

# NALC embraces retirees as few other unions do



**Ron  
Watson**

**R**etiree membership in the NALC constitutes an exception to the general practice of U.S. unions. In most unions, retirees are not permitted to remain as members, and thus are not eligible to vote, hold office, or otherwise participate in the governance of the union at any level.

The NALC is different. Article 2 Section 1 (a) of the *NALC Constitution* provides that NALC membership shall include “retirees...who were regular branch members of the NALC when they retired.” The same article and section provides the only limitation on retiree membership: “Such retirees...shall have no voice or vote in any matter pertaining to the ratification of a national working agree-

ment, local memorandum of understanding, or proposed work stoppage.” Retired NALC members can vote in elections, hold office and participate in the union’s governance, at all levels.

Moreover, the NALC dues structure for retirees makes the cost of retaining membership minimal. National retiree dues are set by the *NALC Constitution* at \$7 per year. State retiree dues vary: More than half of the states have zero retiree dues, while most of the remaining charge between \$1 and \$5 annually. Branch retiree dues also vary: Many branches charge zero retiree dues and many of the remaining charge a small amount.

The exceptional nature of the NALC retirees’ membership status and dues structure has been the subject of previous Retirement Department columns. See the April 2014 and December 2016 issues of *The Postal Record*. The information in those columns bears repeating. However, membership status and dues structure are not the only remarkable aspects of the way NALC values its retirees. Consider just a few of the things NALC does:

- **Nalcrest** is a retirement community located in Central Florida with 500 garden-style rental apartments starting at \$374 per month. That is per month, not week, and it includes utilities and use of community facilities—fitness center, heated swimming pool, tennis courts, softball field and more. Nalcrest is a vibrant community of retired letter carriers with clubs and community organizations of every description. Applications are limited to retired NALC members.
- **Gold card.** Article 2, Section 5(a) of the *NALC Constitution* provides that in the year a member is to complete 50 years membership in the NALC, the member shall be

given a life membership card of gold, which shall entitle him/her to all the privileges of membership in the NALC without payment of dues, per capita tax or special assessments from the date of issue of the card.

- **Representation on the Executive Council.** Article 6, Section 1 of the *NALC Constitution* guarantees that at least one retired member will sit on the Executive Council. The director of retired members is one of 10 elected resident national officers, and the *Constitution* specifically requires that he or she be a retired member.
- **Retirement Department assistance.** Two full-time staff members, as well as the director of retired members, provide advice and assistance to active and retired members regarding retirement issues and problems. Moreover, even in cases where a member never needs assistance with retirement issues, if a retiree dies before his or her spouse, the department will assist the surviving spouse with the process of applying for survivor benefits.
- **OWCP representation.** Eight regional workers’ compensation assistants (RWCAs), appointed by the NALC president, work full time advising, assisting and directly representing NALC members (active and retired) regarding on-the-job injury claims before the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (OWCP). The ir work benefits retirees, many of whom have accepted OWCP claims and may be eligible for schedule awards. In addition, a large number of retired NALC members have medical conditions such as knee or other joint arthritis that have been directly caused or aggravated by the physical work of carrying mail over many years. Generally, the time limit for filing an OWCP claim in such cases is three years from the last date of work. Recent retirees may receive advice and assistance from an RWCA regarding the potential for an initial filing of an OWCP claim.
- **Accidental death policy.** NALC provides an Accidental Death benefit for active and retired members. The basic benefit coverage is \$5,000, and there is no cost to the member. The benefit is administered by the NALC Mutual Benefit Association.
- **NALC Veterans Group.** Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces form almost a quarter of the membership of the NALC—active members as well as retired members. The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide members who are military veterans access to information and tools specific to veterans’ rights and benefits—as well as a sense of camaraderie.

**Membership in the NALC upon retirement costs little, yet provides substantial benefits. It also contrasts sharply with the way most U.S. unions view their retirees.**