Improving representation, the Delivering for America Plan

Benford told attendees how the union is trying to improve representation for the branches, mostly small, that are not fully staffed—mostly smaller in representing their members—to work by bringing those branches with nearly functional branches that can improve the representation for the members. He said 135 of these branches have been merged with other branches, resulting in improved representation for those members.

On the Postal Service’s year-to-date union, the union is remaining engaged with the Postal Service in order to maintain a real-time table and offer feedback, how we can better serve our membership. As more letter carriers start delivering from Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DCs) and from the mounted mailboxes, the union also warned members to not listen to local leaders talking about what role that would be a role for other S&DCs. “You’re going to be impacted by one of them in any way, we will hear in advance from your regional office and front from at Headquarters to prepare for that,” he said.

Politics and legislation

President Benford outlined NALC's legislative and political agenda, starting with the union's efforts to educate the Biden administration about the implementation of the “Segal” pension valuation method for CSRS. Convinced the White House to issue an executive action to institute the private-sector pension valuations would save the Postal Service billions of dollars annually.

In Congress, NALC continued to add support for the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 6), the bill that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. Another piece of legislation is the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1135), which would allow former non-career employees—including CCAs, TEs and casuals, all the way back to Dec. 31, 1988—to make deposits (or buy back) their non-career time and have it credited for retirement. A little-known fact, Benford said, is that 64 percent of active letter carriers would be affected by this legislation, which would improve a retirement priority.

However, President Benford said that members needed to be realistic about the chances of passage in Washington. He warned members not to build support for postal reform through Congress and Congress, so that when a certain election went a certain way, it would be possible to finally get the legislation enacted. Unfortunately, the president said that there was no time to outline the process for Medicare integration under the Postal Service Reform Act, but that the “time of the current President” posted on the same day had many details for members. The podcast is available on nalc.org, Spotify, Stitches, and other places you listen to podcasts.

New initiatives

To end the speech portion of the meeting, Benford outlined four new initiatives NALC is working on:

• A new online-learning program to complement the in-person training that NALC does well on a local, regional and national level.
• An emergency response team of letter carriers to help NALC members when they’re dealing with trauma, not to serve as counselors, but rather to offer peer-to-peer support in situations like suicide awareness, violence, mental health, medical issues or substance use.
• A mentoring program for women in the union. “The idea behind this is to structure a program that for any of our members that face challenges just because of the fact that they are a woman, they have someone they can talk to who understands that struggle,” he said.
• A standing committee for diversity issues. “Everyone in our union deserves and should have the opportunity to work in an environment where they don’t have to serve as counselors, but rather to offer peer-to-peer support in situations like suicide awareness, violence, mental health, medical issues or substance use.”

Benford moved to the “rap” portion, taking approximately an hour’s worth of questions from the attendees, primarily about issues related to contract negotiations, uniforms and route adjustments, before adjourning the meeting at about 11 a.m.

More than 1,000 letter carrier activists representing branches across the United States gathered in New Orleans to take part in NALC’s 2023 National Convention. The convention calls for the union to hold a national conference in non-contracts years, held every two years, with the date set by the Executive Council.

NALC Convention, held in New Orleans.

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