



National Association
of Letter Carriers
Fredric V. Rolando, President
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Past, present, future

Saving Saturday tops agenda as Rolando opens convention



In a passionate and rousing opening address on Monday to the nearly 7,000 delegates present in Anaheim for the 67th Biennial National Association of Letter Carriers Convention, President Fredric V. Rolando spelled out the challenges facing the NALC over the next five days of the convention as well as for the months and years to come.

Combining his trademark humor with a fiery zeal that brought cheering delegates to their feet numerous times over the course of almost 90 minutes, Rolando called on each individual carrier to save the United States Postal Service, even if it means saving it from postal management.

After entering the hall to Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down," Rolando began his address by reminding delegates that all isn't bleak, and that the NALC remains the largest and best organized open shop union in America, while enjoying success in programs like Customer Connect and the annual Food Drive.

"I challenge anyone to name another union with a longer and richer tradition," he said.

And the NALC is a force for innovation, he said, raking in \$1 billion in new business since 2003 for the Postal Service through the Customer Connect program, not to mention the one billion pounds of donated food collected over the past 18 years in the annual "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive.

However, lowered mail volumes brought about by the worst recession since the Great Depression and increasing electronic diversion of the mail present tremendous challenges to letter carriers.

Then there are the other problems the Postal Service faces that are all-too-familiar to letter carriers—such as the overpayment of nearly \$75 billion in pension contributions, and the requirement to aggressively pre-fund future retiree health benefits to the tune of \$87 billion, something no other government agency or private business is required to do.

The Postal Service's proposal to cut costs by dropping a day of mail delivery would only worsen the prospects for the USPS.

"The very idea of abandoning a day of service, harming customers, forcing them to alternative delivery systems, undercutting public reliance on postal deliveries—it's all so wrong that it borders on the lunatic," he said.



Mindful that the National Agreement expires 14 months from now, Rolando outlined his four major goals for the next contract: to extend and enforce the ban on outsourcing city carrier jobs; to win more work for letter carriers through the assignment of new deliveries; to develop a better, fairer system for evaluating and adjusting routes; and to prepare for the next round of wage bargaining.

"Chip this one in stone: NALC is 100 percent committed to fight to protect the job security and standard of living of letter carriers, no matter what economic conditions we face. We will not give it up."

The union's two top legislative goals remain permanently reforming the retiree health pre-funding provisions of the 2006 postal reform law and defeating the Service's proposal to eliminate Saturday mail delivery.

Some progress has already been made, thanks to H.R. 5746, a bill offered by Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), which seeks to recover and transfer the postal pension surplus to the postal retiree health fund to fully pre-fund all future retiree health benefits.

The next step will be to repeal the \$5.5 billion pre-funding payments, which is likely to become more feasible once Congress sees that the retiree health fund is fully funded.

Rolando urged delegates to contact their congressional representatives to make sure they are co-sponsors of H.R. 5746.

"We must also stop the Postal Service from making the biggest strategic blunder since it gave away the Express Mail market in 1978," Rolando said, "when it voluntarily loosened the private express statutes at the urging of a small, unknown company in Memphis called Federal Express. The rest is history."

"Thanks to our legislative and political activists, we are making real gains in the battle to save Saturday delivery," Rolando said.

"The real strength of our union is the pride that each member feels as we serve our customers, in every neighborhood—at 150 million addresses nationwide—six days a week," he said near the close of his speech. "Together, we are 300,000 strong, and together, we will succeed," he said.



Convention Monday

Rep. Loretta Sanchez

'You're as good as gold'

President Rolando introduced Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA), who has represented Anaheim in the House since 1997. Rolando noted that Sanchez is a strong supporter of letter carriers and a co-sponsor of H. Res. 173, the congressional resolution calling for the continuation of six-day mail delivery, as well as of H.R. 5746, the bill that would correct an erroneous \$50 billion to \$75 billion overpayment to the U.S. Treasury by the Postal Service into the Civil Service Retirement Fund.

Inviting members of host Garden Grove Branch 1100 to join her on stage during her speech, Rep. Sanchez brimmed with affection and enthusiasm for letter carriers and for all working men and women. She said she admired letter carriers' hardworking "six-day legs" and pledged to keep them walking six days of the week. She also said she admired how letter carriers manage to reach the remote Arkansas town where her grandmother lives. "You're as good as gold, and we're going to keep you that way," she said.

Sanchez noted that letter carriers provide plenty of services beyond delivering mail, such as collecting donations for the annual food drive, helping customers in crisis, and providing daily contact for isolated people.

"I know all the work you do that's not in the job description," she said. "That's what being an American is all about—doing all of that."



Rep. Loretta Sanchez

Young given special honor

President Rolando proposed a resolution declaring his predecessor, William H. Young, "president emeritus." After delegates approved the resolution by acclamation, Rolando invited now-President Emeritus Young to address the convention.

Looking back on his more than three decades of service to letter carriers as a national officer, Young expressed his unwavering confidence in the union's members. "I was interested in seeing what you and I together could accomplish," he said, "and by God, you never let me down, and I thank you."

