

Helpful hints for first-time national convention delegates



Nicole Rhine

This July, the NALC will celebrate its 125th anniversary at the 69th Biennial National Convention in Philadelphia. And while the NALC—and its national conventions—have been around for a very long time, for some members this may be the first time to be a national convention delegate. So, in the spirit of getting geared up for Philadelphia, I thought I would share with first-time delegates some of our traditions and some (I hope) helpful advice, which I sought from several seasoned delegates at NALC Headquarters.

As a first-time delegate, you will be amazed by the size of the delegation at the convention. It's not

uncommon for our conventions to have close to 8,000 delegates. You will walk onto the convention floor for the first time and you will be in awe. I know I was at my first convention in Orlando, FL, in 1996. Most seasoned delegates will admit that they had the same reaction the first time they attended a national convention.

Your executive vice president, Tim O'Malley, had the same reaction at his first convention, which was in St. Paul, MN, in 1986. Brother O'Malley described it as a "sea of letter carriers." What you will come to realize, however, is that the "sea of letter carriers" all have the same interests as you. After all, we all do the same job. So don't be shy—go out and meet some of your brothers and sisters from all over the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Make sure you go to the registration area to get your convention badge and convention bag. You will need to have the convention badge on you at all times. While you're in the registration area, visit the many booths located there with information on everything from Nalcrest to OWCP.

The general sessions run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each day without a break, so you may want to stock up on snacks and water to bring with you each day.

Most delegates dress very casually at the convention. But be aware that it can sometimes get cold on the convention floor—so you may want to think about bringing along a light jacket, sweatshirt or sweater. Also, seasoned delegates will tell you to wear comfortable shoes—you'll do a lot of walking. The Pennsylvania Convention Center is a big place.

You're also going to see a lot of delegates wearing branch vests—your branch may even have them. I did some

research into when delegates started wearing the vests at national conventions. From browsing through old convention proceeding photos, it seems that the vests began appearing on the convention floor in the early 1950s. There are some really cool ones, and a lot of the seasoned delegates have adorned their vests with old buttons and past convention badges.

Before and after the general session, there will be numerous workshops covering a wide range of topics. (A full list of workshops is listed in this issue of *The Postal Record*.) Many of them are conducted by your national officers. There are also several workshops conducted by staff members who work at NALC Headquarters. Be sure to hit as many workshops as possible—they will be filled with excellent information that is useful no matter what role you have in your local branch.

In your delegate bag will be all kinds of information concerning the convention. The *Pocket Guide* is an essential source of information—it includes times and locations of workshops, bus schedules and the locations and times of other events. You also should make sure to bring the *Resolutions and*

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Amendments booklet with you to the general sessions—we do the convention business from these booklets.

Some other things to look forward to? You'll get to hear amazing letter carriers sing the national anthem at the beginning of each general session. You'll learn the letter carrier cheer. You'll hear from several interesting guest speakers. (Did you know that President Dwight D. Eisenhower attended the 1952 National Convention in New York City? Or that Vice President Al Gore attended the 2000 National Convention in Chicago?)

But most importantly, as a delegate you'll participate in the democratic process of making the decisions for the future of this wonderful union. It's a serious responsibility, and I hope you take pride in being elected as a delegate for your branch.

We have a lot of work to do in Philly. Be safe, and I'll see you there!