



NALC'S UNSTOP



Letter carriers may put down their satchels when they retire, but they don't have to stop serving their union in a variety of ways, even as branch officers. NALC members have the option of continuing their union membership after they retire, and many retirees play essential roles for our union long after they deliver their last letter.

Retirees serve in various leadership positions. Some are officers at the branch, state, regional or national levels. Some use their wisdom to advise other members as retirement, NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP) or Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) representatives. Some are released in support of AFL-CIO political campaigns. Some organize for the Letter Carrier Food Drive, Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and other charity fundraisers, or work on events honoring carriers who are military veterans.

Retirees are free from restrictions imposed on active carriers by federal law or Postal Service policy, allowing them to advocate for all NALC members. For instance, unlike active carriers, retirees are not subject to Hatch Act restrictions on certain political activities by civil servants, so they have more freedom to advocate on behalf of their fellow NALC members. Retirees also are free to speak about postal practices; for instance, retirees can explain to postal patrons why they may not want to consent to switching from door delivery to cluster boxes.

"NALC has a long history of embracing both its active and retired members, who participate in our union at every level," NALC President Fredric

Rolando said. "Whatever role they play, retired members are a wonderful resource. They use their knowledge and their time to serve their fellow carriers and their communities long after they leave the job. They never forget NALC's strong tradition of service."

One of the most valuable services retirees provide, Rolando said, is institutional memory.

"Our retirees have long memories, and their wisdom can be invaluable," Rolando said. "They know our history, our traditions and our struggles, and they remember how hard they fought to win and protect our current rights and benefits—and how precious and vulnerable those can be. Retirees inspire us."

STANDING UP FOR RETIREES

Since the day it was founded in 1889, one of NALC's top priorities has been to secure a pension for retired carriers. Active NALC members understood that everyone faces retirement someday, and that benefits for retirees were worth fighting for. As a carrier wrote in *The Postal Record* in 1907 about a pension bill the union supported in Congress, "This pension legislation that we seek is not primarily and solely for the benefit of the old men of today, it is for the old men of the future—you and I as well."

In that era, the Post Office Department did not provide any pension or other retirement benefits to letter carriers. Those who could keep up were forced to work into old age to support themselves. Those who couldn't keep pace, regardless of age, could be fired. Letter carriers bristled at the harsh treatment, and some tried their best to fight the policy in solidarity with their



PABLE RETIREES

older co-workers. In one infamous incident in 1915, 25 carriers in Fairmont, WV, resigned in protest when the postmaster, following orders from Post Office headquarters in Washington, DC, fired an aging carrier. They were stunned when all 25 were arrested for an illegal strike, even though they had simply quit. Most were fined, but one carrier hanged himself in a jail cell before his trial.

After many years of struggle by NALC and the rest of the labor movement, Congress finally granted retirement benefits to most federal employees with the enactment of the Civil Service Retirement Act of 1920, which established the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). Since 1984, new federal employees have been covered by a replacement system, the Federal Employees Retirement System, or FERS.

NALC has long acknowledged the contributions of its retired members. The tradition of recognizing carriers after 50 years of membership with a gold card began in 1939, and other honors followed. In a bid to encourage retirees to retain their union membership, delegates to the 1956 national convention in Minneapolis created a lower dues structure for them (see below).

To give retired members a voice in, and a helping hand from, their union, NALC created the position of director of retired members at the 1976 national convention in Houston as a resident national officer. The current director of retired members, **Dan Toth** of Lorain, OH Branch 583, oversees a Retirement Department that serves almost 91,000 retired members, representing about 31 percent of the union's almost 294,000 total membership. The Retirement Department provides information to

retirees and carriers planning to retire, and monitors developments in the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and on Capitol Hill that affect retirees.

In 1964, the first residents of Nalcrest, NALC's retirement community exclusively for NALC members, moved in. Nalcrest, located in central Florida, has grown to a full-fledged retirement community with 500 apartments and a host of amenities, including an auditorium and sports complex.

FREEDOM TO ACT

Retired carriers are free from the restrictions on active carriers that govern certain kinds of activism. With that freedom, they have the opportunity to give back to their fellow union members in ways they couldn't as working letter carriers.

