

# Taking a look at the *NALC Constitution*



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**“We the people of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”**

Although the United States Constitution was not ratified until 1789, some three years after our country gained its independence from Great Britain, it provided direction for our country.

The NALC has its own constitution, which dictates the general content of the local branch and state association bylaws and essentially contains the rules and regulations to run the national union, branches

and state associations. Over the next couple of months, I plan to highlight portions of our *NALC Constitution*.

The NALC was organized in Milwaukee in 1889; affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) on Sept. 20, 1917; and later became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) on Dec. 5, 1955.

You will find the below listed table of contents in the *NALC Constitution*:

- Constitution of the National Association of Letter Carriers.....page 3
- Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches.....page 66
- Constitution for the Government of State Association.....page 87
- Form of Ceremonial for Initiation of Candidates into Branches of the National Association of Letter Carriers.....page 102
- Form of Installation Ceremony for use of Branches, State Associations, and the National Association.....page 105
- Constitution and General Laws of the United States Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association.....page 110
- Constitution of the National Association of Letter Carriers Health Benefit Plan.....page 131
- Charter of Incorporation of the United States Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association [as amended].....page 142
- Past National Conventions.....page 147
- Index.....page 150

The *NALC Constitution* is broken into three levels of coverage. The first level covers the national union, the second the local branches and the third the state associations of

our organization. The *Constitution* is amended through the body of delegates at a national convention. Amendments approved at the 69th Biennial Convention held in Philadelphia July 21-25, 2014, are the most recent.

The *NALC Constitution* booklet basically contains the history of our organization. Changing with the times and demands of its membership, it provides the same security and assurance to our members as originally determined by the founders in 1889.

**As noted, the *Constitution* is broken into three levels of coverage.** This month we will look at the first level. The national union is governed by this chapter. All of the articles in the entire *Constitution* were written and amended by letter carriers. Letter carriers can continue to amend the *Constitution* at every national convention. Now, let us take a look at the articles in each chapter and highlight provisions that affect our members.

**Article 1: Name, Powers and Objectives—Section 1** establishes our name as The National Association of Letter Carriers of the United States of America; it further authorizes the use of initials of NALC to identify our organization.

**Section 2** establishes the *Constitution* and its application for state organizations and local branches. It establishes constitutional authority over the Mutual Benefit Association and Health Benefit Plan.

**Section 3** states, “The Union shall have the jurisdiction to make its own Constitution, Rules of Discipline and General Laws of the United States Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association and Health Benefit Plan.”

**Section 4** states, “The National Convention shall be the supreme body to which final appeal shall be made on all matters emanating from Members, Branches and State Associations.” There shall be no geographical limitations on the jurisdiction of the union. Note that the delegates at each national convention comprise the “supreme body.” The membership elects delegates to the convention, giving those people the rights and the responsibility to attend and vote on issues that affect members of the NALC.

**Section 5** establishes the object of our organization to “unite fraternally all letter carriers and other employees of the Postal Service for their mutual benefit....” It empowers it to run the headquarters building in Washington, DC, to establish the Life Insurance Department and Health Benefit Department, and to sponsor a non-profit retirement housing facility in Lake Wales, FL, to be owned and operated by the NALC. This is Nalcrest.

Section 5 further gives the national union the right to collect voluntary contributions from the membership “for the purpose of assisting candidates without regard to party affiliation for election to federal office who favor legislation in the interest of labor, said funds to be separate and apart from all other moneys and funds of the Unions.” This is NALC’s PAC.

**Next month, I will continue highlighting sections of the *NALC Constitution*.** I want to wish all the members and their families a safe, healthy and happy Fourth of July!