

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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The first phase of the Modified Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process (MIARAP) has been completed. There was a flurry of activity as we neared the deadline, and one district actually went beyond August 31 with a few offices; but, overall, the parties did a good job under difficult circumstances. In particular, I want to thank the NALC activists who worked so diligently and effectively on behalf of letter carriers throughout Region 5. We knew going in that it would be difficult to meet the MOU's timelines. By its very nature, MIARAP evaluations and adjustments entailed a lengthier process than under the previous agreement. Additionally, the use of COR and the requirement to validate the data generated by that program expanded the time necessary to handle the adjustment process. I have previously discussed the importance of MIARAP in the context of a declining mail volume environment and the benefit of having a **joint** process to ensure a balanced approach to evaluating and adjusting routes. I know this has not been easy for letter carriers to deal with, and I appreciate your patience and understanding as we have worked through this process. Remember, we will be revisiting all of the routes in the Fall to ensure that they are adjusted to as close to eight hours as possible. This follow-up is a very important aspect of this process. In the meantime, be sure to work your route professionally on a daily basis, keep track of your workload and work hours, and utilize Forms 3996 and 1571, when appropriate, to document your day.

The saga of the Postal Service's financial woes continues to play out in the public arena. While management's push for five-day delivery dominates the headlines, NALC continues to work with our friends in the House and the Senate for reasonable and responsible measures to ensure the survival of the Postal Service, short-term, and to strengthen and develop our business prospects, long-term. Unfortunately, one important component of our strategy recently hit a snag in the Senate. S. 1507, the companion bill to H. R. 22 in the House, was greeted with a slew of negative amendments when it was marked up in committee. While most of

the amendments were struck down thanks to the quick response of NALC e-Activists, unfortunately, the one requiring an arbitrator ruling on contract disputes to take the Postal Service's financial health into account, thus elevating this factor above all others, remained in the bill. Such a provision would be devastating to the union's efforts to protect wages and benefits when negotiating a new contract. This anti-labor amendment has no relevance whatsoever to the intent of the bill, which simply provides much needed temporary financial relief in the face of an onerous payment schedule for future retiree health benefits that was thrust upon us by the previous administration. It is a perfect example of the enemies of working men and women using any excuse to attack us and weaken our ability to protect our interests and provide for our families. A vote on this bill is expected after the summer recess. When President Rolando sends out an e-activist message calling for action, please be prepared to contact your senators, to voice your disapproval of this amendment and your support for the basic premise of this bill.

Another contentious issue on Capitol Hill these days is Healthcare Reform. As far as I am concerned, this is a no-brainer. Healthcare costs are skyrocketing; and, as a result, working families are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their standard of living. Additionally, nearly 50 million Americans have no health insurance, and millions more are underinsured. Insurance companies are living high on the hog and are spending millions of dollars sponsoring ad campaigns to maintain the status quo. One of President Obama's campaign promises was to reform healthcare; to make it accessible to all Americans and to make it affordable. He is trying to make good on that promise, and he needs our help to be successful in this fight. We must get a handle on this issue if we hope to have any chance to rebuild the middle class and restore the American dream. The "debate" over healthcare is yet another example of the efforts of anti-labor forces to promote the interests of the corporate elite over the needs of working men and women. Their efforts to thwart reform do not involve rational discussion; but rather, they encourage engaging in fear-mongering tactics, distortions and outright lies to promote their agenda. As with all things, we must look beyond the most outrageous arguments and focus on the core issue. Healthcare reform legislation is essential, and true

healthcare reform requires some sort of public option. The public option, which the right decries as “socialism”, does not involve government take-over of the healthcare industry; but rather, it would force insurance companies to competitively price their goods and services, thereby making healthcare more affordable and more accessible to all citizens. And, by the way, the right also labeled the two most efficient government programs and important safety nets for our senior citizens, Social Security and Medicare, as socialism as well. It should be pretty clear what their agenda is. Contact your representatives and senators, and urge them to support and vote for real healthcare reform. It will not affect the FEHBP, our current healthcare system; but it will, ultimately, have a positive impact on the economy which will be good for all working men and women, including letter carriers.

I want to welcome Region 5's newest RAA, Mike Birkett. Mike began his career with the Postal Service in 1984; and, within two years, he was president of Dubuque, IA Branch 257. Since then, he has served with distinction in many positions with NALC, most recently as president of the Iowa State Association. In the 90's, Mike worked in the NBA's office. He became well known and highly respected throughout the four-state region, by both union and management alike. As a result, he has hit the ground running and has already made important contributions as a member of the regional team. Danny and I look forward to working with Mike to become an even more effective force on behalf of the letter carriers in Region 5.

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