



National Association
of Letter Carriers

Fredric V. Rolando, President
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NALC and Organized Labor Succeed In Obtaining Critical Improvements To Congressional Health Reform Bill

Rolando Says Legislation Moving Through Congress Provides 'Significant Progress' for American Workers

The NALC and much of the labor movement, led by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, have been successful in negotiating an agreement with the Obama administration and congressional leaders to significantly improve the financing provisions of pending health care reform legislation that will expand coverage to 30 – 35 million Americans who today lack health insurance.

The measure would also reform the discriminatory practices of the private health insurance industry, improve both Medicare and Medicare Part D, and make a serious attempt to rein in skyrocketing health care costs. Despite its \$90 billion-a-year pricetag, the reform would reduce the federal budget deficit while protecting the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP), which provides health insurance for NALC members and their families.

Major issues still remain to be resolved between the House and Senate versions of the legislation, but a vote on final passage could come before President Obama's State of the Union message in February.

"Although this compromise legislation is disappointing to those of us who support a single-payer system or a strong public insurance option, it nevertheless represents significant progress for working Americans," said NALC President Fred Rolando. **"The bill will benefit letter carriers specifically by covering the uninsured members of their families and helping to keep the cost of health care from soaring out of control."**

The most contentious sticking point for NALC and the labor movement in general concerned a proposed excise tax on high-cost health plans slated to begin in 2013.

Originally targeted at family plans costing more than \$13,000 per year (and self-only plans costing more than \$6,500), this 40 percent levy on health plans was included in the Senate bill as a way to finance reform and to discourage excessive spending on health care. But it threatened to unfairly tax union health plans that were costly – not because of overly generous benefits, but because of demographic and geographical factors.

Thanks to relentless lobbying by NALC and other unions, the tax thresholds were increased first to \$23,000 and \$8,500 in the Senate and then to \$24,000 and \$8,900 as a result of the White House agreement reached by the AFL-CIO on January 14. Those thresholds will also be adjusted upwards to account for age and gender differences and to account for any surge in health care inflation between now and 2013. Furthermore, dental and vision coverage will no longer be counted against the threshold, effectively raising the levels by as much as an additional \$2,000. In addition, the AFL-CIO deal secured an exemption for collectively bargained health plans through 2017, an exemption that may or may not cover bargaining unit postal employees with FEHBP plans.

"We had hoped to get rid of the excise tax altogether," Rolando acknowledged, "but since the average cost of FEHBP plans (\$13,000 for family and \$6,900 for self-only) falls far below the new thresholds, our plans will not be taxed for the foreseeable future."

"We are still concerned that the indexing of the thresholds is inadequate," he added, "since health care premiums have traditionally risen much faster than inflation and FEHBP plans like the NALC HBP could be hit by the tax sometime in the next decade."

Under the law, the thresholds for the tax will rise by the increase in the Consumer Price Index plus 1 percentage point. "Fortunately, we will have 10 years to fix the indexing provisions of the law or repeal the tax altogether," Rolando said.

Martin Luther King Holiday a 'Day of Service'

Letter carriers will join Americans from all walks of life on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. federal holiday Monday, January 18, in observance of a National Day of Service in honor of the slain civil rights leader.

The AFL-CIO is having a weekend-long national celebration of Dr. King's legacy with a call for the White House and Congress to adopt meaningful job creation policies. Union members from around the country are gathering in Greensboro, North Carolina for five days of activities, including community service projects, a jobs town hall meeting and workshops and commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro sit-ins.

Across the country, working Americans will hold roundtables, marches and rallies to remind members of Congress that Dr. King's vision for the nation included not only civil rights but also economic justice for all Americans.

In 1994, Congress dedicated the federal holiday as a national day of service to strengthen communities and achieve common goals in meeting national challenges such as poverty, economic insecurity, illiteracy, hunger, and environmental degradation. Suggested types of service include preparing and delivering meals, refurbishing schools and community centers, collecting food and clothing, removing graffiti and cleaning neighborhoods, reading to children, and training mentors and tutors for youth.



