



NALC

Number 18-16

Dec. 24, 2018

# Bulletin

## White House postal task force releases long-awaited report

On Dec. 4, the Trump administration's task force released its report evaluating USPS's finances and operations, "United States Postal Service: A Sustainable Path Forward." The report is available for viewing on the NALC website. The report had been due to the White House on Aug. 10, but the administration did not report the findings for nearly four months, leading both the Postal Service and Congress to delay meaningful action on addressing core issues while awaiting these recommendations.

United States Postal Service:  
A Sustainable Path Forward  
Report from the Task Force on the  
United States Postal System



DECEMBER 2018

NALC President Fredric Rolando called it "a huge missed opportunity filled with legislative recommendations that are likely to be dead on arrival in Congress."

Rather than fully addressing the artificial financial crisis caused by the retiree health care pre-funding mandate enacted by Congress in 2006, the report launches an all-out attack on the collective-bargaining rights of postal employees. It calls for the revocation of the right to negotiate wages by all four postal unions, including NALC.

"NALC totally rejects this attack on hardworking American workers and we are confident that bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress will too," Rolando said.

The report also calls for massive service cuts, allowing USPS to reduce the frequency and quality of delivery services, which would result in huge job losses for city letter carriers and harm our customers. It advocates forcing the Postal Service to dramatically raise prices for competitive products, the fastest growing—and highly profitable—segment of the Postal Service's volume.

An industry coalition representing package shippers, the Package Coalition, warned that the recommendations would "limit access and raise prices" on package delivery, harming consumers and the Postal Service alike.

While the report does not expressly call for the privatization of USPS as the Office of Management and Budget predicted it would earlier this year, it does highlight the privatization of postal systems such as Germany and New Zealand.

"This is a victory for the public and the NALC," Rolando said. "Our efforts to mobilize the public and a majority of Congress to oppose privatization and to support H. Res. 993 and S. Res. 633 have paid off."

He added, however, "This report, particularly in its suggestions for regulatory and administrative changes, poses a serious threat to affordable universal service. We will remain vigilant and fight any efforts to damage the public interest in such service."

In an otherwise mostly disappointing report, one positive was the task force's embrace of one of NALC's ideas to reduce the retiree health care pre-funding burden by limiting the amount to be pre-funded to the actual vested liability for such benefits. NALC urges Congress to adopt this proposal.

"The delay of this long-overdue report has resulted in another missed opportunity in the 115th Congress to advance real measures that would strengthen the Postal Service and return financial stability to this agency," Rolando said. "NALC is committed to restoring the Postal Service to financial stability while protecting its employees and strengthening the universal mail delivery network."

## Executive Council installed

NALC President Fredric Rolando and the 27 other newly installed members of the union's Executive Council took the oath of office on Saturday, Dec. 1, in the nation's capital at the Marriott Marquis Washington, DC.

With President Emeritus William H. Young as the installing officer leading them, the men and women chosen to direct NALC for the next four years recited the pledge as prescribed by the *NALC Constitution*:

"I do solemnly promise on my honor that I will faithfully execute the laws of the National Association of Letter Carriers. I will perform, to the best of my ability, the duties of the office to which I have been elected, guard all property placed in my charge and, at the expiration of my term of office, turn the same over to my successor. I will do all in my power to promote the welfare of the National Association of Letter Carriers and its members."

Rolando, who was re-elected in the fall following a nationwide vote by active and retired NALC members, told those gathered that with 16 new members compared to the team elected in 2014, the Executive Council has a new generation of letter carriers leading the way.

"As we have done for nearly 130 years, a new generation of letter carriers is stepping up to serve, even as their mentors and role models conclude their terms of service," he said. "This younger generation of leaders should inspire hope in all of us."

The evening was an opportunity to look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the new Executive Council. "We have to deliver for the members and we have to maintain their trust and support," Rolando said. "So while an installation is certainly a well-deserved moment to celebrate, it's also a moment to commit ourselves to the job ahead. Together, we must solemnly vow to face the future and confront the many challenges facing our union."

