Important updates from the secretary-treasurer

Nicole Rhine

Open Season for choosing a health benefit plan is Nov. 14 through Dec. 12, and I encourage all NALC members to consider enrolling in the NALC Health Benefit Plan—the NALC's own union-run health benefit plan. NALC health benefit representatives and branch officers are reminded that any USPS employee, regardless of bargaining or non-bargaining status, must be a full dues-paying member of the NALC when enrolled in the NALC HBP.

Under Article 22 of the *NALC Constitution*, an HBP membership (often referred to as an "associate membership") applies only to retirees who did not maintain their membership in the NALC upon retirement and to all non-postal federal employees. These enrollees of the NALC HBP pay yearly dues of $36, which are billed in the early part of the year.

Veterans Day

Although I am not a veteran, I am profoundly honored that so many of our members are and that I get the opportunity to represent our veterans as a national officer. Let's all be sure to thank the men and women who serve in our military for the sacrifices they and their families have made for this great country.

Buy union

As a vice president of the Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO, I would be remiss if I did not urge all NALC members to buy union.

Since football season is upon us, here are some union-made products to throw on the grill: Hillshire Farm sausage, Omaha steaks, Ball Park Franks, Butterball chicken, Farmland pork, Oscar Mayer bacon and Boar's Head bratwurst.

And no tailgate is complete without some union-made snacks like Cheetos; Chex Mix; Corn Nuts; Doritos; Fritos; Old El Paso and Tostitos chips, dips and salsa; Ritz Crackers; Ruffles; Slim Jim; Triscuits; and Wheat Thins—just to name a few.

The lists above are far from all-inclusive. For more information, check out unionlabel.org and labor411.org.

Branch Officers Training

We are working on setting up two more Branch Officers Training sessions to be held after the first of the year. When the dates and locations for training are finalized, the information and registration forms will be included in the *NALC Bulletin*.

Branch Officers Training is an expansion of the Secretary-Treasurer Seminars held in the past. In addition to the basics for financial officers—taxes, payroll, reporting to the DOL, IRS reporting requirements—Branch Officers Training includes specialized sessions for branch presidents/vice presidents, recording secretaries, financial secretaries and trustees. Because of this expansion, the training is now three and a half days long (previously it was two and a half days).

Here's an overview of what the training includes:

- ***Constitution* and bylaws—**This session will cover what is required in branch bylaws and common errors.
- **Dues and membership—**This session is intended to guide branch officers through membership issues that they deal with on a daily basis.
- **DOL reporting—**This session reviews the history of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) and how it affects the activities of unions and union officers.
- **Preparing LM forms and 990s—**Participants will get into the nitty gritty about completing these required filings.
- **What am I signing?—**This session for branch presidents/vice presidents will cover the responsibility and legal exposure that goes along with signing certain documents.
- **Managing branch finances and creating transparency—**This session provides guidance on the day-to-day aspects of running the financial affairs of a branch.
- **Fiduciary issues and practices—**This session gives participants practice applying what they learned in the DOL reporting and *Constitution* and bylaws segments.
- **Payroll and wage issues—**This session will cover the ins and outs of payroll.
- **Travel, reimbursements and per diem—**This session is designed to help branches comply with the tricky IRS and DOL rules involved in travel payments.
- **Handling MDA funds and PAC funds—**This session will cover the rules for collecting and remitting these funds.
- **Internal controls—**This session will cover the checks and balances called "internal controls."
- **Fraud prevention and detection—**This session is designed to identify the biggest risks of fraud and how branches can establish procedures to prevent it.
- **Auditing branch records—**This session is for trustees and will teach how to ensure a complete audit.
- **What policies should your branch have?—**This session will identify policies that branches should have in place.
- **Questions you should be asking as an officer—**This session is focused on helping officers learn more about branch operations.
- **Running a branch meeting—**This session will focus on what makes a good meeting.
- **Why minutes matter—**This session assists recording secretaries in maintaining accurate minutes.
- **Member notification requirements—**This session covers required notifications and the proper way to make them.
- **Recordkeeping—**This session will teach the proper way to keep records consistent with DOL guidelines.