

Taking a look at the *NALC Constitution*, Part 3



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The last several months, my articles have covered sections of the *NALC Constitution*, particularly as it relates to NALC Headquarters and its roles and responsibilities. This month, let us take a look at the second part of the *Constitution*, the *Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches*, which involves the branches' roles and responsibilities.

Article 1: Name and Object—Article 1 deals with the identification by name and/or number of the branch. The section also is used to identify the branch by its name, if one is chosen. A branch often is named after its charter city (for example: Branch 1100, Garden Grove, CA), a past member and/or officer (such

as Nathaniel Green Branch 630), or other identifiers (such as Western Wayne County, MI Branch 2184). Regardless of whether a name has been chosen, the branch will have a number assigned at the time of organization, identifying that local. A bit of history reveals each branch was assigned a number in order of application for its charter. The lower the number, the older the branch. Detroit, MI, was granted the first charter, so it is known as Branch 1.

You might be wondering, "Why Detroit? I thought this union was formed in Milwaukee, WI." When the union was founded in 1889 at Milwaukee, WI, W.H. Wood, a letter carrier from Detroit, was elected as the first NALC president. Hence, he was tasked with dispensing the charters to each branch that joined the NALC. This allowed him to hand out the first number and he gave it to his branch. Now you know how Detroit became Branch 1. Milwaukee, WI, was given the label Branch 2; Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, and so forth. The first 15 branches were the founders of this great union. While our numbers were low originally, today we represent all delivery cities.

These words from the *Constitution* best describe what our union stands for: "The objects of this Branch are to unite all employees who are eligible for membership under Article 2, Section 2, of the National Constitution into one harmonious body for their mutual benefit, and to assist the National Association of Letter Carriers in its efforts to improve the condition of its entire membership."

Article 2: Membership—Section 1 states:

Application for membership must be made in writing, signed by the applicant, stating age, social security number, place of residence, and such other information as may be determined by the Branch. A Form 1187 (Dues Check-off)

must be signed by all applicants seeking a membership in the Branch and the NALC.

Section 3 (a) provides that any regular branch member in good standing in his/her branch, moving his/her employment to another city, or retiree in good standing in his/her branch moving to another city, may transfer membership to the branch located in such city.

Article 3: Meetings—The bylaws of each branch should address the following in regard to branch meetings: the regular meetings of the branch shall be held not less than once a month, at such time and place as may be designated in the branch bylaws. Each branch, with prior approval of its membership, shall have the option of meeting only 10 times per year.

Section 2 provides:

Special meetings shall be called by the President upon the written request of _____ members (number to be determined by the Branch) in good standing or by vote of the Branch and notification of such meetings, stating the object of the call, shall be given the members by the Recording Secretary as directed by the Branch or as required by the by-laws.

When a special meeting is called, the *Constitution* requires under Section 3 that "no business shall be transacted at a special meeting other than that for which it may have been called." Therefore, when any special meeting is called for, the business to be conducted must be fully noted or listed.

New officers training—During the national rap session, the new officers training was previewed by those in attendance. The new training will include the old secretary-treasurer training, along with added classes. The training will now be three-and-a-half days rather than the standard two-and-a-half days offered in the past.

Some of the new classes previewed were: "I've just been elected, now what?" "Auditing branch records," "What policies should the branch have?" "Why minutes matter," "What am I signing?" "When do I have to notify members?" "Running an efficient and effective branch meeting," "Branch elections—best practices," "Questions you should be asking" and "Constitution and bylaws."

In addition to the above, there will also be the classes previously taught regarding DOL reporting, fiduciary issues and practice, recording keeping (paper/electronic), branch planning and budgeting, internal controls, fraud prevention/detection, payroll/lost time issues, travel reimbursement/per diem payments and managing branch finances/creating transparency. Check the NALC website for dates.

I hope all members and your families have a wonderful Labor Day! "The trade union movement represents the organized economic power of the workers....It is in reality the most potent and the most direct social insurance the workers can establish." —Samuel Gompers