

Empowered solidarity



Brian L. Renfro

I am thankful to the members of our union for electing me to serve as NALC's 19th president. I am also humbled by their confidence in me and the other 27 national officers to lead our union over the next four years. I speak for all 28 of us in expressing our excitement and optimism about the future of NALC and its members.

I learned about letter carriers, the Postal Service, and our union at a very young age. My father, Ken, started as a letter carrier in my hometown of Hattiesburg, MS, in 1977, three years before I was born. Unbeknownst to me as a kid, the opportunity to grow up around

letter carriers and their families planted a seed that would later grow into my passion for our union and for representing our members.

In college, I was the student who never could pinpoint what I wanted to do as an adult. When I was hired as a letter carrier in my early 20s, I didn't even know if that was what I wanted to do long term. I soon started attending branch meetings, attended a Region 8 training led by then-National Business Agent Lew Drass—and my life changed forever. Upon returning home from the training, I volunteered to be the shop steward in my station. I'm forever grateful to two now happily retired former leaders in Branch 938, Winfred Johnston and Larry Morgan, for giving me that first opportunity to serve our union.

The feeling of finding my life-long passion is something I will never forget. The realization that our union would enable me to fight for all letter carriers to have a good middle-class career and a dignified retirement just like my father had continues to motivate me to this day.

Our union has a proud history. From its founding in 1889 to the wildcat strike in 1970, we have often celebrated our past. Each of my predecessors has embraced our history while moving our union forward. The 28 national officers elected in 2022 intend to do the same.

While the 28 of us have the responsibility to lead at the national level, it takes all of us. The successes of our past have been the result of all of us coming together to harness the strength of empowered solidarity. It starts with

the fact that we are the most well-organized union in the labor movement—with 93 percent voluntary membership—an anomaly in the broader labor movement.

In my speech at NALC's installation of officers on Dec. 17, I said:

"We have the force of empowered solidarity in the NALC, thanks to the unity and commitment of our 285,000 members. For that I am eternally grateful."

That empowered solidarity is created by the hard work and togetherness of our staff at NALC Headquarters—both our letter carrier and professional staff. It is fueled by our bargaining-unit employees who work every day to keep our union running, including many of the processes and information that our regional offices and branches rely on daily.

The dedicated women and men at the NALC Health Benefit Plan and the Mutual Benefit Association come to work every day, and together they provide the insurance benefits that were created by letter carriers for letter carriers.

In our regional offices, NALC's regional administrative assistants, full-time advocates, legislative and political organizers, regional grievance assistants, regional office assistants and regional workers' compensation assistants work long hours to represent our members.

Our state associations are a key part of the network that advances our legislative and political interests that are very important for our future.

The branch level is where the rubber meets the road when it comes to the representation of our members. Branch officers, shop stewards and all others who have stepped up to take on the often thankless responsibility of representing letter carriers are the core of what we do as a union.

Most importantly, our empowered solidarity is created by all of us—the members of NALC, active and retired alike, standing and moving forward together. You are our strength and will continue to be, as you have for the last 133 years.

My job is to lead and guide our union into the future. As we begin our next chapter on the heels of a pandemic, intense public scrutiny and the satisfaction of having finally achieved postal reform, and as we prepare for another round of bargaining, I am eternally grateful to our members for choosing me to serve as your president. My duty is to empower you so that we can all stand together, no matter our respective responsibilities, and create that force of empowered solidarity. My promise to you is that I will work to do just that every day.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, likely belonging to Brian L. Renfro.