

# Anarchy on NALC's doorstep



**Fredric V.  
Rolando**

**I** have always taken great pride in the NALC's headquarters, the Vincent R. Sombrotto Building. It sits kitty-corner to the United States Capitol, a magnificent and inspiring structure that has become a global symbol of freedom and democracy. Our headquarters places us in the heart of our nation's capital and provides a platform to make the voices of our members heard in Washington, DC. On Jan. 6, I watched in disgust and horror from my eighth-floor office as a riotous mob attacked the U.S. Capitol, interrupting the certification of the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris by the Electoral College.

Over the years, I have seen countless protests, demonstrations and rallies on the grounds

of the Capitol—and NALC has participated in our fair share of them. Such exercises of our First Amendment rights as citizens to petition our government for redress are fundamental to our system of government. But what happened on Jan. 6 was not a peaceful protest or a principled example of civil disobedience. It was a traitorous assault on our country's institutions, less than two blocks from our building. The rioters constructed gallows and hung a noose. They smashed windows and doors, attacked police officers, ransacked the Capitol, and even threatened to hang Vice President Mike Pence. Six people, including two police officers, lost their lives.

The attack was a disgraceful betrayal of our democracy, our elected officials and the law enforcement personnel who protect them. That it was incited by the outgoing president of the United States, who claimed that the presidential election had been marred by fraud and irregularities, makes it even more appalling. As I noted in a statement I issued on that day: "Letter carriers, like our fellow American citizens, are diverse, opinionated and passionate about their values and politics, which NALC appreciates and celebrates. But a line has been crossed that can never be excused, accepted or repeated."

**The U.S. Capitol riot has added to the crisis our country faces—on the day of the insurrection, 4,000 more Americans died from the COVID-19 virus as we entered what are likely to be the deadliest months of the pandemic. A few days later, the U.S. Department of Labor reported the loss of 140,000 jobs in December, pointing to a stalling of the economic recovery from the coronavirus-induced recession. A week after the attack, a bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives voted to impeach President Trump for a second time, for his role in inciting the riot at the Capitol.**

These developments have left our nation shaken. Our political divisions are raw, and there now is great uncertainty about the future. This will certainly complicate our efforts to advance our legislative agenda in the now-restored U.S. Capitol. But there is reason for hope.

First, we should take solace in the fact that the attack on our democracy utterly failed. After order was restored later that evening, a joint session of Congress reconvened and certified the results of the 2020 election by accepting the votes of the Electoral College. As this magazine goes to press, President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris will be inaugurated next week on Jan. 20.

Second, the terrible news of Jan. 6 overshadowed a truly historic and positive conclusion to the runoff elections for two U.S. Senate seats in Georgia on Jan. 5. The election of two Democrats, the Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, to the Senate with a record turnout for a runoff election—facilitated by vote-by-mail—showed that our pluralistic democracy has considerable underlying strength. I know that many of our Republican members in Georgia were disappointed by the results, but the pickup of two seats in the Peach State does shift control of the Senate to a majority leader who supports the NALC's legislative agenda. Progress on postal reform has been blocked by the former leadership in the Senate for years; now we finally have a chance to mobilize a bipartisan majority in Congress to strengthen the U.S. Postal Service, a beloved institution that binds our nation together in so many ways. In this moment of pandemic fatigue, recession and political polarization, never have such institutions been more important.

I am not naïve. Our society, our economy and our democracy have deep-seated problems that require fundamental reforms. We must work in good faith with each other, recommit ourselves to democratic values, engage in honest debate based on common facts, and find a way to see our fellow Americans as brothers and sisters—despite our differences. That is what we do in the NALC and in the labor movement. And that is what we need to do in the country as a whole.

**We congratulate President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on their inauguration. NALC vows to work with them and both parties in Congress to repair our country and to overcome the general crisis we face. President Biden's capacity to work with leaders in both parties to make progress and build unity is needed now more than ever. We urge congressional leaders to work with him to overcome the poisonous partisanship that has plagued our country for so long.**

I hope that every member of our union will join me in doing our part to heal the deep divisions that led to the tragedy at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. That is how we can move the country forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fredric V. Rolando".