

NALC's legislative and political network

The 1970 Postal Reorganization Act established that a nine-member board of governors would have direct oversight of the U.S. Postal Service. In reality, the agency, and its board, answer to an even higher authority—the 535 members of the U.S. Congress.

“Congress is our true board of directors,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “Not only does it have control over the Postal Service, Congress also legislates many of our benefits, including retirement and health care, and sets the bounds of our collective-bargaining rights. That’s why it is so important that we educate members of Congress and make them understand the value of the Postal Service and its letter carriers to all Americans.”

NALC has spent years refining its legislative and political network to create an effective system to develop and maintain relationships with these lawmakers, from both sides of the aisle.

“Our union’s political diversity is among our greatest strengths in the political arena,” Rolando said, “because Congress is diverse as well. We are in every state and every congressional district in the nation. We are from different traditions, different political parties and different backgrounds, just like America. We speak with different voices to deliver the same message.

“We have the potential to get all of our elected representatives to understand how the Postal Service is good for all of their constituents,” he said. “It starts with trying to get all of our members involved.”

Every NALC member is a vital part of this union’s legislative and political network. By working together, the

network can help the union achieve its goals. And we’ve seen what can happen when letter carriers aren’t involved in explaining the intricacies of the Postal Service.

“Postal issues are sometimes complex—think about the mandate to pre-fund retiree health care, for instance,” Rolando said. “When legislators aren’t briefed on the issues, they can make uninformed decisions. We need to help them understand our issues and make informed decisions.”

In recent years, NALC’s allies in the House and Senate—from both parties—have helped us beat back more than a dozen attempts to end Saturday delivery, attack services such as door delivery, to deregulate mail delivery, and many other dangerous initiatives. NALC’s successes happen when letter carriers are actively engaging with their elected representatives at all levels—national, state and local.

In the following pages we’ll outline the structure of NALC’s legislative and political network, from the union’s national president to what individual members can and should be doing to participate.

“If our members understand what we’re up against and how they can help to preserve their jobs and benefits, they will want to get involved,” Rolando said.

National level

NALC’s national headquarters sits a few blocks from the Capitol in Washington, DC, giving the union walking-distance access to meet with congressional representatives and their staffs.

President Rolando directs the union’s legislative and political net-



“Postal issues are sometimes complex —think about the mandate to pre-fund retiree health care, for instance. When legislators aren’t briefed on the issues, they can make uninformed decisions. We need to help them understand our issues and make informed decisions.”

—President Fredric Rolando

work and sets policy for positive postal legislation and our defense against destructive proposals.

With Rolando’s guidance, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe oversees the union’s Legislative and Political Affairs Department. Renfroe understands the importance of NALC’s legislative agenda.

“It’s never been more important to ensure that the Postal Service remain a source of good jobs and be ready to compete in the 21st century,” Renfroe said. “Our priority for the 115th Congress will be addressing the pre-funding burden that has been responsible for 90 percent of the Postal Service’s revenue losses in recent years.”

Assisting Renfroe are the professional and letter carrier staffers in the Legislative and Political Affairs Department. They back the efforts of letter carrier activists:

- **Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Kori Blalock Keller**

oversees the day-to-day workings of the department and directs NALC’s lobbying, strategy and communications in that area. Keller and her team keep a close eye on the daily happenings on Capitol Hill and meet regularly with members of Congress and their staff members. On the political side, the department keeps tabs on candidate campaigns, evaluating and recommending candidates who deserve NALC’s support. And the depart-



ment oversees administration of the Letter Carrier Political Fund, ensuring that the union’s political action committee complies with federal election laws and files required reports.

- The most recent addition to the staff, **Legislative and Political Assistant Corey Miller**, researches and tracks House and Senate races, organizes candidate interviews, assists with Federal Election Commission reporting, organizes training and briefing events and provides reports on legislative and political activities to other NALC departments and to the union’s national officers.
- To help assure that NALC members understand the issues at stake and keep up with the latest news and know how they can make their voices heard, the department produces regular updates for distribution through the union’s publications, its social media accounts and its smartphone app. An additional **legislative and political assistant** has written many of those pieces by monitoring federal and state legislative developments; this position is currently vacant and NALC is in the process of hiring an LPA.
- **Mobilization Director Ed Morgan** communicates with state presidents and other activists, leading and coordinating



Dowdy retires; Preston named new Region 13 NBA

NALC President Fredric Rolando has appointed Region 13 Regional Administrative Assistant (RAA) Vada Preston to serve as that region's national business agent (NBA), effective March 6. Preston replaces the retiring Tim Dowdy, a member of Virginia Beach, VA Branch 2819, who has served as Region 13's NBA since January of 2005.