### Pomp and pageantry

In keeping with tradition, the installation ceremony started off with the presentation of colors by the Joint Forces Color Guard. Minneapolis Branch 9 President Mike Zagaros performed "The Star-Spangled Banner" *a cappella*. Retired Executive Vice President Jim Williams led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by retiring Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren, who led the invocation.

Retired Executive Vice President Timothy C. O'Malley served as the affair's master of ceremonies. In his brief remarks, he congratulated those being installed and recognized the families who made sacrifices for those leaders. "We know that union activism is a group endeavor and a family affair," he said. "And none of the men and women taking the oath of office tonight would be here without all of you standing behind them."

Representatives from dozens of NALC branches had purchased tickets to the ceremony, some making the trip from as far away as Hawaii. Following the meal, President Emeritus Young shared some thoughts with the assembly, saying, "I think I know a thing or two about what it takes—the effort, the commitment and the skills—to be successful as a union officer. I can tell you that every one of the officers we install tonight has given the effort, made that commitment and demonstrated those skills."

O'Malley then called forward the 10 resident national officers, three national trustees and 15 national business agents who make up the 28-member Executive Council. NALC's seven elected AFL-CIO delegates were invited to the stage as well.

After administering the oath of office, Young excused the other officers and called President Rolando to the podium to deliver his third inaugural address.

### Immediate challenges

Rolando addressed the challenges facing the union in 2019 and beyond, starting with two public policy debates: the legislative and regulatory framework within which the Postal Service operates—currently under review by the Postal Regulatory Commission—and the need for sensible and bipartisan postal reform.

On that second matter, the president noted, "this challenge has been a marathon, not a sprint—we've been trying to overcome the legislative mandate to pre-fund retiree health benefits for more than a decade."

Rolando thanked the countless NALC activists who have worked to fend off bad proposals to deal with the financial losses caused by the mandate, including five-day delivery, deregulated access to mailboxes and privatization.

"Living to fight another day over the past several Congresses has been a good strategy," he said. "But in the 116th Congress, we will move toward the next step to strengthen the Postal Service for the long haul."

Rolando cited technological change as both a challenge and an opportunity. While the internet has been a positive for the Postal Service with the growth in package delivery, "our exposure to market developments has undeniably increased," he said.

The president noted that autonomous delivery vehicles and drone delivery are areas on which the union must keep careful watch. He also referenced Amazon's recent purchase of 20,000 delivery vans and its hiring of non-union

## Carriers struggle in aftermath of fire

The deadliest fire in California history has a death toll that is staggering. The Camp Fire that overran the city of Paradise, CA, late last year killed 85 people, with an additional 11 still unaccounted for. Thousands more have been left homeless.

No letter carriers are among the dead, but at least 24 active and four retired letter carriers have lost their homes, said Brian Bump, president of Sacramento, CA Branch 133, which includes carriers in Paradise and Chico, CA, the cities most affected by the fire. At press time, four more carriers have yet to gain access to the burned area to see whether their homes survived.

The Camp Fire erupted in the mountains west of Paradise and Chico on Nov. 8. It took nearly three weeks of firefighting and another weekend of heavy rain to extinguish the blaze. The fire burned 153,336 acres of forest and grasslands, and it destroyed 13,972 homes, 528 commercial buildings and 4,293 other structures. Nearly all of Paradise was destroyed.

Until the Camp Fire surpassed the grisly record, last year's Tubbs Fire, which damaged or destroyed the homes of at least three city letter carriers, was the most destructive and deadly blaze in the state's history.

Letter carriers in the affected area resumed delivering the mail as soon as it was safe and they could access their routes, though air quality remained a problem for many until the fire was extinguished. For several days, letter carriers in a larger area surrounding the fire wore masks provided by the Postal Service.

Several postal facilities were damaged or unusable. Miraculously, the Paradise Post Office was left mostly intact, but it was located in an evacuation area and could not be immediately accessed. Eleven city routes at the Paradise facility were shifted to the Chico Midtown Station.

