



It's never too late to plan ahead

So often we are tempted to put things off until tomorrow. Maybe it's an insignificant decision, maybe it's an uncomfortable conversation and sometimes it's simply just something we don't want to do. It isn't unusual; in fact, it's a natural tendency for most of us. However, there are times when planning ahead and carrying out those plans must take precedence over our natural tendencies. The duties of the Contract Administration Unit's officers and staff fall into that latter category. Since the business of our union can't be put off until tomorrow, I thought it would be a good idea to give you an update on some of the issues the CAU is currently working on.

I realize it is only March, but it is time to make serious preparations for the NALC's 67th Biennial Convention in Anaheim, California. The CAU is already at work preparing for our convention. We anticipate having updated resources available by convention time. The CAU is working to finalize a new NALC contract disk for 2010. The disk will include the 2006-2011 National Agreement between NALC and USPS, the *Joint Contract Administration Manual* (April 2009), the updated Materials Reference System with index and resource documents, an updated Defenses to Discipline resource, numerous USPS handbooks, manuals and publications, a large collection of NALC materials such as *The Activist* and Contract Talk columns, resources on health and safety, and much more.

While many of these resources are available on the NALC website, the convenience of having all of them on a single disk is undeniable. The CAU is also working to finish an updated NALC Arbitration DVD, which will include more than 5,000 new searchable regional and national arbitration awards.

In preparation for the Anaheim convention, the CAU is preparing materials and training for the CAU workshop. We plan to cover a wide range of issues and relevant documents that have been generated since the 66th convention in Boston in 2008. We will discuss important documents that have been given an "M"-numbered designation, and notable national and regional awards that have "C" number designations.

In years past, the CAU workshop has been an opportunity to receive background information on many of the important documents that shape our workplace, and this year's convention will not be an exception. The back-

ground information you get from the CAU workshop concerning these important documents will allow you to return to your respective branches and be able to inform the membership on the pressing contractual issues that confront us in these crucial times.

Branch leadership should begin planning now to ensure that you and/or some member(s) of your delegation attend the CAU workshop. Having as much information as possible on these important contractual issues can help in planning your branch's strategy in pursuing contractual compliance.

As a further update, NALC has seven available and scheduled dates in 2010 for national-level arbitration. The CAU is preparing to move forward on all of these dates to present the union's case in arbitration. Some of these outstanding issues concern language published in handbooks or manuals that the union believes violates the National Agreement, are not "fair, reasonable, or equitable," and adversely affect letter carriers. Other cases are interpretive disputes concerning USPS practices that the union believes are beyond the USPS' right to pursue.

Just as at every level of the grievance/arbitration process, we are continuing to engage the Postal Service in discussions in hopes of resolving these issues at the lowest possible level. However, should these ongoing discussions be fruitless, the CAU is preparing, along with legal counsel, to move forward to national arbitration. As you well know, last-minute planning for any arbitration is a recipe for disaster. National-level arbitration preparation is certainly no exception to this rule.

We are also in discussions with Postal Service representatives concerning many of the pressing matters that are affecting letter carriers on a daily basis. For instance, the issues concerning "window of operations" violations, inappropriate withholding of positions under the provisions of Article 12, and compliance with the new delivery assignment memo are just a few of the important items we are working on, and they all require planning.

What is the point of these updates? Simply put, to let you know we are all working together to improve the workplace for the benefit of letter carriers and ultimately the Postal Service, which is our future. Together we are committed, together we plan, and together we stand. Think, plan and win.

