

THE ROAD AHEAD

CHARTING OUR COURSE: 2008

New challenges and old troubles. New opportunities and a record of success to build on. It's a new year, and when the members of the National Association of Letter Carriers look at the road ahead, they can see markers of events to come and the way solidarity can move us all forward together.

The year 2008 promises a hearty portion of possibilities. With the new National Agreement in place, the NALC is tackling the thorniest issues in its relationship with the Postal Service. Whether the topic is a better system for route evaluations or implementation of new mail-sorting technology, the union is engaged with USPS in cooperative but tough negotiations. From the local to the national level, contract enforcement is aimed at one object—guaranteeing respect on the workforce for our members and our members' rights.

With our congressional allies, the NALC is standing firm against contracting out of letter carrier work, a cancer that would destroy the public trust our members have earned over generations. And we are working with our political friends toward important goals to restore the middle class, including universal health care and securing the free choice for all workers to organize and bargain for decent wages and benefits.

Nothing will be more important to reviving the American dream than the outcome of this year's national election. Electing a president who will fight for working families, with a solid congressional majority to back her up, is paramount and will demand our dedication and our energy.

NALC members also will hold our Letter Carrier Food Drive in May and meet for our 66th Biennial National Convention in July. And there will be much more that we cannot yet see on the road ahead. The next few pages provide a glimpse of the signposts up ahead.

Campaign 2008

Ever since the NALC membership voted in a nationwide preference poll last summer to endorse New York Sen. Hillary Clinton for president, blue-shirted Carrier Corps members have been spotted cheering for our candidate at political rallies from Nevada to New Hampshire. These Carrier Corps volunteers have promised to devote at least 10 hours of their personal time to work on a multitude of get-out-the-vote activities. In 2008, the NALC's Legislative and Political Department and state and local leaders will work toward fulfilling President Young's hope that tens of thousands of members will become Corps volunteers by the time the 66th Biennial NALC Convention convenes in Boston this summer. The Carrier Corps registration form appears on page 9 of this issue.

At NALC Headquarters, the Legislative Department's staff began the new year as it ended the old one—burning up the phone lines, calling letter carriers in key states, identifying Clinton supporters and urging them to turn out on her behalf in their states' caucuses and primaries. The

intensive effort was essential due to the compressed political calendar. More than half the country's presidential nominating primaries will take place either before or on February 5, the so-called Super Tuesday. The rest will be wrapped up by early June.

The NALC also hopes letter carriers will be among those chosen as delegates

to the major parties' national conventions in late summer—first, the Democratic National Convention August 25-28 in Denver, followed by the Republican conclave in Minneapolis-St. Paul the first week of September. In the weeks leading up to Election Day, November 4, President Young estimates that more than 200 letter carriers will be released to take part in the AFL-CIO's Labor 2008 effort, perhaps double the number who worked on 2006 get-out-the-vote drives.

And as the big day slowly draws closer, the NALC will increasingly call upon its members to help with a variety of political activities in a massive mobilization effort not only to elect a friend of letter carriers as president, but also to boost the number of labor-friendly members in the U.S. Congress and in state legislatures. To facilitate that final push, NALC will spend a good part of the year organizing for action—completing statewide phone trees, recruiting activists, and developing a base of volunteers with the tools they need to be effective in campaign work.

Political fuel

Money raised by the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education finances the union's bipartisan political activities, so continuing to increase COLCPE participation, both in terms of contributor numbers and contribution levels, remains a priority for 2008.

Because it's the union's political action fund, COLCPE cash can only come from the completely voluntary contributions of NALC members. The fund is kept 100 percent separate—as required by federal law—from union treasury and dues monies. Members know that COLCPE supports not only letter carrier political work, but also

Legislative priorities

In 2008, more so than in most years past, a large part of NALC's legislative focus will be on the state and local level. State legislative liaisons (SLLs), working with Headquarters, will be pushing for the adoption of full-scale vote-by-mail or, at a minimum, no-excuse, mail-in absentee balloting measures. In Oregon, the only state where elections take place solely via mail-in ballot, vote by mail has proven to increase voter participation. Matching the public's respect for the integrity of letter carriers with the voting process is a win-win for America's democracy and for the future of the Postal Service.

