

A farewell message: The members are never wrong



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Over the past 21 years, I've written a monthly officers' column in *The Postal Record* as your director of city delivery, executive vice president and, for almost 14 years, as your national president. I spent the 23 years before that serving as a regional administrative assistant in Region 9, as director of education for the Florida State Association of Letter Carriers, as branch president in Branch 2148, as shop steward in Branches 2148 and 1071, and of course delivering mail in Sarasota and Miami. As I write this column, it's hard to believe that it will be my last one as I retire from my 44-plus-year career in the National Association of Letter Carriers. It may be the most

difficult column to write because it is literally impossible to fully convey the gratitude and love I feel toward the NALC and its members. My days in leadership in our great union are coming to an end, but I will remain a proud letter carrier—and active member in the NALC—for as long as I live.

We have faced various challenges together since I assumed the presidency in 2009. The wonderful retrospective article prepared by the NALC Communications Department (without input from me!) provides a summary of these challenges. It is generous to me beyond measure, though I am certain that all the credit for whatever successes we have had over my years as president are due to the 94 percent of all letter carriers who voluntarily belong to NALC, the thousands of activists who have stepped up to work together for our common benefit, and the countless officers and friends who have served with me over the years. Together, with the assistance of hundreds of current and former staffers of the NALC, our work has made the power of solidarity real in hundreds of thousands of households across the country. I can think of no better way to have lived my working life—for which I will be eternally grateful to all of you.

Of course, NALC will continue to face challenges in the future. In three short months, we will once again enter into negotiations with the Postal Service on a new collective-bargaining agreement with ambitious goals, most notably: better wages and an all-career workforce in order to achieve and maintain proper staffing levels sufficient to ensure that all routes are delivered every day without exceeding contractual work-hour limits. We also will continue our current discussions with the Postal Service regarding measures to protect the safety of letter carriers in the face of a rising wave of on-the-job robberies—with the goal of preventing such robberies, not just investi-

gating them after the fact. Meanwhile, we will continue the work of a variety of NALC/USPS joint task forces dedicated to reforming the USPS's workplace culture, ensuring contractual compliance, maintaining joint route evaluations, reducing new-employee attrition, prioritizing letter carrier safety, monitoring and enhancing delivery operations, and improving the grievance/arbitration process.

Next year, we will have to renew our push to achieve legislation that repeals the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset provisions (which gained majority support in the House of Representatives this year), and that allows federal employees to make retirement deposits to win pension credit for prior non-career service.

Administratively, we will continue our work with the Biden administration to adopt fair allocation methods for the Postal Service's Civil Service Retirement System liabilities via executive action, and to nominate the right people to serve on the USPS Board of Governors and other agencies that affect our members.

I will not be here to lead these efforts, but I am confident that we have the leaders in place to successfully advance them. NALC recently elected new officers, either by consent at the Biennial Convention in Chicago or by voting in the recent mail ballot election. The members' selection of the 28 elected officers for the next four years confirmed what I've always believed: The members are never wrong. Each of these women and men is fully aware of the challenges we face, and each of them is eager and more than qualified to move our union forward.

One of the most important duties of leadership in any organization is to prepare others to lead. I have taken this responsibility seriously—indeed, I have had the opportunity to personally mentor and/or work with each of the newly elected officers over the years, and I couldn't be prouder that the members have selected each of them to serve you in the future. Congratulations to each of them.

Also serving our members is an amazing staff of letter carriers and professionals who work side by side with our officers, along with our dedicated bargaining-unit employees. I want to thank each of them for their friendship, support and commitment to the NALC.

All there is left to do is to say farewell—but not goodbye. It has truly been an honor and a privilege to serve as your national president these past 13-plus years. I've made an enormous number of friends throughout the country in my union life. I truly appreciate the hospitality you've always shown me in my travels. We've been able to accomplish a lot through some trying times, and none of it would have been possible without your support. I want to thank the hundreds of members who have sent kind words and well wishes, the thousands for your friendship, and the tens of thousands for your activism and resolve as we've navigated through our working lives together.

I wish all of you the best of health and look forward to crossing paths in the future. Thank you.