.

Having friends in high places, Young said, helps protect our jobs and livelihoods. "Because of the anti-worker policies of the last eight years, employer-provided health care and retirement have been eroding rapidly and the

American dream has slipped beyond the reach of millions of Americans. Letter carriers understand that protecting our own benefits helps raise the bar for all workers, and with more supportive friends now in Congress, restoring that dream is a real possibility once again."

### Legislative priorities

Of course, it would be great to have labor issues right at the top of President Obama's priorities in his first 100 days. But, President Young noted, "The man has a lot to tackle right out of the chute: a massive recession, exploding debt, consumer fears, two wars—and that's just for starters."

It is precisely because the nation's challenges are so daunting that "we need the support of our friends in Washington more than ever, just to keep our issues on the radar," Young said.

No one knows better than letter carriers how tough times are for the Postal Service, which is facing another year of multi-billion-dollar losses. The NALC is pushing strongly for a bill to give the USPS some relief from a requirement that it pay \$5.5 billion a year into a special Office of Personnel Management account to "pre-fund" retiree health care. The bill, H.R. 22, would allow the USPS to tap that fund to pay for current retiree health benefits—saving the Postal Service more than \$2 billion a year—while maintaining a more affordable pre-funding schedule (*see story, page 3*).

"Relief for the Postal Service now will help avert painful service cuts and postage rate increases that would only deepen the recession," Young said.

President Obama has spoken about "shovel-ready" projects to jump-start the economy and President Young pointed out, "There's one 'shovel-ready' law that could jump-start the restoration of the middle class, and that's the Employee Free Choice Act."

EFCA would make it easier for workers to form unions in their workplaces and bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. Among other things, the law would penalize companies that trample on employees' rights when they try to form a workplace union. It also provides for mediation and arbitration for first-contract disputes, and—most important—it allows workers to form a union when a majority sign cards authorizing union representation.

EFCA easily passed the House last year, but a Senate filibuster blocked the measure. Even if had passed, it was clear President Bush would have vetoed it. The election results make prospects for EFCA brighter—Obama pledged during the campaign to sign it into law—but a Republican filibuster in the Senate is still possible.

Repealing the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) also remain NALC priorities in the 111th Congress. As many letter carrier retirees well know, WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of those who receive both a Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pension and Social Security benefits from other employment. The provision can sometimes reduce a worker's Social Security benefit by more than half. Similarly, the GPO can also unfairly cut the retirement benefits of the spouse or survivor of a CSRS retiree by up to two-thirds, based on the spouse's Social Security eligibility.

While the NALC continues to push for the outright repeal of both provisions, the Legislative and Political Department is also working closely with a number of lawmakers who are drafting legislation to gradually eliminate them.

Some state-level issues continue to be legislative priorities for 2009, including greater use of voting by mail and the fight against do-not-mail registries. Mail-in voting boosts overall participation in the electoral process while helping to

strengthen the Postal Service. Conversely, "Do Not Mail" registries could sharply curtail already dwindling mail volumes and further imperil letter carrier work.

Successfully handling all these issues—in state capitals and on Capitol Hill—will depend on letter carriers' commitment to activism, and on your continued, generous support of COLCPE.

### Breaking it down

For the first time, the COLCPE lists in this issue begin with a breakdown of the percentage of members in each branch who contributed anytime during 2008. It also shows the percentage of members who are signed up to make automatic contributions—the steady giving that helps Headquarters efficiently budget COLCPE resources.

Following those branch numbers are, first, the automatic contributors, then occasional givers, and finally a list of group donations. And, on pages 39-42, you will find step-by-step instructions on how you can sign up to contribute to the PAC by payroll allotment, by electronic funds transfer (EFT) or, for retirees, by direct contribution from your annuity.

"We put more boots on the ground in the Labor 2008 campaign than ever before," said President Young. "That impact, especially in battleground states, was possible only thanks to your generous COLCPE contributions."

With a list like this, it's easy to see how individuals working together can make a huge difference. A few dollars here and a few more there, multiplied by thousands of letter carriers, works to strengthen our relations with our Democratic and Republican friends, both old and new, on Capitol Hill and on Pennsylvania Avenue.

A vigorous COLCPE will help NALC maintain and nurture those friendships and, in turn, protect the jobs and working conditions we deserve, with the pay and benefits that keep the American dream alive for proud union carriers. ☒



## Veteran carrier catches fall classic

**A** 30-year veteran letter carrier from suburban Chicago got a chance to witness first-hand two games of baseball's 2008 World Series match-up between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Tampa Bay Rays, thanks to his support for COLCPE.

During last summer's national convention in Boston, a random drawing selected Elmhurst, Illinois Branch 825 member Arthur Biladeau's entry from a drum containing the names of active and retired NALC members who were signed up for automatic contributions at the "Gimme 5 for COLCPE" level—\$5 per pay period for active members and \$5 per month for retirees.

Occasional and lump-sum givers who donated a certain amount to the PAC by convention-time were also in the running for the fall classic prize package, which included a pair of tickets for two of the championship games, plus airfare, a three-night hotel stay and a per diem allowance for expenses.

The World Series raffle was just one of the COLCPE contests first announced by President Young last March. Up for grabs in a second drawing, which was open only to "Gimme 5" participants, was a 32-inch flat-screen high-definition television. Samuel Willis Jr., of Tulsa, Oklahoma Branch 1358, was the winner in that drawing. ☒

