

On site

The men and woman who take care of YOUR building



The bust of Vincent Sombrotto on display in the lobby of NALC Headquarters



The Vincent R. Sombrotto Building in Washington, DC

“When they built this building, they built it strong.”

Those are the words of NALC Headquarters Assistant Chief Engineer Bill Jenkins, who has worked on the Sombrotto Building at 100 Indiana Ave. NW in Washington, DC, for 25 years. He explained that the concrete footprint is six feet deep, which is deeper than most buildings, and that many of its original systems lasted for 50 to 60 years, well beyond the norm.

But it’s not just the building that’s built strong; the same could be said of its employees.

“NALC is lucky to have such dedicated workers maintaining our headquarters,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “Letter carriers donated their dimes, quarters and dollars to make this building a reality. They deserve the best people striving to maintain our history.”

There are seven unionized employees who make up the building employees staff—two engineers, a carpenter, a painter, and three guards/porters/drivers. They are often the first to arrive and make sure that the building is ready for the national officers and staff, maintaining systems such as heating and air conditioning, plumbing and electrical.

For the droves of letter carriers who visit the building when they come to the nation’s capital, the guards are the first people to welcome them to the members’ building. *(For more on the building and its unique history, see Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine’s column on page 31.)*

The employees also are involved in office remodeling on the eight floors of the building. With a carpenter and painter on staff, “we do everything but lay the carpet,” said Journeyman Carpenter Owen Croggon, including hanging walls, ceilings, electrical work and painting. By having the painter and carpenter on staff, the union avoids having to pay to bring in contractors each time there is a new project.

Construction is in Croggon’s genes. “My great-great-grandfather was a stonemason on the first part of the construction of the Washington Monument,” he said. He also had a grandfather who was the senior cabinetmaker at the Smithsonian and a grand-uncle who built the stands for presidential inaugurations.

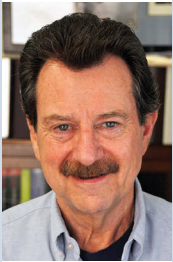
Because it is the letter carriers’ national headquarters, many of the building staff take an interest in the union’s issues. Jenkins understands letter carriers better than most, having married into a family with five letter carriers. He met his wife, the daughter of former Executive Vice President Frank Connors, while she worked at NALC.

The other employees also express interest in the union’s mission.

“I appreciate the solidarity of it,” Porter/Driver Ramon Turner said. Working in the thick of Washington has given him a personal perspective on the issues of the day, for letter carriers and the nation. During his seven years, he’s been impressed by having the chance to meet and talk to important visitors, such as former senior White House official Ron Bloom. “I’m one degree from President Obama,” Turner said with a laugh.

Political heavyweights, such as Hillary Clinton, Edward Kennedy and Harry Reid, have come through the front doors of the Sombrotto Building, too.

Several employees say that there is a unique atmosphere to the building because it is run by officers who are letter carriers, rather than by corporate leaders, lawyers or lobbyists, which is the norm for the nation’s capital.



Owen Croggon is a journeyman carpenter who has worked at NALC for 28 years. He belongs to the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters.



John Jones is a journeyman specialty painter and paper-hanger and has been with NALC for 12 years. He belongs to the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, District Council No. 51.



Mike Hicok is the chief engineer and has been with NALC for 22 years.



Bill Jenkins is the assistant chief engineer and has been with NALC for 25 years.



Towan Gallion is a part-time guard and has been with NALC since March. She also continues 23 years of work for the company that cleans NALC Headquarters.



James Scarborough is a guard/driver and has been with NALC for four years.



Ramon Turner is a porter/driver and has been with NALC for seven years.

They belong to the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 99.

All three belong to the Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ.

“They welcomed me in as an equal,” Jenkins said. “I can talk to the president of NALC, one of the largest organizations in the country. Working for letter carriers is working for a great group of regular people.”

“It’s a good place,” agreed Mike Hicok, the chief engineer. He’s been with NALC for 22 of his 37 years in the industry. “I’ve been in other places, both on the top and on the bottom. When we have problems, [the NALC leaders] listen to us, and it’s not like that everywhere.”

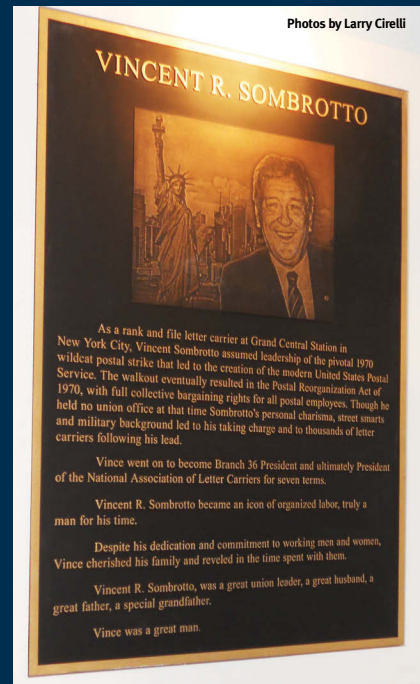
“There are a lot of moving parts at Headquarters,” President Rolando said, “and they require the best from everyone, from your officers to the letter carrier staff to the building employees. Only by everyone working together can this union move forward, and it’s important that as a union we recognize the work they all do and say thank you.” **PR**

The Sombrotto Branch



On June 13, New York Branch 36 renamed itself as Vincent R. Sombrotto Branch 36. To mark the re-naming, the branch held an event at the local’s headquarters. The Sombrotto family (above), NALC President Fredric Rolando (c) and President Emeritus William Young (not pictured) were on hand for the ceremony.

Photos by Larry Cirelli



A plaque about Sombrotto that is on display at Branch 36 headquarters.

Two national disputes involving FMLA settled

The NALC and the USPS have agreed on two national-level settlements regarding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the use of NALC FMLA forms.

The Postal Service had proposed changes to the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* that would oblige employees to use Department of Labor (DOL) forms to certify FMLA protection.

The NALC took the position that there was no requirement under FMLA to use DOL forms and initiated two disputes. The first was over the proposed *ELM* changes;

the second was over the USPS’ refusal to allow employees to use NALC FMLA forms.

In the first dispute, the Postal Service has agreed to change the language in Section 515 of the *ELM* to allow employees to use a format other than the DOL forms to certify FMLA protection. (See M-01812, available for download and review at nalc.org/cau/step4mrs.html.)

The change in Section 515 of the *ELM* resolves the second issue and employees may now use the NALC FMLA forms for FMLA protection. (See M-01817.) **PR**