CLUW Advances Cervical Cancer Awareness

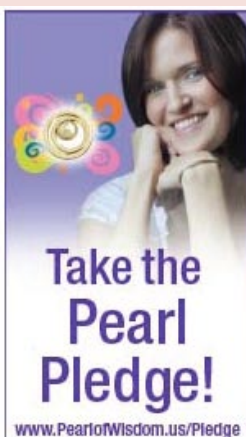
The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) wants women to know that cervical cancer – the second leading cancer in women worldwide – is preventable with the Pap test, the HPV (human papillomavirus) test and the HPV vaccine. It has joined as a partner in the Pearl of Wisdom Campaign to Prevent Cervical Cancer, spreading the word to share with their mothers, daughters, sisters and friends.

In January, National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, the Pearl of Wisdom campaign is urging women to "Take the Pearl Pledge" to schedule their annual gynecologic examination; tell five friends about their pledge and ask them to join them; and wear a Pearl of Wisdom in support of cervical cancer prevention.

Women can visit www.PearlofWisdom.us/Pledge to participate. The Pearl of Wisdom campaign aims to secure 4,070 pledges by Mother's Day (May 9). This is the same number of U.S. women who were projected to die of cervical cancer in 2009. Women can wear their own pearls to participate, or they can purchase a Pearl of Wisdom pin through the campaign. All proceeds go to the U.S. Pearl of Wisdom Campaign fund, which supports U.S.-based cervical cancer prevention activities.

Formed in 1974, CLUW is a nonpartisan organization for union women within the union movement with members from 54 international and national unions across the United States and Canada. CLUW is endorsed by the AFL-CIO.

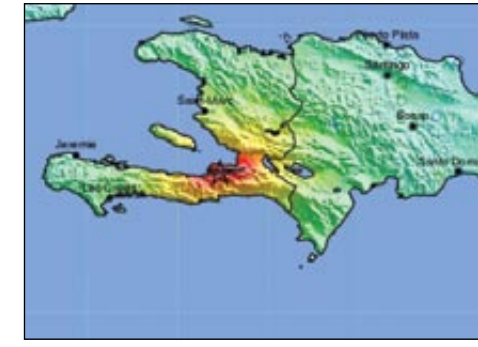
(For more information on cervical cancer prevention, see CLUW's 'Cervical Cancer Prevention Works' program at www.cluw.org/cervcancer.html.)



Rolando Urges NALC Membership To Give to Haiti Earthquake Relief

One of the greatest natural disasters in history has devastated the Caribbean island nation of Haiti and the people there are in desperate need.

NALC President Fred Rolando noted that while the extent of the loss of life, injuries and total destruction in Haiti is unknown, it surely will be of unbelievable magnitude, surpassing Hurricane Katrina, possibly the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, and potentially be among the highest death tolls ever.



USGS Map

"As help rushes from this country to our nearby neighbor, our thoughts and prayers go out to all who have died, suffered injury or seen their lives shaken to the core by this horrific earthquake," Rolando said. **"Letter carriers have a great tradition of helping those in need, and now I ask that you join me in making a commitment of hope to these victims by sending a generous charitable donation."**

Those interested in providing volunteer personal assistance should contact the Center for International Disaster Information at www.cidi.org and (703) 276-1914.

The AFL-CIO has identified several charitable organizations that are providing aid to Haiti. Donations may be made to:

- **American Red Cross International Response Fund:** www.redcross.org, or toll-free at 1-800-REDCROSS. Contributions also can be mailed to American Red Cross, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, DC. 20013 or to your local American Red Cross chapter.
- **RN Response Network:** www.NationalNursesUnited.org.
- **United Way Worldwide Disaster Fund:** <https://volunteer.united-e-way.org/uwwwdisaster/donate/> or mail checks with the Fund reference to United Way Worldwide, P.O. Box 630568, Baltimore, MD 21263-0568.
- **The Solidarity Center Emergency Relief Fund:** www.solidaritycenter.org.
- **Partners in Health:** www.pih.org/inforesources/news/Haiti_Earthquake.html or send to Partners in Health, P.O. Box 845578, Boston, MA 02284-5578.
- **Doctors Without Borders:** www.doctorswithoutborders.org, or toll-free at 1-888-392-0392. USA Headquarters: 333 7th Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10001-5004.

