

# State associations: The backbone of our legislative and political network



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**O**ver the last couple of years, a lot has been written and said about NALC's legislative and political network. This network includes Headquarters officers and staffers, state associations and branches.

While this network has evolved and improved over the years, since 2006, one thing has remained constant: Our state associations are a key piece of our legislative and political success.

In 2006, the delegates to the 65th biennial convention amended Article 1, Section 2 of the *NALC Constitution for the Government of State Associations* to read as follows:

**Sec. 2.** The objects of this Association are to assist the National Association of Letter Carriers in maintaining a more perfect organization and improving the Postal Service; to organize all letter carriers within the State; and to guide and direct all activities relating to legislation within the State.

This Association shall have the authority to coordinate with the National Business Agent regarding seminars and training schools on State, District, and Branch levels, which shall be financed by the NALC and directed by the National Business Agent.

Effective September 1, 2006, State Association financial resources previously expended on seminars and training shall be expended in pursuance of and consistent with the object stated above: "to guide and direct all activities relating to legislation within the state."

Prior to this change, training and education were the primary function of the state associations. Of course, a change like this required many states to make internal adjustments to best position the association for their new primary objective. In the years since the 2006 constitutional amendment, many of our state associations have made these necessary changes, and that process continues. For most states, 2019 provides opportunities to continue to improve.

Before talking about how these changes take place, let's look at how state associations fit in our legislative and political network. State associations are the entities within NALC whose primary focus is legislation. Headquarters officers have overall responsibility for everything our union does, including legislation. Branches are involved in legislation but have other representational responsibilities.

The primary focus of state associations should be devel-

oping relationships with each member of Congress within the states. There is no better way to educate and influence members of Congress to support letter carriers than hearing our message from letter carriers who live and vote in their states and congressional districts.

To accomplish this, state associations have letter carrier congressional liaisons (LCCLs) in place. In some states, these positions are elected, and in others they are appointed. Regardless of how these individuals are chosen, the important part is that our legislative and political network, primarily the state association, provides LCCLs and other members the knowledge and resources needed to develop and foster relationships with their members of Congress and their staffs at the local level.

## **We contain multitudes**

**NALC members vary widely in our political views, from very conservative to very liberal.** This is a strength of our union and has allowed us to develop relationships with members of Congress in both parties in Washington and at the local level.

In 2019, the vast majority of our state associations have conventions. These conventions usually include training and other activities. However, the primary purpose of these conventions is to chart the course for the state association until the next convention, just as the national convention does.

Every state officer and delegate to each state convention should view it as an opportunity to improve. One example is taking a close look at a state association's bylaws. If changes are needed to better position the state association for success, use the process and the convention to propose, debate and ultimately decide what changes are needed.

## **We owe it to ourselves to work even harder**

**Headquarters and regional officers and staff look forward to assisting state associations this year and continuing our work to improve our network.** Letter carriers have a strong voice on Capitol Hill because of the work done over the years in Washington, DC, and at the local level. We are better positioned than ever before to navigate the difficult circumstances we face legislatively thanks to the efforts of NALC members at all levels. But we owe it to each other and our future to continuously work to get better. Let's take advantage of every opportunity to do so.