

NALC leadership, structure and you

With the recent ratification of the 2019 National Agreement, this is a good time to review how our union is structured to serve members.

NALC's message to all carriers, and especially to new members, is: "You are the union." NALC is designed to provide the best representation for you, both on the workroom floor and at the national level, through collective bargaining. NALC democracy is firmly rooted in a written constitution that spells out election procedures, officers' duties, convention responsibilities and other key matters. The *NALC Constitution* has evolved over the years to meet the union's changing needs and to strengthen members' control over union affairs. The lifeblood of a democratic union is the active participation of its members. You—the letter carrier—make union democracy work.

NALC's National Convention is the union's supreme governing body. The convention is held every two years, and elected delegates from every branch across the country are eligible to attend. At the convention, delegates consider proposed constitutional amendments and resolutions on a variety of topics. Delegates also discuss key issues in standing committees and set national policy for NALC.

Your union, headquartered in Washington, DC, is led by the Executive Council, which is composed of 10 elected national resident officers, three national trustees and 15 national business agents (NBAs), with each of the latter overseeing one of the 15 geographical regions that together cover the country. NALC's branches (akin to "locals" in other unions) are the heart and soul of the union. Branches are where NALC members share information about both

local and national issues; voice their opinions at meetings; and develop, promote, and coordinate union activities, from advocacy efforts to charitable and social events. Each of these branches has its own elected officers who guide them and administer the National Agreement at the local level.

Each of NALC's resident officers has specific responsibilities outlined in the *NALC Constitution*. These elected national officer positions are president, executive vice president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary-treasurer, director of city delivery, director of safety and health, director of retired members, director of the NALC Health Benefit Plan and director of life insurance. Every officer must be an NALC member. Candidates are nominated for office at every other biennial convention and are elected to four-year terms by NALC members, via secret mail-in ballots. The next nomination of national officers will be held during the next biennial national convention, Aug. 8-12, 2022, in Chicago.

The president carries out the duties set by the membership, as per Article 9 of the *NALC Constitution*, and has overall authority over the organization.

The executive vice president's duties include overseeing collective bargaining, organizing and legislative activities. The executive vice president also stands in for the president, if he or she cannot fulfill his or her duties, until the next election.

The vice president's duties include assisting the executive vice president and overseeing the national business agents insofar as their duties relate to his/her duties.

The secretary-treasurer keeps the records and accounts of the union and assists branch leaders with their responsibilities.

The assistant secretary-treasurer serves under direct oversight of the president, performing duties assigned by the president. He or she serves as the secretary of the NALC Executive Council when it is in session, and serves as the secretary-treasurer in the absence of the sitting secretary-treasurer.

The director of city delivery handles issues related to mail delivery and how letter carriers do their jobs, including developing and distributing training materials.

The director of safety and health works to assure that letter carriers are safe from the many hazards they may confront while doing their jobs. This includes advocating for safe Postal Service procedures and policies, and educating and training carriers on how to protect their safety and health and that of their co-workers.

The director of retired members advocates for retiree benefits, and assists and educates active and retired members on retirement issues.

The director of the Health Benefit Plan administers the NALC Health Plan, a not-for-profit health insurance program founded by NALC that is open to letter carriers and other federal employees.

The director of life insurance administers the U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association, a not-for-profit insurance program founded by NALC that offers letter carriers life insurance and other insurance and financial benefits.

The Board of Trustees, composed of three trustees, oversees the financial affairs of the union, auditing its books, reporting on the audits and other financial information, and managing its property.



Fifteen elected NBAs, each responsible for one of 15 regions of the country, serve the members and branches in their region. Acting under the national president's ultimate direction, NBAs have extensive authority over union affairs in their regions and serve on the Executive Council. An NBA's primary responsibility is contract administration—handling grievances, presenting arbitrations and dealing with regional postal management. He or she also deals with organizing and respond to requests for advice and assistance from branches in their regions.

Each region employs at least one regional administrative assistant (RAA), who are appointed by the NALC president. The RAAs assist the NBAs in a variety of ways, including monitoring the grievance-arbitration process; organizing, developing and conducting training sessions; and supporting community service activities. Each region also has the assistance of a regional grievance assistant (RGA) and a regional workers' compensation assistant (RWCA), both of whom also are appointed by the president. RGAs have extensive grievance-handling experience and advanced education in the dispute resolution/arbitration process. The RGAs' duties include helping local branches handle grievance backlogs, conducting specialized training or simply filing grievances. RWCA's have comprehensive knowledge of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) and the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). RWCA's assist members who have suffered on-the-job injuries or who have more complex compensation cases than their local branch representatives may be able to handle. All this work by RGAs and RWCA's ensures that all of our members are well represented.

NALC state associations are responsible for legislative and political matters that affect letter carriers. State associations work closely with branches, NBAs and NALC Headquarters on legislative and political issues. These efforts are important as we work in the halls of Congress to secure both the future of the Postal Service and our jobs. The NALC president also appoints legislative and political organizers (LPOs) to assist state associations in promoting and protecting letter carrier interests on Capitol Hill. LPOs help develop and implement plans specifically designed for the legislative challenges within each state. They assist with the education and training of other letter carriers, officers, and rank-and-file activists to help carry out the plans.

Within local branches, letter carriers are designated as union shop stewards for individual stations or facilities. Whether you're a newly hired city carrier assistant or a veteran carrier, you should know that NALC business starts, and often ends, with the work of the shop steward. From filing grievances to offering workplace advice, these front-line defenders of the contract are the union's main presence in a carrier's station.

"It's long been said that stewards have the hardest job in the union," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "and I believe that to be true. But the work that stewards do is among the most important, too, because it all starts with them."

No matter how big or small your issue is, your steward is the person to approach. If your work schedule is incorrect, consult with your steward. If you see an issue with your paycheck, talk to your steward. Whatever the issue, bring it to your steward. The steward will know whether management is violating

the contract, and if so, what to do about it. For a more complete description of a shop steward's role and the grievance process, see "Understanding the Grievance Procedure" in the March 2021 edition of *The Postal Record*.

If your steward is unavailable, contact your branch. In a small branch, that could mean contacting the branch president directly. In a larger branch, you might be directed to talk to a specific officer who is responsible for your area. If the officer isn't in your station and you can't talk to him or her in person, call the branch office. Your steward and branch officers can and will handle most contractual situations. If you are unable to contact the steward or branch officers, that's when you should contact your NBA's office. NBAs can help you deal with just about any issue and provide you with answers to your questions.

While stewards and branch officers can be contacted locally in person or by phone, sometimes your NBA's office may be a few states away. To communicate with your NBA, call or write his or her office. The office numbers and addresses are listed on page 2 of each issue of *The Postal Record* or online at nalc.org. Additionally, NALC Headquarters includes many departments, all designed to serve you. A list of departments and phone numbers can be found at the "Contact Us" tab on the NALC website.

"NALC is here to make sure the Postal Service follows the contract, and we all know management doesn't always follow the letter of the contract," Rolando said. "So, remember, when you have an issue, no matter how big or small, start with your steward, then your branch, then your NBA. We are here to help you." **PR**