The state liaisons will also keep working this year to educate local lawmakers about the inherent problems with proposed "Do Not Mail" registries, state-based initiatives similar to the national Do Not Call telephone registry. If implemented, "Do Not Mail" restrictions could significantly reduce mail volumes and threaten letter carrier jobs.

On the federal stage, the battle will continue over what some in Washington

are calling the "Evil Twins"—the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, two laws that unfairly cut Social Security benefits earned by federal and postal retirees. Bills to scale back or eliminate both the WEP and GPO continued to languish in committee limbo at press time. Although getting rid of the provisions is considered unlikely before a new Congress and president take office in January 2009, overturning them remains high on NALC's legislative to-do list.

While not on the front burner, the NALC also is keeping the legislative heat on the issue of contracting out letter carrier work. An NALC-USPS joint committee is working on this sticky issue, but it's difficult to predict whether an acceptable resolution can be achieved. In the meantime, the union is pressing its friends in Congress to keep anti-contracting out measures alive and ready for action, just in case the Postal Service decides to resume its self-destructive expansion of Contract Delivery Service.

Participants in the Federal Employees Retirement System lose their unused sick leave when they retire, and as Director of Retired Members Ernie Kirkland noted in his December 2007 *Postal Record* column, an increasing number of FERS participants try to offset that loss by using as much of their sick leave as possible in the months leading up to their retirement date. To help eliminate the need for such tactics, Virginia Rep. Jim Moran is crafting a bill to reimburse FERS participants for at least a portion of their unused sick leave. For its part, the NALC is working with Congress to ensure the bill's language includes this option for Postal Service employees, too.

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President Young testified before Congress that while he was committed to negotiating with the Postal Service on contracting out, he would not hesitate in turning to NALC's friends in Congress for help if the Postal Service resumed expansion of Contract Delivery Service.



Electing a worker-friendly president is the major political goal of the union in 2008.

(Federal and postal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System already may cash out a portion of their unused sick leave.)

The union is also keeping tabs on measures introduced last fall in the House and Senate that would allow federal agencies to rehire federal retirees for temporary work. NALC wants to make sure that any retirees re-hired by the Postal Service are covered under the collective bargaining agreements of their respective crafts.

Workplace issues

While the 2006-2011 National Agreement between the NALC and the USPS was settled and overwhelmingly approved by the membership last summer, a handful of top-level joint contract committees were working on lingering issues as the new year began.

At press time, committees were still meeting on such critical topics as contracting out letter carrier work, an alternate route inspection process, improving the dispute resolution process, and delivery issues, including the impact the new Flat Sequence Sorter system will have on letter carrier work. (For an update on the committees, see pages 2-3.)

The union is preparing for an infusion of new TEs, or non-career transitional employees, who will replace all casuals in the craft and also ease the transition to the FSS work environment. In late December, the finishing touches were being put on a question-and-answer packet to help NALC leaders smoothly integrate TEs into the workplace. Unlike casuals, TEs are covered by the contract and may join the union. Local branches are being encouraged to recruit them as NALC members.

Future leadership

President Young created the NALC Leadership Academy in 2005 to help the union identify, train and mentor the next generation of union leaders. So far, 120 letter carriers have graduated from the academy and two more classes of 30 are planned this year, one beginning this month and one in the fall.

Leadership Academy classes include two applicants carefully selected from each of the NALC's 15 regions. These letter carriers travel to Washington for three one-week sessions of seminar-style classes with union officers and staff on a wide range of topics—from the history of the NALC and the evolution of National Agreement to improving the verbal and written communication skills essential to effective leadership. Between their weeks in Washington, students work closely with branch and regional mentors on "homework" assignments designed to further develop and build on what they learn in the classroom. President Young announced the names of the next Leadership Academy class in late December (see page 19).