Their special role as a voice for all carriers became essential in 1939 with the passage of the Hatch Act, which severely restricted the political and legislative activities allowed by federal employees, including letter carriers. The law forbids them from volunteering to work for campaigns or to run for office.

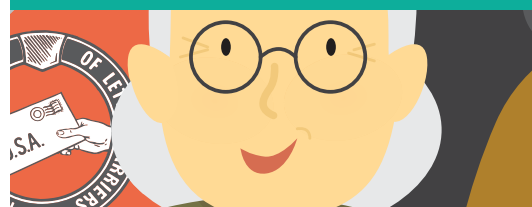
NALC turned to the NALC Auxiliary, composed primarily of letter carriers' spouses, and to retired carriers to advocate for letter carriers. Free of Hatch Act restrictions, retirees and Auxiliary members have played an essential role in speaking on behalf of letter carriers in the halls of Congress and in political campaigns.

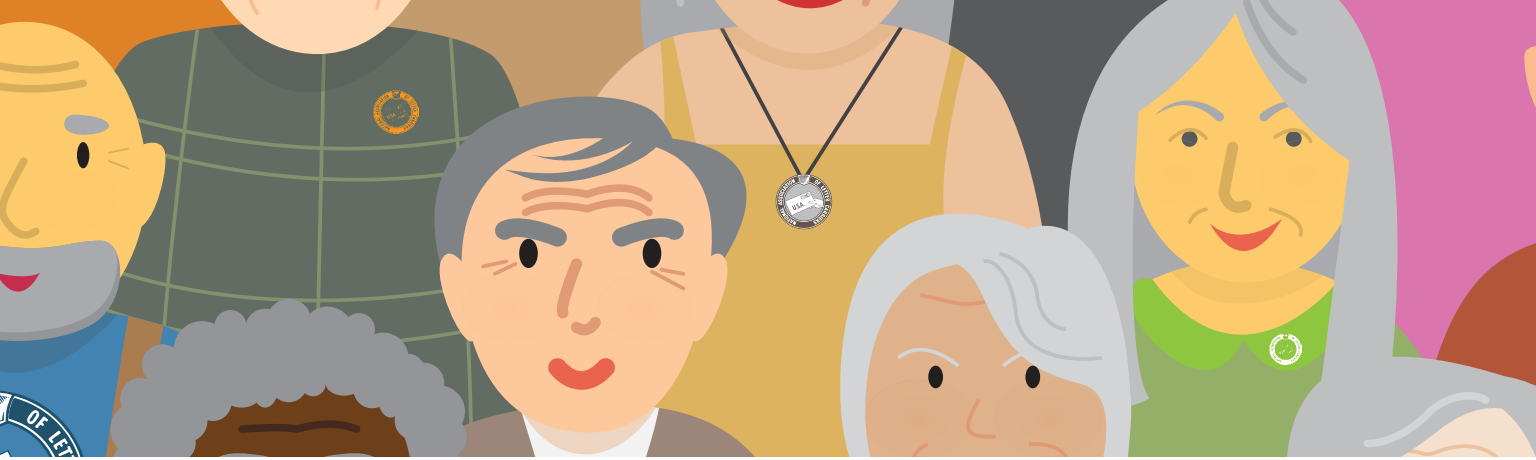
After much work by NALC on its behalf, a 1993 Hatch Act reform law loosened some of those restrictions, allowing active carriers greater room to participate in legislative and political activities. However, a recent dispute over the Hatch Act led NALC to once



Are you thinking about retiring?

See the NALC's retirement guide on page 15. It will help you make the most of your postal and union benefits. It's never too early to plan for your golden years, so whether you just started or you only have a few years left in your career, the retirement guide will help you get a head start.





again rely on retirees as released carriers to work on AFL-CIO campaigns in support of pro-labor candidates beginning in the 2018 midterm elec-

tions. As President Rolando recently told the attendees at the national rap session, retired NALC members continue to serve as our voice in political campaigns, reaching out to voters to help elect pro-labor, pro-Postal Service candidates to Congress.

“We are blessed to have both active and retired carriers working as union activists,” Rolando added.

Arizona Merged Branch 1902 Treasurer **Mary Halford** worked on her first campaign on behalf of NALC last year. Halford retired in 1998 and remained active in NALC, but her first experience working on campaigns came during the 2018 midterm elections, when she helped the Arizona AFL-CIO support a slate of candidates.

