

Making progress at the bargaining table and beyond



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On Feb. 22, we officially opened negotiations for NALC's 16th contract with the Postal Service. Our Executive Council and Headquarters staff have been busy preparing for these negotiations for quite some time. Thanks to their dedication and hard work, I am proud to report that NALC is in a strong position to bargain for our next agreement. I am confident that we are prepared and positioned to fight for an agreement that will reward our members for their contributions to the Postal Service.

Our goals for this contract, which you can read more about in this magazine's cover story on page 4, are guided by what we have heard from you. We are pursuing strategies and initiatives based on resolutions passed at previous conventions. Additionally, we read every letter that comes to NALC Headquarters, and we appreciate your opinions and ideas. Please know that we keep them top of mind in our preparations for negotiations. As always, we're here to serve you, so please keep the good ideas coming.

With collective bargaining underway, NALC certainly has busy weeks and months ahead of us; however, there still are several other ongoing priorities that we are actively working to address. I want to update you on several of them.

USPS Board of Governors and Postal Service leadership

Two members of the nine-person USPS Board of Governors (BOG) are serving in holdover years for their terms that expired on Dec. 8, 2022. Capt. Lee Moak's and William Zollars's hold-over terms expire on Dec. 8, 2023.

We are hopeful that President Biden will renominate our union brother, Capt. Moak. Stability at the BOG and the Postal Service's leadership is key for NALC, especially during contract negotiations.

Postmaster General DeJoy's support was instrumental in finally achieving the postal reform legislation that was enacted last year, and he has been open to hearing from NALC on many key issues.

Segal Report

For years, we have encouraged the administration to implement the recommendations of the 2010 Segal Report commissioned by the Postal Regulatory Commission that called on the Office of Personnel Management to accurately value the Postal Service's pension assets and liabilities. We have continued to meet with the Biden administration to request executive action on this top priority for NALC. This is the next step needed to ensure the long-term financial stability of USPS and our jobs.

Investment strategy for Postal Service's retirement funds

We are in the early stages of conversations with a bipartisan group of lawmakers regarding the investment of the Postal Service's retirement funds, the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits (RHB) Fund.

Currently, the funds are invested in low-yield Treasury bonds. NALC is proposing to diversify the investment portfolio with stocks and bonds by purchasing Thrift Savings Plan-style index funds, which could yield hundreds of millions of dollars more annually. Previous proposals would shift funds from the RHB. While this will be a complicated and likely time-consuming process, I am pleased to hear lawmakers' interest in addressing this issue.

Federal Retirement Fairness Act

As I write this article, the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (FRFA), a key piece of our legislative agenda, has yet to be introduced in the 118th Congress. FRFA would allow certain federal employees, including letter carriers who spent time as non-career employees—such as casuals, transitional employees or city carrier assistants—to make catch-up contributions for time spent in these non-career positions.

While the FRFA has garnered increasing bipartisan support in recent years, it has been difficult to move the legislation forward due to the high price tag. NALC is actively working with the bill's authors and the relevant House committees to ensure that the version of the FRFA introduced in the 118th Congress is set up for maximum success.

Social Security Fairness Act

The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) was reintroduced in the House on Jan. 9. As I write this article, the bipartisan bill already has 151 co-sponsors. The legislation, which would repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), which are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce or sometimes eliminate Social Security benefits for millions of federal annuitants, including CSRS retirees, has been a longtime priority for NALC. I remain focused on utilizing our resources to continue growing bipartisan support for this bill.

Crimes against letter carriers

Alarming, crimes against letter carriers have been on the rise in recent months. As I have said many times, these attacks are appalling and must be stopped. No letter carrier should fear for his or her life while on the job. NALC is actively engaging with all the stakeholders, including postal management, the Postal Inspection Service, the Office of Inspector General and law enforcement, on potential solutions that will protect us. We must hear from all those involved to reach a consensus on actionable steps to implement that will keep us safe on our routes.

Overall, it is certainly a busy and important time for our union. I look forward to what we will accomplish for NALC members at the bargaining table and beyond.