Rural Carriers Become National Partner In NALC 'Stamp Out Hunger' Food Drive New 'Family Circus' Artwork Arrives for May 8 Promotion

The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), which has been a longtime supporter of the NALC National Food Drive in many locales across the country, has accepted an invitation by NALC President Fred Rolando to become a full national partner in the May 8 drive to "Stamp Out Hunger."

With the new national role, NRLCA will assist NALC and the drive's other co-sponsors in promoting the volunteer collection of non-perishable food on the second Saturday in May, encourage increased participation by rural carriers in the effort, and help deliver donations to local food banks, pantries and shelters.



NRLCA's logo will appear on national publications and other promotional materials of the drive alongside those of the other national partners: the U.S. Postal Service; Campbell Soup Company; Valpak; the AFL-CIO; United Way Worldwide and its local United Ways; and Feeding America, the nation's food bank network.

Announcement of the new alliance between NALC and the NRLCA came as famed newspaper cartoonists Bil and Jeff Keane again provided the drive with special artwork to help alert citizens of the May 8 collection.

Hundreds of NALC branches have already registered to participate in the food drive which stands on the cusp of breaking the 1 billion-pound mark in donations over the history of the 18-year-old humanitarian effort.

As the *NALC Bulletin* went to press, the number of registered branches for the 2010 drive stood at 474. Branches that have not yet registered are urged to as soon as possible in order that materials can be sent to them to assist in their local drive. **There is a January 25 deadline for receipt of branch registration forms.**

NRLCA President Don Cantriel, in advising President Rolando of his union's action, said the NRLCA was eager to be more involved in helping to fight hunger in America.

"After several years of participating in the NALC food drive in a very limited capacity, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association is extremely excited by the invitation from President Rolando and the NALC to have a greater role in the NALC food drive," Cantriel said. **"We look forward to becoming a more active partner in the whole process and working closely with our brothers and sisters of the NALC for a very worthy cause."**

President Rolando, noting the severe situation that still exists in the nation's economy and resultant jump in the number of food insecure Americans to more than 49 million, has asked all branches to redouble their efforts to surpass last year's record collection of 73.4 million pounds, and push past the 1 billion-pound mark since the national drive began in 1993.

"There are millions and millions of fellow Americans who do not have jobs right now, or if they do, the wages are low, the benefits meager, and the security non-existent," Rolando said. "Members of our great union have come to their aid in the past, and we must do it again. I urge all branches – however small or large – to sign up and be part of this great humanitarian effort on May 8."

Questions regarding the food drive should be directed to Drew Von Bergen, national coordinator, at vonbergen@nalc.org.



Compensation Act 2010 COLA – 3.3 Percent

The 2010 cost-of-living adjustment for Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) participants will be 3.3 percent based on the December Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) released by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics on January 15.

The FECA COLA adjustment is based on the increase in the CPI-W between December 2008 and December 2009, and will be effective March 1. FECA COLAs are applicable only in cases where death or disability occurred more than one year prior to the adjustment's effective date.

There was no projected accumulation yet for the sixth regular cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) under the 2006-2011 National Agreement, nor any projected accumulation toward the 2011 retirees COLA.

The December CPI-W at 630.600 was still below the base month level of 644.303 for July 2008. The sixth COLA, if any, will be based on CPI-W data in the report for January 2010, released in February.

Because there was no COLA adjustment for 2010, the 2011 retiree COLA will be based on the increase in the average CPI-W between the third quarter of 2008 and the third quarter of 2010.