“It was one of the best things I’ve ever done,” she said.

“We did canvassing, phone-banking, preparing packets for other people who were going out. We worked 40 hours a week, sometimes more,” Halford said, “but it paid off because we got people elected who were labor-friendly.”

Halford started as a letter carrier in Norman, OK, in 1966 as the first female carrier in her town. She transferred to Scottsdale, AZ, a few years later and retired there. She has served NALC in many roles, and now serves as state director of retired members along with branch treasurer.

“I didn’t come from a union background, but I got involved early on because, being a woman, it was an anomaly then and I got a lot of grief,” she said. “But I stuck it out and loved every minute of it, and I’ve been involved my whole life.”

Halford welcomed the opportunity to expand her activism beyond her own union by heeding the call for retiree involvement in AFL-CIO political

REGULAR MEMBERS

With certain exceptions, retired NALC members have the same rights and benefits as active members. Retired members can attend branch meetings, vote in branch elections and serve as officers. The sole votes reserved for active members are those involving contractual issues, an exception required by the *NALC Constitution*, which states that only members who are active USPS employees can have a voice or vote in matters pertaining to “the ratification of a national working agreement, local memorandum of understanding, or proposed work stoppage.”

Retirees pay reduced national dues—only \$7 a year. Some state associations and branches charge additional dues that they set in their bylaws. In almost every case in which the retiree retains the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHB) and is covered by the NALC Health Benefit Plan, the annual retiree membership dues will be less than the \$36 annual charge for non-members.

For that small amount, retired members have access to many benefits, including:

- A free \$5,000 accidental death policy through MBA.
- Access to the NALC Retirement Department for assistance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
- A subscription to *The Postal Record*.

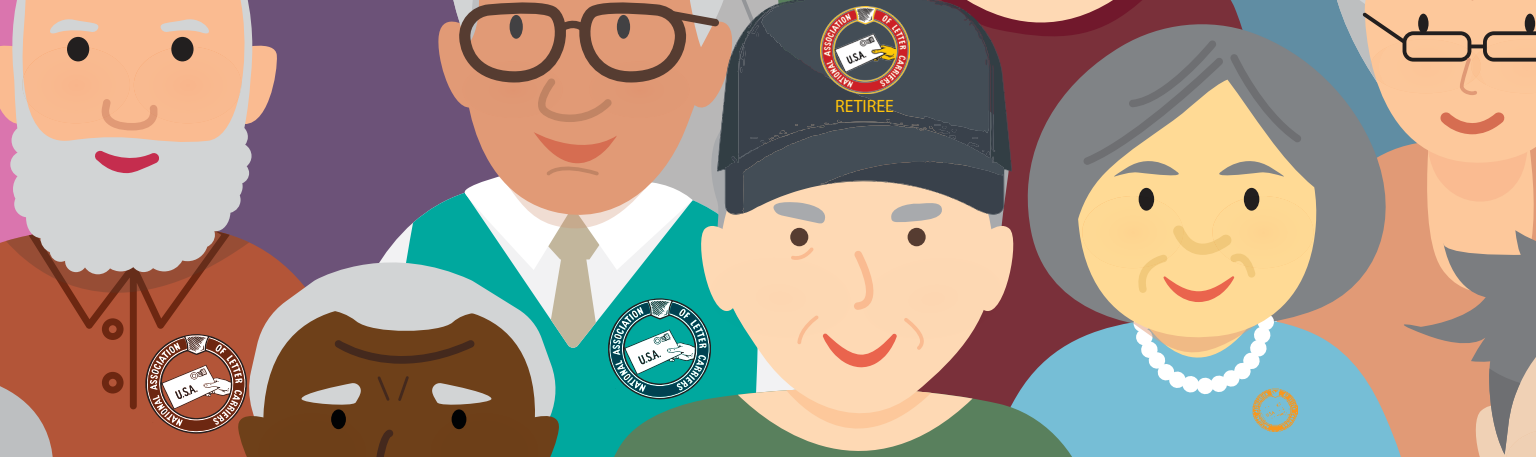
- Continued participation in NALC governance.
- A voice on Capitol Hill through the NALC’s Department of Legislative and Political Affairs activities.