Friday 'Rally for Jobs'

President Rolando asked delegates to consider modifying the Convention schedule to allow delegates to participate in an AFL-CIO "Paychecks Pay the Bills" jobs rally at noontime Friday in downtown Los Angeles. Delegates approved, and as a result, Friday morning's workshops will be moved to an earlier time, with further details to be announced. Buses will convey participants from the Anaheim Convention Center to the rally and back.

"As long as there are 15 million Americans out of work and another 13 million discouraged and underemployed workers, the outlook for the Postal Service will remain bleak," he said, since payroll growth is the number one indicator of future mail volume growth.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka will speak to the convention before delegates head to the massive noon rally, which will also call for supporting the preservation of six-day delivery as a means toward saving 80,000 postal employee jobs.



Convention Tuesday

UMWA President Cecil Roberts

Unions, members stand together

United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts made Tuesday feel like Sunday morning, firing up delegates with a spirited tribute to working people, the righteousness of their cause, and the power they wield when they stand together. The proud West Virginia native brought thousands of letter carriers to their feet again and again as he preached a message of solidarity, justice and compassion.

"Shoulder to shoulder, back to back, your fight is our fight," he roared. "Saturday mail delivery should continue!"

Taking the stage to the tune of Patti Smith's "People Have the Power," Roberts thanked letter carriers for their consistent support of mine workers, especially those struck by tragedy. "One of the first unions of all to say 'What can we do? What can we help with, legislatively? What can we do to comfort your people?' has been the letter carriers," he said.

In return, Roberts pledged that miners would support the NALC's efforts to save Saturday delivery. "We will do whatever you ask us to do, because you have been with us over and over again," he said. "Your jobs are important to our economy. We stand squarely on your side."

Roberts noted that 14 working men and women die on the job each day in America. "As we fight for jobs, we must remember that we must make these jobs safer," he said. More than 210,000 mineworkers have died in this country, he added, half in mine accidents and half from black lung disease.

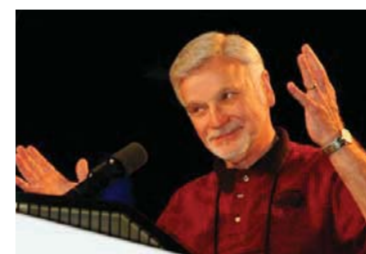
The best way for workers to ensure their safety, said Roberts, is to organize and join a union. "You want a safer workplace?" he asked. "Join a union!" Roberts then listed a litany of benefits unions bring to workers and all Americans, from better health care to improved pensions to workplace fairness—closing to particularly loud applause with this: "You want to tell the boss to kiss your ass? Join a union!"

Fighting for the 'last mile'

Delegates viewed a video entitled "Fighting for the Last Mile—NALC's Campaign to Save the Postal Service," a film that detailed the union's continuing fight to stop Postmaster General John Potter's efforts to drop a day of mail delivery. The feature explained the complex financial issues that have put the Postal Service in a bind, as well as the NALC's effort on all fronts to save Saturday delivery by fixing these financial problems while opposing Potter's short-sighted plan.

"The answer is not to take letter carriers off the street," Rolando said in the video. "It's to give the Postal Service access to their own money."

Rolando said copies of the video will be distributed to branches, the media and members of Congress, and will be posted on the NALC website.



UMWA President Cecil Roberts



NRLCA President Don Cantriel



UNI's Neil Anderson

NRLCA President Don Cantriel

"Rural carriers are our good friends and partners in all we do," President Rolando said in introducing Don Cantriel, president of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association. "And the NRLCA has as much to lose with the elimination of Saturday deliveries as we do."

Cantriel noted that in 2010, the NRLCA became a full-fledged partner in the annual Stamp Out Hunger food drive. "We proudly stand by you in this endeavor," he said.

Calling the Postal Service "a patient," Cantriel quipped that it "may be sick, it may need a little medication, but it does not need a limb removed."

"That is precisely what the Postal Service wants Congress and the American people to do, to sacrifice Saturdays for the greater good of the company," he said.

Cantriel suggested that USPS consider some management trimming. "We don't need layer after layer of management to tell us to do our jobs or to manage other managers," he said. "Don't try to save the Postal Service on the backs of workers."

Neil Anderson, Union Network Int'l

On Tuesday afternoon, Neil Anderson, post and logistics director for Union Network International (UNI), spoke to the Anaheim delegates.

"There are 20 million UNI members in the service sector worldwide, including 2 million postal workers, and the NALC is a proud UNI member," President Rolando said in his introduction of Anderson, who served as a postal worker in New Zealand early in his career.

"You know all too well that you have to watch what's happening in the rest of the world," Anderson said.

He gave the example of the trade negotiations between Canada and the European Union (EU). "The EU wants Canada to sign on to a trade agreement which would require Canada to liberalize its postal service," Anderson said.

"In the Netherlands, its postal service, TNT, proudly points to the 11,000 jobs it will shift to part-time positions and that it will deliver mail only three days a week, to save costs," Anderson said. In Italy, however, "six days is not enough for them," he continued. "They say, 'The Internet is our competition,' and we will continue to deliver not just six days a week, but twice a day, with express and parcels in the afternoon."

"They're saying, 'To give better service, we have to give more service,'" Anderson said. "Innovation is how we're going to meet the competition in the future."