

Where would we be without NALC?



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As of the publishing of this column, NALC will have entered a new era with the installation of its 19th president, Brian L. Renfro. With this transition comes excitement and expectation for what the future will bring. Undoubtedly, there's a level of anticipation as to what accomplishments NALC will achieve for letter carriers. Looking forward, one thing is for certain—the future will bring with it new concerns for letter carriers. Fortunately, NALC is as poised as ever to address and overcome any challenges on behalf of letter carriers and its members. However, we would be remiss to not take a moment to explore where we would be without NALC.

By pausing to look through the rearview mirror, one can begin to understand the triumphs made through the efforts of NALC on behalf of letter carriers and, in many cases, for working families in general. From the dawn of its existence in 1889, NALC has had a huge impact on the rights and benefits of workers. Bettering the working lives of letter carriers and righting previous wrongs has been at the forefront of NALC's agenda from the beginning.

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Almost immediately after NALC was organized, the confrontations began with the Post Office Department. To put things in context, it is worth mentioning that for close to its first century of existence, there was no collective-bargaining process for NALC. To attain any gains for letter carriers, NALC had to lobby Congress and pursue legislative recourse. However, NALC remained steadfast in its commitment, despite the uphill battles it faced, to secure many of the benefits that letter carriers still enjoy to this day.

It was not until after the Great Postal Strike of 1970 that NALC won collective-bargaining rights in the representation of its members. Following the strike, the Postal Reorganization Act was signed into law in 1970, paving the way for contract negotiations. Since the first such negoti-

ations in 1971 between NALC and the U.S. Postal Service, nine contracts have been negotiated by the parties and ratified by the membership. During that same period, six other contracts have been awarded by arbitration panels.

NALC has been fortunate over its history to have the right person at the right time to lead our great union during critical junctures. There has never been a more compelling example of this than the presidency of Fredric V. Rolando, as displayed daily through his leadership and guidance during his tenure. The legacy he leaves behind will surely remain a remarkable bookmark in NALC history; a few defining moments bear mentioning.

One of his most notable accomplishments was spearheading the passage by Congress and the signing into law of the Postal Reform Act. The 12-year, hard-fought battle ended with great strides toward strengthening the financial stability and long-term viability of the Postal Service, thereby substantially improving the plight of letter carriers and all postal employees. Highlighted in the act was relieving the Postal Service of the onerous requirement to pre-fund future retiree health benefit costs, requiring six-day delivery, and integrating Medicare.

Navigating both NALC and the Postal Service through the financial repercussions of the 2008 Great Recession was another noteworthy feat. The decline in mail volume drastically affected postal revenue, imposing a serious financial strain on the Postal Service. I would venture to say that the outcome would not have been nearly as favorable had it not been for President Rolando's steady hand on the wheel.

Toward the end of his administration, President Rolando was faced with protecting the safety of hundreds of thousands of letter carriers and other postal employees, as well as officers and staff of NALC, during a worldwide pandemic, the likes of which had not been experienced for a hundred years. His tireless efforts and relentless demands for safety protocols most definitely resulted in the saving of countless lives.

The accomplishments are too many to recite. In addition, President Rolando's unwavering dedication to NALC and his steadfast devotion to the membership manifest themselves in his very being.

NALC has been blessed to be able to help craft the history of which letter carriers are the beneficiary. With their unity, solidarity, selfless dedication and hard work, the new leaders of NALC will continue the union's quest to elevate letter carriers.

For more information on the history of NALC, see *Carriers in a Common Cause: A History of Letter Carriers and the NALC*, which can be found on the NALC website or through the NALC Supply Department or online store.