

Unity and solidarity



**Brian L.
Renfro**

Unity and solidarity are words commonly used regarding organized labor. As is the case with many things in our daily lives, hearing or reading something often enough causes us to unintentionally lose sight of its importance and, at times, its very definition. This is human nature. In the case of these two words, they are more than simply words. They are principles at the very core of what a union is and what makes a union strong and successful.

This is a busy time for everyone in the NALC. First and foremost, letter carriers are working longer hours and even harder than ever. Branch and regional officers and representatives are spending countless hours fighting local management's rampant disregard for the provisions of our collective-bargaining agreement and often for the safety and health of letter carriers. National officers and staff are busy negotiating with the Postal Service for a new collective-bargaining agreement, while making efforts to address other issues facing our members, such as the wave of violent crime against letter carriers. NALC activists at all levels continue to work on other priorities, such as advancing our legislative and political agenda and our charitable efforts to make a positive impact on the communities we serve.

As we work hard daily to succeed in these areas, we maintain laser focus on the tasks ahead, as we should. I find that it is often motivating and refreshing to take a step back and look at what gives us all the best chance to be successful as a union in every area in which we represent the members of NALC. This is where unity and solidarity stand as our greatest strengths.

The success of labor unions and the larger labor movement has always been closely tied to our unity and solidarity in large numbers—the power of many people standing behind a common cause. As I wrote in my first President's Message as NALC president, we have the strength of empowered solidarity. NALC members have exercised that strength for more than a century, making us the powerful union we are today.

We are privileged to be members of a democratic union. NALC is as democratic as any labor union in this country. This provides ample opportunity for all NALC members to have input on the union's priorities and help chart our course for the future. Our structure allows for healthy discourse through branch meetings, state conventions and national conventions, just to name a few. NALC members and leaders at all levels have a strong tradition of constructive discussions, both informally and formally. I truly believe that this has made our union stronger and will continue to do so in the future.

We must all remain conscious of the unity and solidarity that makes us strong. Threats arise in the forms of people and ideology. Any effort to sow division is an effort to erode the strength of our union. That strength is founded on our unity and solidarity. NALC members have never tolerated these threats, and that isn't going to change anytime soon.

As we continue to fight the challenges ahead of us on a daily basis, let's all remember what makes us strong. If we grow and strengthen our bond of unity and embrace our gift of empowered solidarity, together we will achieve the best outcome possible for letters carriers in all areas in which we provide representation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian L. Renfro".

NALC and USPS continue contract negotiations

NALC and the Postal Service have agreed to continue negotiations on a new collective-bargaining agreement. The current agreement, which was set to expire at 12 o'clock on the evening of Saturday, May 20, will remain in full force until a new negotiated or arbitrated agreement takes effect.

A mandatory 60-day mediation period will follow, as required by statute. NALC will continue to work toward reaching a negotiated agreement with the Postal Service during this 60-day period. Issues that remain in dispute after the mediation period would be addressed through an interest arbitration process, which would result in a final and binding decision on the contents of a new national agreement. The parties would select a neutral arbitrator to chair an arbitration board that would also include one management and one union arbitrator.

Further updates will be provided as the process moves forward.