To retain NALC membership, retiring members must sign a Form 1189 (dues checkoff provision). Form 1189 authorizes OPM to deduct union dues from retiree annuities. Generally, NALC Headquarters mails all recently retired members a packet that includes Form 1189, when it is notified by the Postal Service of a retirement. The form also is available from many branch offices, from your NBA office or by calling the NALC Headquarters switchboard at 202-393-4695. After completing and signing Form 1189, retirees must submit it to a branch officer. A local branch officer must also sign the form and then submit it to NALC Headquarters.

“It’s important for retiring carriers to remember to send in their dues form,” Rolando said, “because the window for continuing membership into their retirement years closes quickly.”

Along with retirees, the *NALC Constitution* allows carriers who leave because of disability under Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (OWCP) or who the Executive Council determines were unjustly separated, to retain their NALC membership.

“We cherish the contributions our retired sisters and brothers have made to our union,” Rolando said, “and welcome them to continue to serve and to enjoy the benefits of membership.” PR



campaigns. “It shows you what true unionism is all about,” she said. “We worked with other unions and got to know different people. Since that time, I’ve become even more involved. I just became a precinct committeeperson for my legislative district.

“I am so proud to be an NALC member,” Halford added, “but bringing all these people together and getting to know their struggles makes a big difference in how you view everything that goes on around you.

“It’s given me a whole different perspective, just really energized me,” she said. “It’s been a really gratifying experience and I look forward to doing it again.”

MODE OF DELIVERY

Another way retirees are free to serve their union is by advocating on mode-of-delivery issues. The Postal Service is attempting to convince postal customers in some parts of the country to consent to switching from door delivery to cluster-box or centralized delivery. However, retirees are serving as messengers for NALC to explain to postal patrons that they have a choice and why they should retain door delivery.

The *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* states that “employees in active status must not engage in campaigns for or against changes in mail status.” Retired carriers are free to work in campaigns against changes in mode of mail delivery. Such campaigns may involve educating the public about their rights when USPS solicits conversions of mode of delivery and about how it would affect each customer or forming partnerships with community organizations to help preserve mail service by retaining door delivery (see the June issue of *The Post-*

al Record for more information).

“Postal regulations make it clear that property owners have control over their mode of delivery and that changing it requires their written consent,” Roldano said. “Retired carriers are involved in assuring that postal patrons know the regulations.”

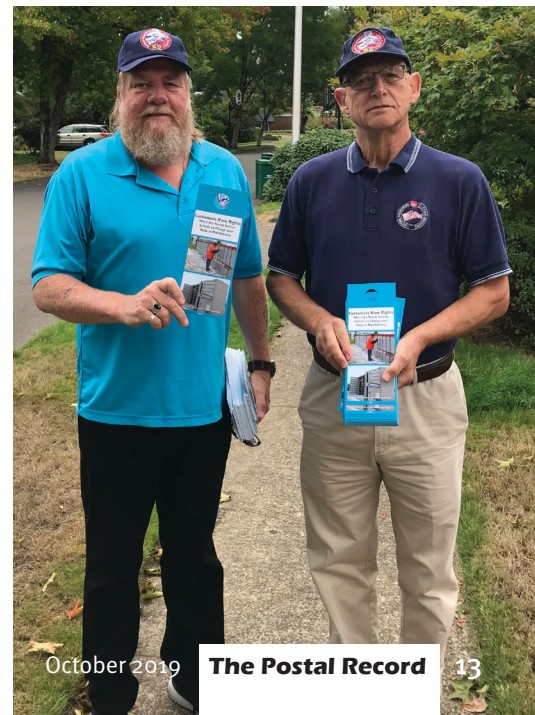
Jim Falvey, retiree and former president of Portland, OR Branch 82, works on campaigns initiated by his branch to resist changes from door delivery in his area. Working with a fellow former Branch 82 president, retiree **Jim Cook**, Falvey reaches out to postal customers to explain that they have a right to refuse to switch from door delivery, and the advantages of retaining it. He retired in 2014 on the same day he became branch president, a position he held until 2017.