Public service

Preparations are already well under way for the 16th annual NALC Food Drive, scheduled for Saturday, May 10, the usual Saturday before Mother's Day. Along with the now-traditional special artwork provided by "Family Circus" cartoonist Bil Keane, food drive materials this year will sport an updated logo that now includes both the union's name and the "Stamp Out Hunger" slogan made popular by the NALC's long-time partner in the drive, the Campbell Soup Company.



Branch registration forms for the 2008 drive were mailed out in December and are due back at Headquarters by January 25. That deadline will facilitate the mail-out of branch food drive coordinator packets, which include forms for ordering the free food drive postcards and the official poster. Last May, the drive took in nearly 71 million pounds of food for the benefit of community food banks and pantries around the country.

A targeted three-year campaign to increase fund-raising for the union's official charity, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, enters its second year this month. As part of that campaign, National MDA Coordinator Jim Williams has set up a special online discussion group that allows branch MDA coordinators to share ideas and success stories. He also is working with national and local MDA offices to learn the best, easiest and most enjoyable ways for branches to raise money for "Jerry's kids." Williams, a member of Portland, Oregon Branch 82 and former NALC Executive Vice President, is confident the union will surpass last year's take of \$2.1 million in pledges and donations for MDA.

In September, amazing accounts of heroism, tales of incredible endurance and stories of life-or-death decision-making will once again mark the annual Heroes of the Year awards. A panel of independent judges will review the "Proud to Serve" stories and other human interest articles printed throughout the year in *The Postal Record*, looking for instances of distinguished carrier service to customers beyond delivery of the mail. At a special luncheon, President Young will salute a national hero, a

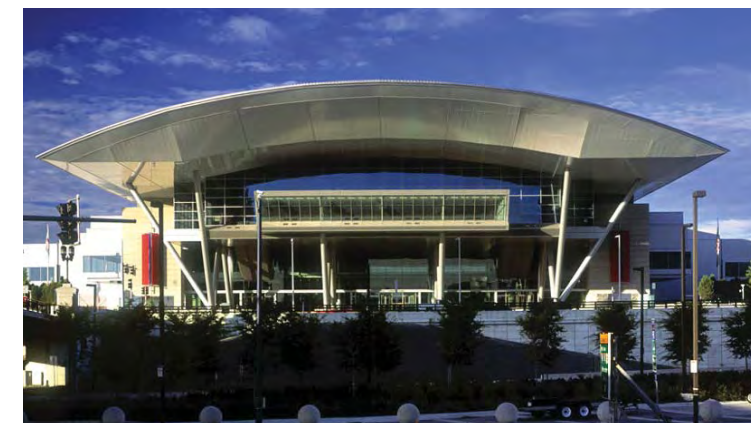
66th Biennial Convention

While the NALC was founded in 1889 in Milwaukee, Boston was the site of the union's first convention in 1890, as well as the 46th gathering in 1968. Forty years later, letter carrier delegates will once again return to Beantown for the 66th Biennial NALC Convention, July 21-25.

National Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broedel issued the convention call in late fall and the groundwork is being laid for the arrival of as many as 10,000 delegates from all over the country.

A full week's worth of business and fellowship will take place at the Convention and Exposition Center in downtown Boston, including about two dozen morning and afternoon training workshops and seminars scheduled around the general floor sessions. With the meeting falling mere weeks before the Democratic and Republican national conventions, NALC delegates can

expect to hear some lively political discussion, both on and off the floor, and to participate in the usual business of debating policy issues and formulating the union's future course by acting on proposed resolutions and constitutional amendments. In addition to national and international labor leaders, guest speakers will include prominent national political leaders. ☒



The Boston Convention and Exposition Center will host the 2008 NALC Convention in July.