

The BIG CHILL

While the weather this winter has been unusually brutal over wide swaths of our country, the political and legislative environment in Washington, DC has made for a particularly chilly landscape here in our nation's capital.

With the Obama administration entering the second half of its four year term, with the House of Representatives lurching farther to the right as a result of the November elections, with the Democrats hanging on in the Senate by the slimmest of margins, and with every politician, pundit, and constituency group in the country focused on the 2012 Presidential and Congressional elections, the partisan vitriol has reached epic proportions. And it seems to worsen with each passing day.

For the past two years, the Obama administration has been attempting to steer legislation and direct policy to pull our economy out of its recession, to help raise the standard of living of all Americans, and to find or create real jobs for the millions among our otherwise productive citizens who are out of work. But with the constant squabbling both among and within our political parties,

and with a political win-at-all-costs mentality permeating Washington, these monumental tasks are made even more difficult. Unfortunately, our country's polarized political culture continues to worsen. In this environment where the politics of obstruction rules, where daily polls on just about everything influence decisions at every level of our government, and where extremist political pundits and other "experts" work round-the-clock to stir the political cauldron, it is amazing that anything gets accomplished in Washington.

As an elected leader of the NPMHU, I am cognizant of a few realities. First, I know that our membership is comprised of hard-working citizens, whose employment as unionized Mail Handlers has allowed them the real opportunity to pursue the American Dream: that is, to work at a secure job with work rule, seniority, and safety protections; to make a decent wage with protections against rising inflation; to have access to quality, affordable health care; to count on a pension at the conclusion of a lengthy career; and to be part of the greater good by contributing to the success of an employer that continues to provide an invaluable service to each and every business and individual in the country.

Another certainty that I know, is that our membership also is comprised of people from all walks of life, a melting pot of individuals with different backgrounds, from different cultures, of different religions, and of course, bringing to the table differing political views. Your National Union leadership respects, in fact embraces, the diversity of people and views that make up our great union. With regard to those differing political opinions, what should clearly bind us together as brother and sister Mail Handlers is our collective desire to preserve and improve upon the hard-earned benefits that we all now enjoy, and which our current and future members should expect going forward.

The American electorate, as it often does during mid-term national elections, handed a major victory to the Republican party in November, resulting in a complete change of leadership in the House of Representatives -- from the Speaker of the House down to Republican control of each and every committee and subcommittee in that chamber. A major consequence of this leadership shift, as it relates to Mail Handler issues, is that the



MARK A. GARDNER, Secretary-Treasurer

agenda and legislative initiatives important to a vibrant Postal Service, and to a postal and federal workforce, now is at the mercy of a Republican leadership which has clearly suggested, among other things, that federal and postal workers are overpaid, underworked, and are receiving overly-generous fringe benefits. Obviously, nothing could be further from the truth. But these ideologues are not allowing the truth to get in the way of a misguided attack on our dedicated federal and postal civil servants.

I am an optimist and, as such, I remain hopeful that political civility will soon find its way back into our public discourse. But for the time being, I am asking all Mail Handlers, irrespective of background, culture, or political affiliation, to remain united in our collective efforts to actively support legislation that promotes a strong, fiscally vibrant Postal Service, and that protects the benefits for which the NPMHU and our sister postal and federal unions have struggled mightily to achieve over these many decades. Please watch your bulletin boards and visit the NPMHU online Legislative Center (easily accessible at www.npmhu.org) to learn more about what you can do to protect your job.

Thank you for your continued support of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union.

Fraternally,

Mark A. Gardner
National Secretary-Treasurer

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