



NALC

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Bulletin

NALC activists review contract

Politics, legislation and training round out 2017 ‘rap session’

More than 1,200 letter carrier activists representing branches across the United States gathered in Atlantic City, NJ, in June to take part in NALC’s 2017 National Conference. The *NALC Constitution* calls for the union to hold a national conference in non-convention, odd-numbered years.

NALC President Fredric Rolando scheduled the meeting—commonly called a “rap session”—shortly after the union reached a tentative 40-month national collective-bargaining agreement with the U.S. Postal Service—the culmination of 15 months’ worth of negotiations between the two parties.

“I appreciate the members’ patience throughout the process,” Rolando said at the start of the June 14 meeting, recognizing that nearly 15 months had passed between Feb. 19, 2016—the date that formal negotiations for a new contract were opened, three months before the expiration of the 2011-2016 National Agreement—and May 12, when the proposed pact was officially announced.

“As long as all of our demands remained on the [bargaining] table, we said we would continue to negotiate,” Rolando said. “We were very clear on what had to be included in any negotiated agreement with the Postal Service, and all our key priorities remained on the table over 15 months of talks, so the process kept going.”

After explaining the agreement’s ratification process, Rolando said that the central focus of the conference was to provide branch leaders with a detailed explanation of the tentative agreement and the union’s bargaining and legislative strategies so those leaders could share the information with their members.

“Today’s discussion is for our members,” he said, asking that participants refrain from recording the conference. “It is not in the best interests of our members,” he explained, “to share our bargaining and legislative strategies with postal management, the media, politicians and the rest of the world through social media.”

Rolando expressed his hope that, between the general session and the workshops, leaders not only would get answers to all their questions, but also would understand the NALC’s strategy behind every contract provision.

A proposed pact

Introducing the subject of the tentative 2016-2019 agreement, Rolando noted that it rewards all letter carriers for their exceptional contributions to the U.S. Postal Service’s comeback from the Great Recession, continues cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) provisions, maintains the ban on sub-contracting and preserves the existing no layoff protection.

In addition, he said, NALC successfully negotiated a formal mechanism to address long-standing problems with USPS’ often-acrimonious workplace culture, and the union succeeded not only in narrowing the pay gap between city carrier assistants (CCAs) and career letter carriers, but also

in partially compensating carriers for time served as transitional employees (TEs).

External factors made negotiations rocky at times, he said. For example, the April 2016 expiration of an emergency (or “exigent”) postage rate increase—just as contract negotiations were getting underway—complicated matters; the move rolled back the price of a first-class stamp by 2 cents, shaking up the already tenuous financial state of the operationally still-profitable Postal Service.

Other factors that influenced the talks included the arrival of Megan Brennan as the new postmaster general, the excessive rate of attrition among CCAs, the large number of vacancies on USPS’ Board of Governors, the simmering debate over postal reform and the results of contract negotiations between the Postal Service and the other unions.

Contract review

President Rolando then launched into an interactive summary of the proposed national agreement’s key components, stopping frequently to answer questions from four floor microphones and repeating his admonition that no leader should leave Atlantic City without getting his or her questions answered.

He began with the agreement’s workplace complement and health insurance provisions and then turned to provisions affecting pay, benefits and working conditions outlined in various articles and memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

Rolando noted that while the proposed contract would not allow the Postal Service to raise the Article 7 caps on the CCA complement, it would allow USPS to keep some of the additional CCAs mutually agreed to (3 percent of full-time regulars) pursuant to various MOUs negotiated in the prior contract.

“These same MOUs provided a mechanism and a timeline for the conversion of over 47,000 [to date] CCAs to career positions,” he said, “and most of them did not have to serve an Article 12 probation.”

The tentative agreement also decreases management’s contributions for health care premiums for career letter carriers by 3 percent over 40 months, following a pattern found in NALC’s previous negotiated and arbitrated contracts, as well as in the recently negotiated agreements of the other unions. However, Rolando pointed out that USPS would continue to pay more toward health care premiums than any other federal agency over the entire period of the agreement.

