Our leaders try to shape our futures while planning ahead. NALC leaders at the office, branch, regional and national level now shoulder the enormous responsibility to simultaneously act on letter carriers’ current concerns one moment and work toward a long-term fix the next.

While branches plan for this new year, a blunt reality must be accepted: Our ranks are rapidly declining. During Pay Period 10 last year, 187,453 career city letter carriers were on the rolls. As of Pay Period 24, there were 182,215. That averages to a decrease of 655 carriers every 28 days.

And while the NALC’s obvious concern about the survival of the Postal Service and thus, letter carrier jobs, receives our justified attention—letter carriers on the workroom floor live in the here and now. Our work floors are now populated by harassing managers, elongated routes, pending grievances and excessive overtime. The union has the responsibility to respond as effectively and efficiently as possible and with fewer resources than in the past.

For our organization to succeed, we must continue to organize. More than 92 percent of working letter carriers voluntarily belong to the union. That adds up to more than 12,000 freeloaders reaping the benefits of what NALC has accomplished, while avoiding the responsibility of participating in union activities, avoiding the responsibility of fighting to save America’s Postal Service, and avoiding the responsibility of protecting their own jobs. Even while surrounded by anti-government, anti-benefit and anti-worker fervor, these non-members fail to make a difference.

Too many of the non-members blame some perceived injustice earlier in their career as justification for not belonging to their union. Others blame a personal gripe they had with a local representative. Meanwhile, their job security and benefits are thanks to the collective actions of many, not the failings of a few.

It’s not too late for them to join and make a significant contribution toward protecting their job security and benefits. It’s the right thing to do, and it’s the smart thing to do.

NALC Customer Connect station coordinators: Quarterly Customer Connect district teleconference schedules are now posted on the NALC website: nalc.org/depart/cau/custconn/index.html. Examples of what you will find on the website can be found below.