

Our sister union



George C. Mignosi

This month I had the honor of being assigned to represent the NALC at the installation of the elected officers of our sister union, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU). President Rolando tasked me with extending the solidarity of the nation's letter carriers to all members of the APWU, and with offering congratulations to all the newly elected and re-elected officers of APWU.

Union installation ceremonies are important events in the lives of unions. They are, of course, happy occasions for all the officers and their families. But more importantly, they are occasions to celebrate the power of democratic trade

unionism, and to recommit ourselves to unity, solidarity and social justice, in our workplaces and in our country. At a time when the institutions of our political democracy have turned on America's working people and have sunk to a dysfunctional low point, organized workers have each other and their unions to rely on more than ever. That's why the APWU event was so special. Installations provide a time for hope and renewal, and NALC was there to celebrate that hope.

Fred asked me to convey his thanks to Brother Cliff Guffey, Brother Greg Bell and all the other outgoing officers of the APWU. As an officer, I know what an honor it is to represent fellow workers at the national level. It's a privilege and a solemn duty that is deeply rewarding. But I also know the sacrifice it entails—the long days, the endless travel, the mental pressure, the worries and burdens that come with defending brothers and sisters who are counting on you. Brother Guffey and his fellow officers served during one of the darkest times in the history of the United States Postal Service. The loss of mail volume occurred during period following the 2008 global near-financial collapse was the worst experienced since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Guffey and they served honorably and deserve the appreciation of all postal employees, regardless of their occupation or craft.

Incoming APWU President Mark Dimondstein could hardly have picked a more important time to take office. Postal employees face grave threats to our futures. Indeed, we face a kind of perfect storm—a misguided top management at the Postal Service that is dedicated to a doomed “shrink to survive” strategy, a hostile United States Congress that seems more interested in scoring ideological

points than serving the country, and a White House that is, at best, indifferent to peril faced by the United States Postal Service. Add to that a technological revolution that is eliminating a lot of traditional mail even as it creates huge e-commerce opportunities, and Brother Dimondstein takes office perhaps facing the greatest challenges ever faced by an incoming APWU president.

Unfortunately, Brother Dimondstein and his colleagues will not have much time to get acclimated to their new positions. The Senate is considering postal reform right now. A budget conference committee in Congress recently has been meeting. Our jobs, our pensions, our health insurance and our futures are on the line right now.

APWU has plenty of assets and strengths going for it. It has a great tradition and a huge capacity for action. It has a great history of struggle. It has hundreds of thousands of members who are committed to each other. And, with all humility, it has a longstanding partnership with the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Our unions have been partners for nearly four decades.

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We bargained contracts together for 25 years. We defeated privatization together in the 1980s during the Reagan years. We won political rights for postal employees with the Hatch Act reform in the 1990s. We preserved our collective-bargaining rights when George W. Bush tried to strip them away. We have literally fought for our members side by side, in the streets and in Congress, for about 40 years.

Working with our brothers and sisters in the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, the NALC and APWU can and must fight for the people's post office. It's our mission and our responsibility.