Turning to the much larger list of NALC’s gains, Rolando then went through the provisions of Article 9 that would take effect if the contract were ratified:

- All letter carriers, career and non-career alike, would receive retroactive raises of 1.2 percent (effective Nov. 26, 2016).
- Career carriers would receive two retroactive COLAs: \$21 (Sept. 3, 2016) and \$333 (March 4, 2017) annually, applied to City Carrier Tables 1 and 2 in the same manner as the last contract.
- CCAs would receive an additional 1 percent retroactive to Nov. 26, 2016 (in lieu of COLAs).
- Applied retroactively to Nov. 26, 2016, CCAs with 12 weeks of service would get a step increase of 50 cents per hour and then another step increase of 50 cents per hour after an additional 40 weeks of service.
- Career letter carriers who retired after May 21, 2016, would be eligible for both back pay for hours worked after the effective dates of retroactive pay increases described above and for an annuity adjustment.
- Going forward, all career and non-career letter carriers would receive a general wage increase of 1.3 percent in November 2017.
- Also in November 2017, CCAs would receive an additional 1 percent wage increase (in lieu of COLAs).
- Career carriers would receive another COLA in September 2017, two COLAs in 2018 and two COLAs in 2019.
- In November 2018, all letter carriers, career and non-career alike, would receive a pay upgrade achieved through a consolidation of the letter carrier pay grades, meaning all career and non-career letter carriers will be moved to Grade 2, retaining their time-in-step credit and gaining a 2.1 percent raise in pay. (Those already in Grade 2 will also receive a 2.1 percent raise, preserving higher pay for carrier technicians.)
- Also in November 2018, at the time of the upgrade, CCAs would receive an additional increase of 1 percent annually (in lieu of COLAs).

Taking dozens of questions as he went on, Rolando then turned the discussion to a number of contract provisions affecting CCAs and former CCAs with prior TE service.

He went over the proposed contract’s one-time conversion to career status for CCAs with at least 30 months of relative standing in offices with at least 100 workyears, defined as the combined bargaining units of NALC, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the National Postal Mailhandlers Union (NPMHU). He also explained the MOU that addresses CCAs in smaller offices who have no clear path to career status.

The president then described the provisions in the contract intended to help former TEs. Those who are still CCAs, he said, would be eligible for advanced step placements upon conversion to career, while career carriers with substantial TE service after Sept. 29, 2007, would be eligible to receive up to four step increases in May 2018.

Next, Rolando highlighted huge gains made in the area of health insurance coverage for CCAs with spouses or families. In addition to the existing \$125 per pay period for self-only coverage in the USPS Non-Career Health Plan, he said, the proposed contract would provide a management contribution toward self-plus-one or family coverage of 65 percent in a CCA’s first year of service and 75 percent in the second year of CCA service.

Another key advancement Rolando highlighted was the agreement’s new Joint Workplace Improvement Process (JWIP). “After many years of trying,” he said, “we finally have included in this contract a memorandum of understanding with the Postal Service to create a formal process to deal with the dysfunctional workplace culture in far too many postal installations.”

Noting the long history of frustration on this front, Rolando vowed to commit the resources necessary to implement the MOU and, in any event, to achieve our goals in this area.

He concluded the detailed review of the tentative agreement with a discussion of all the key changes made to other articles and MOUs contained in the proposed contract.

If the agreement is accepted by the members, it will go into effect immediately. If the agreement is rejected, the parties may continue bargaining or refer the dispute to interest arbitration.

The full proposed agreement and the ratification ballot were mailed to all NALC members who are eligible to vote on ratification, along with a six-page summary of the agreement. A separate summary of the tentative agreement was included in the June issue of The Postal Record.

Coming soon: Part 2, covering the rap session’s discussion of postal reform and legislative challenges, along with balloting details.



