

# Whole-of approach, times two



**Philip  
Dine**

**B**ack in July, with summer in full bloom and the weather far warmer, President Renfroe agreed to talk to Gray TV, which owns 113 local stations around the country, about the surging thefts and attacks targeting letter carriers. Reporter Heather Graf, accompanied by her camerawoman, conducted a thorough interview at NALC Headquarters geared for broadcast in a national weekday program called “InvestigateTV+” that Gray planned to launch in the fall, with a focus on long-form, investigative and consumer stories.

Production schedules being what they are, particularly for new shows, not to mention an avalanche of events both foreign and domestic

(from wars to approaching elections), the segment didn’t air until a week ago as I write this—a six-month interval.

The timing couldn’t have been better. We had just finished our 10th “Enough is enough” rally, getting the word out in cities and regions about the need to address these attacks, and this 30-minute national segment helped tie things together with an in-depth look at the broad problem—featuring our president’s analysis of the factors sparking the crimes and reflecting NALC’s determination to protect letter carriers.

All of Gray’s local stations (a mix of ABC, NBC, Fox and CBS affiliates, each owned by Gray) carried the show that Monday afternoon, with a potential audience into the tens of millions. Of Gray’s 113 stations, 79 are their market’s top-rated TV outlet; 101 are first or second.

**Shifting to the other end of the media spectrum, around the time the Gray program aired, Region 7 NBA Patrick Johnson spoke with a small weekly newspaper in Valders, WI, some 45 miles south of Green Bay.**

Reporter Todd Bergmann was looking into delivery schedules, specifically a shift from the day’s mail being trucked out both morning and afternoon to just a morning truck. As a result, when *The Valders Journal* is published each Wednesday, it wouldn’t be sent out to subscribers among the village’s 968 residents and beyond until Thursday—a day’s delay in folks getting their award-winning chronicle of local news.

Why did Patrick take the time, fresh off the Minneapolis “Enough is enough” rally, to talk with this 2,800-circulation weekly?

As we’ve often noted in this space, small media doesn’t mean unimportant media; on the contrary, local outlets often have a strong impact on residents, who tend to perceive them as credible and close to the community. Plus, you never know

who’s in the reading audience—perhaps a business leader or the spouse of a lawmaker. Moreover, as a one-man reporting crew, Todd doesn’t have the luxury of specializing on this or that beat, so he might benefit from guidance on postal matters from the lead letter carrier in the region.

“We appreciate the fact that when he reached out to you, [NALC] was able to talk to him,” *Valders Journal* editor Mary Thomsen said, “because it is a critical issue. It’s important to get the newspaper out on time, because we still have a sizable readership that wants a physical newspaper product.”

**Speaking of NBAs, those who serve at this level of our union have been a major asset in NALC’s communications efforts—whether with the rallies (often functioning as the regional glue between the national perspective offered by President Renfroe and the local experiences provided by rank-and-file carriers, shop stewards, branch officers or state presidents), or by dealing with individual journalists on topics such as service matters or weather-related safety challenges. And, indeed, on the crime issue even in places where rallies haven’t so far been held; Region 14 NBA Rick DiCecca’s office has, for example, been doing yeoman’s work dealing with the Boston media as brazen attacks occur in the area.**

This whole-of-union effort helps NALC stand out in a labor movement that too often relies on a top-down communications approach—a strategy that would seem to make little sense given the need for labor to muster as much public support as possible. The reason our union is able to summon voices from throughout our ranks is simple: We are blessed, at all levels, with letter carriers who are informed, dedicated—and willing to help get out the message.

Combine that with what might be termed a whole-of-media approach, aimed at using all available options—from community news outlets to national media organizations—and it is no wonder that NALC disseminates its message widely, consistently and effectively. And does so, moreover, in pivotal periods such as this, when surging criminality, hotter weather, a new postal business plan and key legislative goals require no less.

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