"They're making do, that's the best I can put it," Bump said of the carriers displaced from Paradise and a few other stations working from Chico. "They put a smile on their faces, but they've got a lot on their minds." Among them are carriers who lost their homes in the fire.

Some homeless carriers have gone to other areas to live with relatives, Bump said, and for now, USPS is allowing them to work in those areas. "The Postal Service has been pretty accommodating," he said.

Displaced carriers delivering from the Chico Midtown Station were expected to work there at least through the holiday season, Bump said. Given the scale of devastation, though, some may not have routes to return to because they were wiped out by the fire, he added. The Postal Service could adjust routes or find work elsewhere for those displaced carriers.

The NALC Disaster Relief Foundation furnished uniforms for carriers who lost them in the fire and is sharing information with these carriers about additional resources. Branches or members wishing to donate funds to the Disaster Relief Foundation may do so now by sending a check or money order to NALC Disaster Relief Foundation, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. Donations are not currently tax deductible, but the foundation is applying for tax-exempt status. One hundred percent of donations received from letter carriers, branches and state associations go to letter carriers in need—no administrative costs are deducted.



Some of the destruction from the Camp Fire in California



**NALC  
Disaster  
Relief  
Foundation**

**Make a donation by sending a check or money order to NALC Disaster Relief Foundation, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.**



President Emeritus William Young led the new Executive Council through the pledge of office.

drivers, which makes it important for NALC to question how it can diversify USPS's customer base and also raises the issue of whether the union should attempt to organize the new workforce.

"So, one of the top priorities of the new NALC Executive Council will be to respond in a way that upholds employment standards in the delivery industry and protects the jobs of America's city letter carriers," Rolando said.

Letter carriers must help USPS retain its unique competitive position, he explained. "Our focus should be to strengthen the Postal Service's unique advantages as the nation's only truly universal delivery network—all the while adapting to the forces shaping our work lives," he said. "We have captured the last mile and we must do everything we can to keep it—not only for the benefit of our members, but for the benefit of the American people."

### Negotiations on the horizon

In 2019, NALC and USPS will attempt to negotiate a new National Agreement, but the outlook for a negotiated deal presents more challenges than the last round. Rolando noted that USPS has failed to complete agreements with the American Postal Workers Union and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association while the regulatory and legislative issues remain unresolved.

"Certainly we will be pointing to America's improved labor market and rising wages when we sit down at the table with the Postal Service starting next summer," he said, noting that preparations for the talks have been going on since the last contract was ratified.

"As we pursue our collective-bargaining goals, this next round of bargaining will be an opportunity for both sides to bargain strategically to make the Post Office as indispensable to America in its third century as it has been in its first two," he said.

### 'Powerful legacy'

Rolando remains optimistic about the future of NALC.

"Brothers and sisters, make no mistake, we are undeniably a great union," he said. "We have the resources, we have the talent, and we have the idealism to succeed—all turbocharged with the powerful legacy of those who came before us," he said to enthusiastic applause.

He noted that NALC is 93 percent organized and has had numerous major successes over its history. It won the eight-hour day for federal workers, achieved collective bargaining through the successful 1970 Great Postal Strike, defeated privatization during the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush presidencies, and prevented the dismantling of the Postal Service following the Great Recession. "And [we] will once again prevail against the latest privatization threat in the Trump years," he said.

He concluded his remarks by stressing the importance of unity to NALC's past and future successes.

"The folks up here who have won the privilege of representing their brother and sister letter carriers know why we were able to do all that," he said. "It is not because of what any one of us has done; it's because of what all of us have done together. Our success has required all of us to contribute. And we all know that this union is much greater than the sum of its parts."

"Of course, this is the essential insight of trade unionism—alone we are powerless, together we are unstoppable. Thank you to the men and women who make up NALC for all that you do."

## National Association of Letter Carriers

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*NALC Bulletin* is published semi-regularly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

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Circulation: 32,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

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