NALC President Fredric Rolando led attendees of the 2017 Rap Session through a summary of the proposed agreement.



Branch Officers Training set for San Diego, Baltimore

NALC’s Branch Officers Training sessions have been set for this fall in San Diego and Baltimore.

Branch Officers Training sessions consist of three and a half days of educational seminars tailored to assist branch presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, recording secretaries, financial secretaries and trustees in the performance of their duties.

The training covers the basics for financial officers: taxes; accounting systems and maintenance of proper controls; reporting to the Department of Labor; fiduciary duties under the Landrum-Griffin Act; bonding of branch officers and IRS reporting requirements.

Additional training topics include the *NALC Constitution* and branch bylaws; branch operations and identifying branch policies; running a branch meeting; maintaining accurate and complete meeting minutes; member notification requirements; record keeping; branch elections and branch dues and how to read a dues roster.

A complete overview of what the training entails was included in Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine’s November 2016 *Postal Record* article, available for review at nalc.org.

One session of Branch Officers Training will take place Oct. 16-19 in San Diego. The registration deadline for this training session is Sept. 12. Room rate (single/double) is \$169 plus tax.

The other session will take place Oct. 30-Nov. 2 in Baltimore. Registration deadline for this training is Sept. 27. Room rate (single/double) is \$159 plus tax.

Use the registration form below to register. **Note: Please do not make airline reservations until you receive an acceptance letter.**

Branch Officers Training registration form

Please register me for one of the following NALC Branch Officers Training seminars:

☐ **Oct. 16-19 in San Diego**

Registration deadline is Sept. 12. Room rate [single/double] is \$169 plus tax.*

☐ **Oct. 30-Nov. 2 in Baltimore**

Registration deadline is Sept. 27. Room rate [single/double] is \$159 plus tax.*

☐ **If your chosen seminar is already full, check here if you’d like to be registered for the other one.**

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

Name _____

(one registrant per form, please)

Branch or state position _____

Branch # _____ **Branch city** _____ **State** _____

Home address: _____

City _____ **State** _____ **ZIP** _____

Phone number (required) _____

Send to:

**Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine
National Association of Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144
FAX: 202-737-1540**

*** Please do not make airline reservations until you receive an acceptance letter.**

Redesigned OSHA/NIOSH ‘Heat Safety Tool’ app for smartphones released

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have collaborated to update OSHA’s original Heat Safety Tool app for smartphones.

The updated app, available for both Android and iPhone, provides a clearer user interface while still providing the same information to help keep employees safe when working outdoors in hot weather.

Extreme heat causes more deaths than any other weather-related hazard; each year more than 65,000 people seek medical treatment for extreme heat exposure.

Letter carriers who are exposed to hot and humid conditions can use the app to check the heat index and learn about the relevant protective measures.

The app displays the heat index in the user’s location and shows the current risk level.

The app also forecasts the hourly heat index throughout the entire workday, giving employers information they can use to adjust the work environment as needed to protect workers. It provides tips for recognizing the signs of heat-related illness and for rendering first aid, plus links to more information and to NIOSH/OSHA contact information.

The app features:

- A visual indicator of the current heat index and associated risk levels specific to your current geographical location.
- Precautionary recommendations specific to heat index-associated risk levels.
- An interactive, hourly forecast of heat index values, risk level and recommendations for planning outdoor work activities in advance.
- Editable location, temperature and humidity controls for calculation of variable conditions.
- Signs and symptoms and first aid information for heat-related illnesses.

Note: If you have the original OSHA app on your phone, it will no longer function after Sept. 30.

To find links for downloading the updated app and to get more information on OSHA’s efforts to help protect employees from the heat, visit the Safety & Health page at nalc.org.

There, you’ll also find a link to the NIOSH page in support of the app to learn more about it and to get answers to frequently asked questions, such as “What is a heat index?,” “When should I use the heat index?” and “Is monitoring the heat index enough to keep workers safe?”

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