

The Truth Shall Set You Free



The above words are familiar to many, if not most of us. Contemporary wags have added, “but first it will really [tick] you off.”

Several years ago, I spotted a headline in a conservative newspaper to which I subscribe. It referred to the 10 worst government programs, and the subtitle indicated that this was going to be an annual revelation. It will be surprising to many of you to learn that I am a bit to the right of center, on a political scale. However, one of the agencies included in the list was the United States Postal Service. The ratings were based almost exclusively on the amount of government subsidies these agencies received. Interestingly, the Postal Service was listed very near the bottom of the 10 worst. But ignorance is not an excuse, especially for a conservative publication.

Salivating profusely, I cranked up the laptop and knocked off a few lines of protest to the editor. I chastised my friends about their selective use of the Constitution to regularly bolster their arguments and opinions. Of the 10 government agencies in the article, only one, the Postal Service, had any claim of legitimacy, by a logical reading of the U.S. Constitution. I claimed that the Constitution (Article I, Section 8, Clause 7) grants to Congress the power to establish post offices and post roads.

Would that the Congress had maintained the same reverence for this power as it has with ever increasing zeal for the first enumerated power the Constitution provides

...“To lay and collect taxes ...”

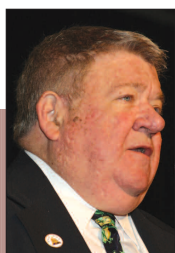
I got a call from one of the editors, asking whether they could use my response on the website that included the electronic version of the newspaper. Of course, I said “yes,” but I was never able to find any mention of the letter. Sometime later, I dropped a note to a friend at Postal Headquarters. This resulted in the receipt of a spreadsheet that showed what “subsidies” had been provided by the federal government over a six-year span. Shazaam! The only monies the Postal Service had received were for “revenue foregone,” which equates to free mailing matter for the blind, overseas voting ... and one expense that really jumped out at me. We were mandated by Congress to provide some very expensive scanning equipment, which it felt was necessary, in the wake of the anthrax scare. There was hardly any indication of waste, fraud or abuse. That is, unless, of course, you consider that the figure for revenue foregone for the period 1991-1998 totaled \$1.218 billion and is being paid back to USPS over a period of 42 years, at a rate of \$29 million per year. Oh, and should I mention that this includes 0 percent interest?

Strange Bedfellows and the Blind Squirrel

On a Friday evening, early in October, I had my TV set to watch Fox News and on came Sean Hannity with the news that he would be joined by Michael Moore. Now, Michael Moore immediately brings to mind, for me, just about everything that is wrong in this republic in which we live. That being said, I was just a bit curious about what might transpire during the segment.

Early in the interview, Hannity spoke about how the country was in dire financial straits, referring to Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac, and that the Postal Service was going bankrupt. Moore immediately jumped on Hannity and asked if he thought the Postal Service existed to make a profit. He further argued that the post office was just one of many government services and the government ought to provide it. He included roads and traffic lights as legitimate services that should be provided. He asked Hannity, rhetorically, do you think the Army should make a profit? Should the fire department make a profit? The post office is a government service that we need.

Michael Moore is wrong in just about every argument he makes ... usually! In this case, he is right on the mark. As the old saying goes, “Even a blind squirrel finds a nut once in a while.” (I came to learn this line after hearing it just about every time I hit a decent shot on the golf course.)



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Get Ready for the Auction at Forum ...
along with great parties and good times!

The National League of Postmasters Auxiliary is always trying to be more aware of the encumbering processes placed on each and every Postmaster. We try to contribute in every way possible at conventions and state functions. Our support of the National Convention and Forum, along with 3-digit meetings, state conventions and training seminars set up by your LEAGUE branch, provides assistance to organize and coordinate every facet. Our LEAGUE family is vast and with the support of each and every one of you, we can only get stronger and grow larger to make the LEAGUE a power that will command attention and

action. We need membership to keep up this caliber of assistance and ask for everyone’s support to increase and mentor our newest and renewing members to help them grow into new positions and opportunities.

I would like to also remind you that Forum will be coming up soon and promises to be exciting and fun. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend Forum from January 30 through February 2. We plan to make each function at Forum a successful and exciting event. There will be a split auction at the icebreaker—the traditional silent auction with a live auction added to the mix. This will provide more interaction to everyone involved and heighten the excitement. The auctioneer is under negotiation at this time but we think we’ll be able to sway him to participate. So don’t forget to bring your auction items to Forum or send them with your state representative or National Board member.

The LEAGUE provides resources and assistance to all the Postmasters throughout the nation. The Auxiliary is just another tool to help our extended family when needed. If you have a spouse or family member who is a Postmaster and you would like to get involved in the LEAGUE, contact any member of the National Auxiliary Board and see what may be available to you. We always welcome assistance whenever offered—or just sign up to be an Auxiliary member and assist your state with LEAGUE functions. We not only help our LEAGUE family, but also have a great time in the process. So come on and join our LEAGUE family and experience the exhilaration of meeting and gathering with family and friends throughout the nation. See you at Forum!

—Fred Gardner, Vice President, National Auxiliary

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The important lesson here is that we need not get intertwined in the argument that those with whom we disagree are always wrong. Just because we are of a different philosophy than our opponent, this is not sufficient reason to dismiss every idea he or she may have. The Postal Service has been short-changed by the Congress, even though it is a constitutionally established function of the federal government. If you stopped 100 people on the street and asked them whether the government was subsidizing the USPS through tax revenues, I believe the vast majority would say “yes!”

With apologies to you for continuing to beat what

may be a dead horse, I believe a few truths have become evident. USPS is not receiving subsidies from the government. Congress has treated us shabbily. Delivering the mail is—and ought to remain—a valuable government service. The Postal Service is not a “company.” The nation’s Postmasters have largely been abused for years because of the “company” mentality and the bottom line.

With the strong hope that these truths will help to set you free, I wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, and a happy and healthy New Year!

God bless, Jim