That’s when Falvey first got wind of the initial efforts by USPS to switch the mode of delivery at large properties such as a local shopping mall where cluster-box delivery would have put an end to mail delivery directly to each store. “When they were kind of poking around, approaching some places,” Falvey said, “I just contacted the property manager and I talked with him, and it was a very quick sell—he said he wasn’t interested in it.” Falvey also helped a housing development with mostly elderly customers preserve door delivery in the same way: “I just contacted the person who ran the place,



Above: Arizona Merged Branch 1902 retiree Mary Halford worked on her first campaign on behalf of NALC last year.

Below: Portland, OR Branch 82’s Jim Falvey (l) and Jim Cook worked to educate residents about their mode of delivery rights.





and she said, ‘Absolutely not.’”

As the Postal Service has broadened conversion efforts in the Portland area, Branch 82 stepped up its response by contacting customers through the mail and by sending retirees such as Falvey and Cook to distribute informational literature directly to the affected customers’ homes. “We put hangers on the doorknobs explaining to people what their rights are, what the Postal Service is attempting to do and the ramifications—what that change means to them,” he said.

“I think all in all, we’re fairly successful in stopping the conversions,” he said, adding, “when we know it’s happening and we use the methods available to us.”

Falvey said that he remains active in the union because if NALC members don’t use what they’ve learned when they retire, it goes to waste. “We lose all that experience,” he said, “and all that institutional knowledge.”

ACTIVELY RETIRED

Retirement can be a sweet spot for union activism—a retiree has a wealth of experience and knowledge to lend, and more time to apply it.



Since hanging up his satchel in October 2018, Central Florida Branch 1091 member **Shane Ulbin** hasn’t slowed down his activism on behalf of NALC—he has revved it up.

“The union’s been very good to me, and I like paying it back,” he said. “My mom raised me to believe that if there’s a fight to be had to make any kind of change then you need to do it, and thanks to the union, I’m in a position where I can make a lot of difference.”

One of Ulbin’s priorities is building relationships with Florida elected officials and generating support for NALC’s legislative priorities.

“I get invited to a lot of events” held by Florida political figures, he said, and people now recognize him as the local face of NALC. “We’ve been very successful in getting people to sign on to our resolutions.” Ulbin painstakingly researches members of Congress and makes inroads with even those who might be hostile to unions. “I read their bios,” he said. “I try to look for something I might have in common.” He recalls a huddle with a member of Congress who, he learned, once had worked for the Apollo program. At a meeting, Ulbin brought up his own love of space travel. “A 15-minute meeting turned into an hour meeting,” he said.

On the state level, Ulbin was a leader in passing a vote-by-mail law in the Florida legislature that he is now working to strengthen, and he supports the efforts of other unions, such as teachers, in the state capital, Tallahassee—efforts he said also benefit Florida letter carriers and their families.

Ulbin is happy to have the time

Fort Wayne, IN Branch 116 retiree Robby Gardiner leads a workshop helping active letter carriers prepare for retirement.

to devote to building these relationships and make progress for NALC.

Ulbin serves in numerous roles, including as Florida State Association District 3 chairman and branch trustee. “My favorite hat is food drive coordinator,” Ulbin said. His branch collected more than 2 million pounds of food this year. “I’m very proud of that.”

Some of his other volunteer activities also serve letter carriers and the people of Florida, such as his work for the Seminole County NAACP, where he coordinates voter registration drives. Ulbin also pitches in to help other unions.

“I plan to do it until I can’t anymore,” he said.

Since retiring in 2016, **Robby Gardiner** has given back to the union by sharing his extensive knowledge with other carriers.

Gardiner, a member of Fort Wayne, IN Branch 116, carried the mail and worked as a Step B representative after starting his postal career in 1969 until retiring in 2016, also serving four years in the Air Force in the Vietnam era. In retirement, Gardiner is training both new and experienced stewards.

As an active carrier, Gardiner worked as a facilitator for Step B training at the national level. That experience moved him to volunteer as a trainer when he retired.

“I wanted to continue to train and to share my knowledge with new stewards,” he said.

He also teaches a retirement training throughout Region 6 and helps individual carriers with retirement issues one-on-one, serves on the executive board of his branch and works with two other retirees on the branch’s food drive committee.

“By keeping active with the union,” Gardiner said, “I have a reason to get up every morning.” **PR**