

# A pause to say thanks and then back to work



William H. Young

**T**here is nothing more exhilarating than the sight of thousands of letter carriers gathered together in common cause. I wish every member of this union could have been in Las Vegas for the 65th Biennial Convention of the NALC to experience the largest and most successful convention in our history.

I want to thank the 9,200 delegates who attended for their dedication and commitment to this union. Day after day these devoted union activists arose at the crack of dawn to attend workshops to improve their knowledge and skills to represent NALC members before going to the plenary sessions to debate the union's future direction. Then each day they turned out with enthusiasm for afternoon training sessions. Not one delegate complained about the long hours.

I also want to thank all of you for the confidence and trust you have placed in me. On the third day of the convention, which happened to be my birthday, I was re-elected by acclamation to serve a second term as your National President. It is a profound honor and I pledge to do my best to serve you and this great union in the years ahead.

**As you will see in the pages of this magazine,** we hit the ground running after the convention to take on two of the most important major challenges facing NALC this fall: the task of negotiating a new National Agreement with the Postal Service and the need to mobilize letter carriers to vote in this November's crucial mid-term elections.

On August 28, the NALC Executive Council gathered in Washington to kick off negotiations with the USPS for a new contract. As I told the Postmaster General at the opening ceremony, I am determined to negotiate a fair contract that I can proudly submit to you for ratification. But it takes two to tango. We will soon find out if management will reward us for building a more productive workplace and take the opportunity to secure the long-term viability of the USPS through programs like Customer Connect. As bargaining pro-

ceeds, we may experiment with a new route examination process at the same time. A proper route adjustment is central to our everyday work environment, but the current system is plagued with unnecessary confrontation and acrimony. We are determined to see if we can find a better way.

The members of this union are united, the NALC is strong and we will pursue our just demands at the bargaining table. But if management fails to meet us halfway, we are also willing and able to seek satisfaction through binding interest arbitration. We are prepared for both paths and the power and unity evident at our convention convinces me that we have nothing to fear.

**The convention also left me optimistic** about the second great task on the union's to-do list: the 2006 mid-term elections. Not only did delegates contribute more than \$100,000 to COLCPE during the week of the convention, they also approved a couple of historic amendments to the *NALC Constitution* to focus the budgets and agendas of the State Associations on the union's political and legislative activities.

The COLCPE funds will have an immediate impact—in mid-September I released nearly 120 activists to work full time on the campaigns this fall of pro-worker House and Senate candidates who will help bring about a positive change in Congress. The constitutional changes will pave the way for a stronger political and legislative program in the future. By tapping the energies of our members in the states and building personal relationships with members of Congress, letter carriers will be able to help shape the political decisions that affect our lives. I have a lot of hope that a better day is coming for this country and that letter carriers will do their part to see it happen.

So, make it a point to say thanks to the members of your branch who served as delegates in Las Vegas. And then join your union to work for a better job and a better America this fall. ☒