

Aggressive representation



**Mack I.
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This is my first article for *The Postal Record* as your newly elected assistant secretary-treasurer, and I want to start by wishing everyone a prosperous and healthy new year. I hope this past holiday season was an enjoyable one for you, with a chance to step back and spend some quality time with your family. As letter carriers, we work hard and deserve each and every chance we get to relax and get away from the fast-paced and often hostile environment of our workplace.

I also want to start off by thanking all of you for the awesome opportunity to serve you in this

capacity. I am truly honored and humbled to be in a position to represent all of the members of our great union on a full-time basis.

You should know that this is a bittersweet moment for me, as I had to step down as president of Branch 11 in Chicago after serving there for 13 years. As excited as I am about this new beginning, I am equally torn about leaving a branch where we had accomplished so much. I look forward to bringing the same passion, energy and “aggressive representation” to my new position, which I believe made us relatively successful in my home branch where I began my postal career.

My career as a union representative started innocently enough as a union steward in an office where no one else wanted the job. I started with the Postal Service in 1997, and by 2001, I was a steward to about 100 carriers at the Chicago Lawn station on Chicago’s South Side. Although labor is in my blood—both my parents were union reps in their respective jobs—this was not something that I was seeking while working for the Postal Service. I just wanted to provide for my family. But I was compelled to get involved in the union because of the bullying and mistreatment of some of my co-workers by management. You know, they always seem to prey on the weak—those who are hesitant to speak up and/or don’t know their rights. (Of course in the Postal Service, if you don’t know your rights, you don’t have any.)

By 2006, when I was accepted to the second class of the NALC Leadership Academy, I was all in. But it was my time at the Academy that was the game changer for me.

The Academy opened my eyes to so much more than just the daily battles in the trenches on the workroom floor. I realized that the Postal Service needed the NALC as much as letter carriers needed it. If this company was to be saved from itself, it would require some advocacy that it was not willing or able to provide. It also gave me a vision for a better local union—a union where our members were united for a common cause with an expectation of strong leadership and representation.

In 2008, I was appointed a regional administrative assistant in Region 3 by then-President Bill Young. It was there that I was trained on arbitration advocacy and workplace intervention. So in 2010, I decided to go back to Chicago to help improve our local union. It was then that we developed the philosophy of “aggressive representation.” Understand, we were not seeking physical or verbal altercations on the workroom floor, we just were not going to react passively.

That simply means that we were bringing a proactive, passionate and relentless approach to representing our members, every day! We believed our members should work in an environment free of hostility and harassment, and we were actively working to remove from the workroom floor those who violated the Joint Statement of Violence. We also aggressively worked to enforce every other provision within our National Agreement, and to improve our local memorandums of understandings. That is the kind of passion and fight I believe we should have as union activists and representatives. And that is what I bring to you as your next assistant secretary-treasurer.

For the past four and a half years, I also had the honor of serving as a national trustee for the NALC. I believe that will be advantageous in my new position, because of the broad perspective I have on all entities in our union, and because of the fiduciary responsibilities of the assistant secretary-treasurer position. NALC rules require me to step down now from that trustee role. Fortunately, I will be able to continue in my other role as a trustee for Nalcrest. I had the chance to visit our “retirement village” right before the holidays, and there are plenty of good reasons that the waiting list is two years long.

In closing, I congratulate my fellow officers of the Executive Council on their election and/or reelection, and I look forward to working with President Brian Renfro on ways to improve the working conditions of our brothers and sisters on the workroom floor. In my next article, I will explore more of the duties of the assistant secretary-treasurer. Until then, I leave you in truth and solidarity.