

Your branch's New Year's resolution



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I wish all NALC members, your families and all of the members of our United States Armed Forces a safe, prosperous and healthy happy New Year.

Many of us have started off each year with a New Year's resolution of some sort. Some of us achieve our resolutions and some of us don't.

This year, I'd like to talk about another type of resolution for each local branch: to continue to strive to give the best representation possible to our membership. I also want to encourage every branch to make a New Year's resolution: to create, if not already in place, a branch filing system that will assist branch officials in retrieving information easily and expeditiously.

We have many different size branches, and each functions a little differently from the others. One thing they have in common is record-keeping. Since branches may have had fall elections and might have new officers, it is important that new officers are brought into their positions having information pertaining to the branch and where branch records are kept. Not only should officers know where records are kept, but they should also know how to label, file, store and dispose of these records, especially if those records fall under their duties and responsibilities. Otherwise, each branch needs a system for filing, maintaining and eventually disposing of records. Chapter 6 of the *NALC Branch Officer's Guide to Finance and Administration (NALC BOGFA)* has great information regarding record keeping. You can find this guide on the NALC website under the Secretary-Treasurer's page. Once there, scroll down until you see "resources," then click on it. There you will see "NALC Branch Officer's Guide to Finance and Administration."

Chapter 6 contains the following sections: Officers' Responsibilities for Branch Records, Retention of Records, The Branch Filing System (including Overall Filing Plan, Filing Methods, Filing Hints [Paper] and Filing Hints [Electronic]), Storing Records and Disposing of Records).

Retention schedule for branch records

There are various ways to file records, and the NALC BOGFA has some suggested methods. Each branch may select a different method, but all must have some type of method in place. Do not file magazines, journals or books. Another common problem is filing multiple copies of documents in one file—which only takes up space.

Federal laws require branches to keep certain records. The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959 re-

quires branches to keep records for five years from the date of the report supporting information that has been reported to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) on the branch LM report. Also, tax laws have certain retention requirements. In addition, the *NALC Constitution* requires branches to keep various membership, meeting and financial accountability records.

One example of records needing retention is election records. Membership and eligibility lists; copies of nomination and election notices; voting instructions; all return envelopes; marked, challenged and unused ballots; and tally sheets must be preserved for one year by the election official designated in the constitution and bylaws or, if none is designated, by the union secretary. (See LMRDA, 29 USC 481 (e).)

Another common record for each branch concerns grievances and related records. After a grievance is completed (final adjudication), the file should be kept as follows:

- **Moving papers:** only for seven years, per CAU policy.
- **Grievance case files (full file):** for five years, per CAU policy.

In summary, branch officials should know where records are maintained and have access to those records that fall under their duties (please refer to the *NALC Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches*, Article 6). Below is a list of some branch records:

- **Financial records**, which include DOL reports (LMs), IRS reports (990s), bills, warrants and payment records. They also may include past and current budgets, leases, property records, rent or mortgages and vendor contracts.
- **Employment records** for officers, stewards and others. This also includes W-4s, I-9s, 1099s, payroll tax records (federal and state withholding, FICA, Medicare, etc.), insurance records, state workers' compensation insurance and, if applicable, retirement records.
- **Representation records**, such as grievances (active files, closed files, settlements, decisions, etc.), local negotiation records, current and past LMOUs, labor-management records and route inspection records. These are just some of the representational records a branch may have.
- **Branch policies, bonding insurance, branch equipment records and keys.**

Again, these are examples of the many records a branch may have and must maintain in some orderly fashion. I strongly encourage all officers to take a look at your branch record-keeping to ensure that, if you need to locate a record, each person with the authority and need to know can locate the records swiftly. Without a proper filing system, that can be very difficult.

If you haven't reviewed the *NALC BOGFA* lately, please take the time to review it. The guide is a great training tool.