

Goodbye, 2020; hello, 2021



**Brian
Renfro**

The year 2020 has been a year unlike any other in my memory. It seems like the overwhelming majority of news and events this past year have been negative. The past year has posed challenges that most of us have never faced before. As I've written previously, letter carriers have risen to every challenge, as we always have, but that doesn't mean it's been easy. We have worked on many fronts to protect ourselves and our interests to be sure that we continue to provide service to our customers. Despite the challenges, letter carriers should be proud of that effort this year, and there is reason to be hopeful for the future.

Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to rage around the country. We are all hopeful that the vaccine developments that have been recently reported make a difference sooner rather than later. Meanwhile, for letter carriers, we have several other positives to look forward to in 2021.

Recently, we were able to reach tentative agreement on a collective-bargaining agreement with the Postal Service. You can read the details of that agreement in this magazine, as well as on the NALC website. Negotiating a national collective-bargaining agreement for a bargaining unit with hundreds of thousands of members is often a long and arduous process. That has certainly been the case for the last 17 months. I want to thank all of the officers and staff who worked hard to assist President Rolando and me—not only in negotiations, but also in the process of preparing for and presenting our case in interest arbitration, while simultaneously continuing to negotiate. Our union is blessed with talented members and staff serving in many different capacities, as well as professionals who provide the highest level of service to our union.

As defined in Article 16 of the *NALC Constitution*, regular members in good standing will soon have the opportunity to vote “yes” or “no” on the tentative agreement. We will continue to work to be sure that each member has a clear understanding of what is included in the agreement so that each can make his or her own educated decision. The ratification process is another shining example of our union's democratic processes that have been put in place over the years. It is something of which we should all be proud.

On Jan. 20, Joe Biden will be sworn in as president of the United States. Elections are usually heated. They cause

strong feelings to come to the surface in many people. This one has been different from any election I remember, and each individual's feelings likely won't change on Jan. 20. There is good news for letter carrier jobs and the Postal Service, however. The Biden administration will support letter carrier jobs and a strong Postal Service.

I'm very appreciative of all of the NALC staff and members who worked hard in several states around the country to help elect President-elect Biden. The pandemic changed a lot of what we traditionally do to communicate with union members. In most locations, knocking on doors wasn't safe, so we had to use more virtual forms of communication. As always, NALC members and staff stepped up, adjusted, and gave their time to help their brothers and sisters.

Our work is not over. In the next couple of weeks, voters in Georgia will decide who will control the U.S. Senate by voting in two runoffs for Georgia's two Senate seats. Letter carriers need a change in Senate leadership. Under Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the Senate has been the place where postal-related legislation that would benefit letter carriers and the Postal Service has died.

The House of Representatives has passed bipartisan legislation to repeal the mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits and to provide needed funding to help the Postal Service sustain itself through the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite bipartisan support in the Senate and urging from Republican senators in his own caucus, McConnell has refused to bring these pieces of legislation to the Senate floor, or even to consider them. This is unacceptable, and NALC members in Georgia know it.

I want to once again express my thanks to all letter carriers for your tireless work during a very difficult year. I wish each of you an enjoyable holiday season. More than ever before, I think we all wish for a happy new year!

Happy
Holidays!

