

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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As I write this article in mid-February, there is no clear front-runner in the race for the Democratic nominee for president. For that matter, it is doubtful that this issue will be decided by the time you read this article in March. Two excellent leaders, Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama, are still in the running, and each is making a strong case for their respective candidacies. On the flip side of the coin, Senator John McCain has all but locked up his party's nomination; and, given his 17% favorable voting record on labor issues and his embrace of the status quo, he is clearly not the candidate to change Washington, DC's priorities in favor of working men and women. Ultimately, regardless of who the Democratic nominee is, we will have to work very hard in the Fall to ensure that corporate money does not buy yet another four years of the same tired old policies, like the last seven years, that have left our country morally and financially bankrupt. We have an historic opportunity to achieve real change, and we must not squander it!

Meanwhile, we continue to pound the pavement and work the phones on behalf of the NALC-endorsed candidate, Hillary Clinton. I want to thank the four state chairs and the Carrier Corps volunteers from Region 5 for your efforts on behalf of her candidacy. In particular though, I want to draw the members' attention to the NALC staff whose efforts are essential to any success we have been able to achieve during this primary season. Jennifer Alvarez, Director of Legislative and Political Affairs, and Seth Hahn, National Field Director, worked shoulder-to-shoulder with letter carriers and other trade unionists to educate working families and to get out the vote in Iowa. The five regional field coordinators from the legislative department burned up the phone lines to get our message out to the members in the many primary and caucus states across the country. They, along with NALC Political Director Tucker McDonald, spent time out in the field as well. Jennifer and Meaghan Slater (RFC) brought their organizational skills to bear on Missouri during the recent primary here. And despite all of the odds being stacked against us, we managed to secure a 50/50 split in the delegates for the state.

These individuals bring their enthusiasm, expertise and dedication to the table and into the field on behalf of letter carriers. Like the other support staff in Washington, DC, they effectively assist our national officers' efforts to pursue policies and goals which result in better

wages, benefits and working conditions for our members. On a daily basis, they devote considerable time and effort toward promoting NALC's agenda. The least we can do is expend some time and energy to ensure their success and, ultimately, our own.

The recent period of local negotiations generated 79 impasse items from across the region. Most of the management impasses were directed at annual leave usage: choice, non-choice and incidental. For the most part, they were attempting to negotiate terms which were consistent with their policy of creating an insufficiency of workers by deliberately under-staffing offices, and then trying to find some way of handling the workload under such artificial conditions. Their efforts were quite transparent and easily set aside.

Many of the union impasses involved establishing LMOUs in offices that have never had one before. The desire to have specific guidelines or to codify past practices so that there are no misunderstandings on how to administer AL selections, holiday pecking orders, light duty requests, etc. was understandable; especially in light of the aforementioned staffing issues and mail volume concerns. I believe we were able to achieve reasonable compromises on these items.

I want to thank the local officers and negotiating committees who worked so diligently on LMOU issues and language. Again, you reaffirm my faith and expectations as to the quality and unselfish nature of the NALC leadership at the local level. The members are well served, and the NALC's ideals as well as the principles of unionism are reinforced and reaffirmed by your efforts.

Happy St. Patrick's Day to one and all! I know they say that everyone is an honorary Irish lad or lass on March 17; but my sense of it is: If you're not toasting the day with a pint of Guinness, on draught, then you probably don't qualify for a visa, temporary or otherwise.

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