

A PERFECT STORM



MARK A. GARDNER, National Secretary-Treasurer

Brothers and Sisters, we are in the midst of a perfect storm. The right-wing leadership in the United States Congress, in various Statehouses around the country, and even in some municipalities continues to push an anti-union, anti-worker agenda—most-times advocating their pro-business, partisan ideology over practical solutions. On the larger horizon, their goal has been to convince the general public that unions are to blame for the ills of our economy, and that the greedy public employees are the sole cause of deficit spending within federal, state and local government budgets. When our collective goal should be to raise the standards of America's working class, and to create and preserve full-time jobs—with living wages, real benefits, and both short and long-term security, these partisan mouthpieces of the alleged “job creators” continue to promote their vision of a disposable workforce. Their race-to-the-bottom mentality prefers the establishment of part-time, low-wage, no benefit, no security, no future, employment “opportunities.”

Fortunately, many of our citizens, including many in the Republican Party, are seeing through this partisan façade. Witness the results in the recent election in Ohio, where 62% of the electorate voted YES on the ballot initiative seeking to overturn Governor Kasich's union busting legislation. Apparently,

the new Governor felt emboldened by recent efforts in Wisconsin, Florida, and other states, when he pushed through his agenda seeking to break Ohio's public employee unions, and to eliminate the hard-fought gains of its trusted public servants. Noteworthy is that more Ohioans voted in this ballot initiative to reject Kasich's plan, than voted to elect Kasich to that state's highest office last year.

I'm hoping that message will not be lost on Kasich and his ilk.

It is with this anti-union backdrop that our Union moves forward to help develop and implement practical solutions to the current financial woes of the United States Postal Service. As detailed elsewhere in this magazine, there are now several bills pending in both the House and Senate that address the USPS crisis. Some of these proposals include language to facilitate responsible solutions to the problems and, sadly, some of the proposals focus on draconian, partisan, anti-worker, anti-union provisions.

Please know that NPMHU officers and representatives continue to meet with USPS officials, with Senators and Representatives on Capitol Hill, with various leaders within the Obama administration, with various other postal stakeholders who are committed to responsible solutions, and with our allies throughout the union movement to develop strategies on how best to accomplish our goals of preserving a robust, fiscally sound Postal Service and at the same time to protect the wages, rights, benefits, and jobs of Mail Handlers and all postal workers.

Concurrent with the vitriolic political landscape in Washington, and in the throes of the ongoing postal financial crisis and reform efforts, our Union also is engaged in the end-game of collective bargaining over the terms of our 2011 National Agreement. With our looming contract deadline of November 20th, we remain hopeful that the parties can reach common ground, and can fashion an agreement which first protects the wages, benefits, and working conditions of our membership, and which also helps preserve the success and viability of the United States Postal Service.

A perfect storm, indeed.

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