"Thanks go to Tim for his decades of service to NALC members and we wish him a happy retirement," President Rolando said.

Preston, a U.S. Air Force veteran, joined

NALC as a member of Tidewater VA Branch 247 in 1986. He served his branch as a shop steward and vice president, and he was elected branch president in 2003. Preston also has worked as a shop steward trainer, as a Dispute Resolution team member, as an arbitration advocate and as a local business agent. In 2005, NALC President William Young appointed Preston to be an RAA for Region 13, which serves NALC members in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. **PR**



mobilization campaigns in the field and developing and facilitating training materials and events. He will soon be assisting several



new legislative and political organizers (LPOs) to create a group of letter carrier staffers who will more comprehensively assist all of the state associations nationwide. Morgan, a member of Philadelphia Branch 157, joined the NALC's Legislative and Political Affairs Department as the first LPO last year. He led get-out-the-vote efforts in the Philadelphia area as part of the AFL-CIO's labor-to-labor election program during the 2012 and 2014 election campaigns. In 2015, he assisted in developing and executing NALC's first-ever network activist training program, where nearly 200 letter carriers from across the country learned how to get active—and stay active—on the legislative and political fronts. Morgan has also served as a congressional district liaison for his branch.

"The men and women of the Legislative and Political Affairs Department are dedicated professionals, committed to making the legislative process on Capitol Hill and our political and grassroots advocacy efforts in the field work for letter carriers," Renfroe said.

State and local levels

The saying goes that "all politics is local," and NALC's network reflects that. It's no surprise that each state is

different, and that each NALC state association is unique as well. What they have in common is their constitutional responsibility to use the majority of their resources to advance NALC's legislative and political agenda. The congressional delegation, as well as the size and geography of NALC branches, differs from state to state. The state associations are the key to NALC's field network.

The 49 state associations focus on legislative and political advocacy to match the particular political environment of each state. They provide letter carriers in each state the tools they need to effectively communicate with their representatives in Congress.

Activist letter carriers also volunteer as congressional district liaisons (CDLs) and letter carrier congressional liaisons (LCCLs). Each develops a relationship with his or her member of the House of Representatives and helps fellow carriers communicate with them.

"All these elements of our network work in tandem for one purpose," Rolando said: "To give letter carriers what they need to make their voices heard in Washington, DC."

Legislative and political organizers

Because every state and every congressional district is unique, NALC must constantly adapt to their differences. "The approach letter carrier activists use to talk to members of Congress will be different from one part of the country to another," President Rolando said. "It's not one-size-fits-all, and no one knows that better than the letter carriers who live and work there. Our network's structure is set up to help those letter carriers get their voices heard."

"It's never been more important to ensure that the Postal Service remains a source of good jobs and is ready to compete in the 21st century. Our priority for the 115th Congress will be addressing the pre-funding burden that has been responsible for 90 percent of the Postal Service's revenue losses in recent years."

*—Executive Vice President
Brian Renfroe*

“If our members understand what we’re up against and how they can help to preserve their jobs and benefits, they will want to get involved.”

—President Fredric Rolando

To assist the state associations with maximizing their resources, Rolando has created the new position of legislative and political organizer (LPO). Working with state association presidents, LPOs will help develop and implement plans specifically designed for the challenges within each state. They will train other letter carriers, officers and rank-and file activists to help carry out the plans, to recruit new activists and to encourage carriers to attend branch meetings, state association meetings and other events to reach letter carriers directly.

“The LPOs are a resource developed to assist the state associations in their efforts,” the president said.

Several letter carriers will soon join NALC’s staff as LPOs, reporting to Executive Vice President Renfroe. With each covering a particular part of the country, the LPOs will lead organizing and mobilization efforts to help letter carriers in these areas participate in the legislative and political process.

Branches

The branches in each state are the strength of the state associations. Branch political action committee (PAC) coordinators are letter carriers who explain the Letter Carrier Political Fund to fellow carriers and encourage them to support it. Each branch also plays a role, of course, by providing information to members, by serving as a rallying point for group activities such as congressional visits, letter-writing campaigns or phone banks and by keeping members informed.

