

The best ability is dependability



James D. Henry

I want to thank President Fredric Rolando for placing his trust and confidence in me to represent the National Association of Letter Carriers membership as vice president. I would also like to thank my union brother Lew Drass for his years of mentorship, friendship and service to NALC, and wish him nothing but the best in all his endeavors and retirement. I am humbled, grateful and honored to continue to meet the obligation and have the privilege to serve my union brothers and sisters as the NALC vice president.

I began my career as a letter carrier in Pomona, CA, on Feb. 22, 1988, after completing my initial active-duty enlistment in the U.S.

Marine Corps, from which I later retired as a gunnery sergeant after 22 years. I've been a proud dues-paying NALC member for more than 34 years.

My path to becoming an active member in the union started after I was unjustly disciplined. Thanks to the outstanding representation afforded me through Branch 1100, especially by Charlie Miller, my case was resolved to my complete satisfaction. Thereafter, I knew I couldn't stand by and see letter carriers treated unfairly. I became a shop steward in 1988 and my calling of representing began. I've been very fortunate to come from a lineage of great leaders, which has only enhanced my natural desire to serve as our brothers' and sisters' keeper.

I've been blessed to gain extensive experience and represent carriers in an array of positions throughout my career. In 1991, I became an area steward for Branch 1100. In 1995, I completed the NALC arbitration advocate training and became an arbitration advocate for the national business agent (NBA) office. I have been presenting cases in arbitration ever since. In 1998, I was appointed to serve as a NALC Step B representative. In 1999, I became a full-time officer and served as vice president for Branch 1100, and then senior vice president in 2008. In January 2011, I was appointed regional administrative assistant (RAA) by President Rolando. During my tenure as RAA, I oversaw six Dispute Resolution teams, conducted dozens of interventions, negotiated thousands of prearbitration settlements and presented more than 150 cases in arbitration. I have also negotiated hundreds of local contracts (LMOUs). Additionally, in 2015 I was selected by Lew Drass as a facilitator/instructor for the Advanced Formal A and Beyond classes and the arbitration advocate trainings.

I firmly believe that the very essence of a union is to unify: i.e., join together, become one force. To achieve that end, its members must be willing and able to see each other as one in the same cause. This sometimes necessitates validating your convictions by fighting for your rights and for each other. As Theodore Roosevelt said, "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best, knows the triumph of achievement; and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

NALC as an organization has epitomized being the "keepers of its brothers and sisters." Every negotiated contract, political endorsement and executive decision has been made with the fundamental principle of ensuring that there is a worthwhile job not only for past and present letter carriers, but for those yet to be born. It's simple: Because we have been in the "arena" fighting and standing up for one another, we have known victory. If we expect to have a work environment that is aligned with the philosophy of "one for all and all for one" at our worksites, we as individuals must be in the arena. I commit to all of you that I will be in the arena fighting for you and fighting alongside you!

I strongly believe that "the best ability is dependability." The profile of a courageous person is doing the right thing because it is right under an unpopular atmosphere or circumstance. It may be difficult to stand up in an adversarial atmosphere between labor and management, but we must be that profile of courage—trustworthy and reliable. We must be able to depend on each other. I commit to you that, as your vice president, you can depend on me to employ my teachings as a Marine of "esprit de corps," to have your backs like vertebrates!

My desire is not that of advancement for self-aggrandizement, but for the advancement of the NALC agenda and ultimately of the membership. My interest is that of service toward the goal of justice for all. This moment, for me, serves as an opportunity to reach beyond the imagination, an opportunity to offer innovative solutions to challenges and problems. It has provided me an opportunity for further growth and expansion beyond measure. I recognize it not merely as a valued experience but as one of the highest-ranking lifetime achievements. Therefore, I will faithfully continue the work that begun with my predecessor. I look forward to the mission ahead and to being in further service to NALC and the membership.