



National Association
of Letter Carriers

William H. Young, President

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100 Indiana Ave. NW Washington, DC 20001-2144 202.393.4695 www.nalc.org



President Young gestures during the Executive Council's discussion of the impact of the recession on the Postal Service. Pictured around the table are, from left, Vice President Gary Mullins, Young, Executive Vice President Fred Rolando, Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel, and Director of Safety and Health Brian Hellman. (Photo by Mike Shea)

Executive Council Meets

'Time of Peril and Hope,' Young Says

The NALC Executive Council gathered at the Vincent R. Sombrotto headquarters building December 8-12 for intensive discussions on the full range of issues confronting letter carriers and the union. President William H. Young welcomed the Council to Washington, DC, by noting the historic nature of the moment. "We have come together at a time of great peril and great hope for our country," he said.

"This is a time of peril because the United States appears to be entering the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes," President Young continued, "and yet it is also a time of hope because we've elected a new, young President with the vision and energy to begin the long process of restoring the promise of our great country."

The 28-member Council received detailed briefings on the economic crisis, its impact on the Postal Service and its workers, and the steps the union is taking with the Postal Service and its political allies to confront the situation. Pausing only for the briefest of moments to celebrate the extraordinary contribution NALC's thousands of e-Activists, Carrier Corps volunteers and COLCPE contributors made during the recent elections, the Council immediately turned its attention to the difficult work ahead.

During the five-day meeting, the Council discussed developments in the field, including the ongoing roll-out of the Interim Alternate Route Adjustment Process, and the union's efforts to assist the incoming Obama administration with the transition to power.

On the legislative front, the Council was informed about the key committee changes that will occur in the 111th Congress and plans for the 2009 State Chairs conference were reviewed. The legislative staff outlined and the Council debated NALC's legislative agenda for the next Congress, which will include advocacy of the Employee Free Choice Act and comprehensive health care reform, as well as financial relief for the U.S. Postal Service on the pre-funding of retiree health benefits.

"Our union has never been more united," Young said, "and our unity has never been more vital to the future of our union and our country—every member of our Executive Council is committed to fighting for better days ahead."

NALC Engages Obama Transition Team

In a series of meetings organized by the AFL-CIO in the first weeks of December and through individual meetings involving NALC officers and staff, the incoming Obama administration has consulted with NALC on the full range of issues confronting federal and postal employees. "What a breath of fresh air," President Bill Young observed. "When President Bush came to town eight years ago, he all but ignored working people and their unions—and the country has been paying the price ever since. At this time of crisis, it is great to have a friend in the White House."

On Thursday, December 11, President Young met with Stephen Crawford, the lead Obama transition official responsible for the U.S. Postal Service. Young and Crawford, an academic who heads up the urban policy unit of the Brookings Institution, discussed a wide variety of legislative and regulatory issues important to letter carriers and exchanged views on the future of the U.S. Postal Service. Among the topics raised with the Obama team was the need to reduce the burden on the Postal Service of pre-funding retiree health costs, in light of falling mail volume brought on by the financial crisis. Other matters covered included the promise of Vote-by-Mail, the threat of Do Not Mail registries, and the NALC's legislative priorities for active and retired letter carriers in the new Congress.



Open Season Extended!

More Time to Join NALC Health Plan; OPM Sets 'Belated Enrollments' to Jan. 31

There is good news all around for the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Not only are thousands of members "coming home" to the plan designed with letter carriers in mind, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has directed federal agencies to accept "belated" Open Season changes until January 31, 2009. This means that all postal and federal employees, as well as annuitants, have an additional seven weeks to consider the top-notch benefits and affordable cost of the NALC Health Plan. Even if you have already enrolled in another Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) plan, you can still make the switch to your union-run plan through the end of January 2009.

The added enrollment period announcement coincides with a report from Health Plan Director Timothy C. O'Malley, who told the NALC Executive Council that new enrollments in the NALC Plan so far this Open Season already have surpassed the 2007 Open Season. More than 13,300 new enrollments had been received by December 8, with additional new participants yet to be tabulated.

"This extended enrollment period is a great development," NALC President William H. Young said. "We know the NALC Health Benefit Plan offers the best service and affordable premiums, and our benefits are designed for letter carriers and their families. Now folks who might have been unable to decide about joining the NALC Plan by the December deadline will be able to take advantage of what we have to offer."

OPM issued a Benefits Administration Letter (BAL 08-406) on December 5 extending the FEHBP enrollment period from the original Monday, December 8, through the month of January.

For more information on the Open Season "belated enrollment" changes, see the Health Benefit Plan section of the NALC website (www.nalc.org/depart/hbp). For information on how to join the NALC Health Benefit Plan, simply call 1-888-636-NALC (1-888-636-6252).

Young Urges Congress to Help Auto Industry—and Protect Postal Jobs

First came the credit crunch, then the recession—a one-two punch that has the U.S. auto industry knocked down to its knees. Sales of cars built by U.S. and foreign companies alike have fallen by more than 40 percent this year—to levels not seen since the 1940s. Undermined by unequal free trade policies and undercut by unfair competition from non-union "transplant" producers in right-to-work states, America's unionized car makers are seeking loans from the federal government to avoid bankruptcy.

In a letter dated December 10, NALC President Bill Young urged every member of the U.S. Senate to back a \$14 billion loan approved by the House. "Permitting the 'Big Three' to go bankrupt would have a devastating effect on our country," he wrote. "There is more at stake than the jobs of those directly employed by the car manufacturing companies—the future of parts suppliers, steel, rubber and semiconductor producers, car dealerships, as well as thousands of retail businesses tangentially dependent on the auto industry, hang in the balance."

At a time when more than 500,000 new workers are applying for unemployment insurance each week, the collapse of the auto industry would endanger some 4 million jobs in dozens of states across the country. Young reminded the Senate members that hundreds of billions of bonds would default and, "The resulting economic catastrophe would be felt in every state in the country and around the world. Indeed, a further deterioration in the economy poses a direct threat to the jobs of 700,000 workers employed by the United States Postal Service, which include my members."

Young concluded, "The cost of the bridge loan will undoubtedly be much less than repairing the devastation of a complete collapse of the U.S. economy. We cannot allow this to happen while we have the power to stop it."