Individual members

While NALC has built an impressive legislative and political network, none

of it could work without the contribution of individual NALC members. While the branches are the strength of the state associations, individual members are the strength of the branches. Members who may or may not be otherwise involved in the network play an important role.

Two main ways that the union calls on members to contribute are through donations to the PAC and by responding to calls to action through the NALC Member App.

“To put it bluntly, the PAC is the money that helps members of Congress get elected and helps power the whole political process,” President Rolando said. “The app is how NALC members know how and when they need to educate their members of Congress on issues, votes and procedures that are important to letter carriers.”

The Letter Carrier Political Fund—NALC’s PAC—supports pro-letter carrier congressional candidates, regardless of political party, with the hope that they will support and protect letter carrier jobs and strengthen the Postal Service as members of the House of Representatives or Senate.

Under federal law, unions cannot use dues money for political purposes. LCPF accepts voluntary political donations from NALC members. Using these pooled funds, the PAC amplifies the union’s impact on the political process in two ways.

The Political Fund also devotes resources that allow for the release of a number of letter carriers to work on select campaigns to get out the vote for letter carrier-friendly candidates. The typical released carrier works to contact voters by phone bank or going door-to-door—a task letter carriers are particularly good at.

(See last month's issue of *The Postal Record* for more information about the political fund).

Because things can happen quickly on Capitol Hill, NALC is committed to communicating with its members just as quickly. Through the NALC Member App, NALC can send out push notifications about the latest happenings in Congress. And when necessary, we can call on members to contact their legislators to let them know where we stand on issues related to letter carriers.

The free app, which is available for iPhones and Android smartphones, not only keeps NALC on the cutting edge of communication technology, it also is a powerful resource tool for helping members have the most relevant information at their fingertips. Among other useful features, the app includes a bill tracker, an individualized list of congressional representatives and information about the Letter Carrier Political Fund.

When you install the app, it will ask you for your home ZIP Code, so it can give you the correct legislative information. You then sign up for notifications based on your interests, and NALC will send such notifications to keep you informed about the latest news and calls to action. You can also simply open the app to find the latest news from NALC, including links to the union's social media accounts.

The government affairs section of the app allows you to see if your House member and senators have sponsored postal-friendly legislation or if they are on a committee impor-

tant to the fight for postal reform. From the bill tracker, you can read NALC's stance on bills in Congress, how many co-sponsors they have and more. There are also buttons for fact sheets and legislative information, so you can learn about these bills before speaking with your members of Congress. And the app makes it easy for you to let NALC know you would like to sign up for the Letter Carrier Political Fund.

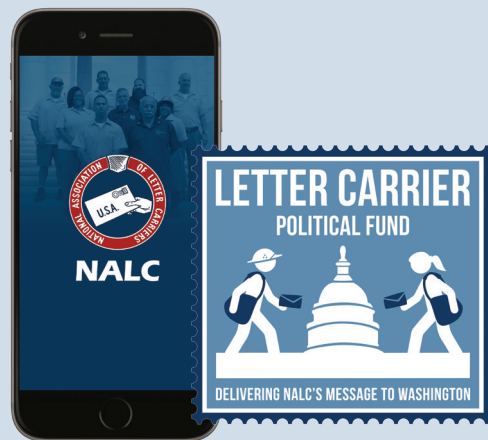
"The NALC App is your direct link to our legislative and political network," President Rolando said. "Every letter carrier with a smartphone should get it to access information and stay informed of happenings on Capitol Hill that affect letter carriers."

Change is the only constant

As times change, NALC never stops looking for ways to improve its capacity to speak on behalf of letter carriers in the nation's capital. As our network evolves, it enhances the union's clout and makes it even easier for every letter carrier across the country to participate.

"The network's purpose is to assure that letter carriers everywhere have what they need to confidentially speak their minds to members of Congress, and that the union has the strength to lobby on their behalf," Rolando said.

Ultimately, every NALC member is part of our legislative and political network. "With all these tools and resources to help them," Rolando said, "any letter carrier can be effective and make our voice heard even louder. All you have to do is step up and answer the call." **PR**



Two ways members can do their part:

1. Contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund

Find out more about the LCPF and how to donate by going to www.nalc.org/pac.

2. Install the NALC Member App on their Apple or Android Smartphone

Download the app by going to your phone's app store and searching for "NALC Member App."

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 per calendar year. Any guideline amount is merely a suggestion, and an individual is free to contribute more or less than the guideline suggests and the union will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount of their contribution or their decision not to contribute.