

Election season promises to be busy, with lots to consider



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Elections are fast approaching and everyone should be thinking about more than one election this fall. A couple of things come to mind regarding the congressional races. NALC supports candidates who support our issues. We don't consider wedge issues when deciding whether to support a candidate. As for myself, I look at who will better secure the Postal Service into the future and who will support collective bargaining and working people's issues when making my decision. These issues ultimately affect our members' jobs and their families' livelihoods. My advice to every member: Research the candidates and vote.

On the local front, many branches will conduct branch elections this fall. When conducting elections, equal treatment is a must. The rules regarding elections are set by your branch bylaws, the *NALC Constitution* and a federal law known as the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA). Beyond that, any and all privileges extended to one candidate by the branch must be extended to all candidates. Please refer to Section 9 in the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures (RGBEP)* handbook.

Electing officers and national and/or state delegates is very important. According to the *NALC Constitution*, local branch officers consist of president, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, health benefits representative and a board of trustees (three or five members). Branches do have the option, however, of providing in their bylaws for the consolidation or addition of officers of the branch.

Department of Labor regulations interpreting the LMRDA state that positions with executive or policymaking authority or responsibility must be an elected one. This provision can sometimes be misunderstood. For example, branch stewards do not normally have to be elected. However, if a branch steward is also automatically a member of the branch executive board, he or she must be elected due to the executive authority of the board. Furthermore, such stewards must be elected by the entire branch because the executive board makes policy for the entire branch membership. (Some branch executive boards are advisory only and the foregoing would not apply in that circumstance.)

In the past, I have received questions regarding a steward being a part of the branch executive board. In almost

all instances, those stewards also held an elected officer position. Therefore, the member would be on the executive board by virtue of his or her elected officer position and not as a steward. I hope this clarifies the issue.

To make sure that nominations and elections run smoothly, I recommend that branches review the *NALC RGBEP* and provide a copy to the election committee. The book details the right way to ensure that notices, nominations and election procedures are followed correctly. A democratic process allows each eligible member the opportunity to vote and elect those individuals they feel will best represent them. After all, those in office should have one major goal: representation of all city letter carriers.

Branches should pay close attention to Section 5 of the *NALC RGBEP* handbook, especially section 5.1, which states: "*The Recording Secretary must notify every member by mail of nominations and upcoming elections at his or her last known home address. The notice must be mailed to each member at least 45 days before the election.*"

Please see the sample notices on pages 16 and 17 of the *RGBEP* handbook. The sample on page 16 is for branches that hold their elections at a regular branch meeting; page 17 is an example for those branches that conduct elections by secret mail ballot.

You can find the *RGBEP* handbook on the NALC website on the Secretary-Treasurer's page. I hope this will remind branches to plan ahead to ensure that all the time frames are met.

End notes

I wish everyone a very happy Labor Day, when we honor the U.S. labor movement for its contributions to workers who have strengthened our country.

The 71st Biennial Convention in Detroit was a great success that once again gave me my dose of unionism. It was great to see my sisters and brothers, some there for the first time and some who have attended in the past. Many thanks to Branch 1 for being such an excellent host.

For those of you who did not attend the convention, I announced that my retirement was planned for Dec. 1 (the end of my term). I will miss working with my brothers and sisters, but I am really looking forward to my retirement so I can finally spend time with my husband, family and friends! As I said at the retirement dinner to the leadership at all levels: *Don't take for granted what this union life gives you. When you get where you're going, don't forget to turn back around and help the next one in line. Always stay humble and kind!* (Credit to Tim McGraw.)