

# California carriers hold rallies to raise awareness of crime

**C**hanting “Enough is enough!” letter carriers from two California branches held rallies in October to highlight the surge in criminal attacks on letter carriers that is occurring nationwide.

“Everyone is here today because enough is enough,” Region 1 National Business Agent Keisha Lewis told dozens of Garden Grove Branch 1100 letter carriers and other postal workers at a rally outside Compton’s main post office on Oct. 4. “When I got hired, it was unheard of for a letter carrier to be approached or attacked by anyone, and this has to stop.”

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe, agreed, telling attendees, “The Postal Service was founded nearly 250 years ago, and since then, letter carriers have been able to walk down even the meanest streets of this country without many problems. Unfortunately, that’s no longer the case.”

The change began in the COVID-19 pandemic’s early days, when valuable contents flowed through the mail stream, such as stimulus checks. That, in turn, led to elaborate check-washing schemes.

“One of the things that’s very concerning is that a lot of these crimes seem to be organized,” he told a reporter in Compton. “So, you’ve got the people who are robbing letter carriers, not necessarily the people who are utilizing those checks once they get their hands on them. So, there’s a number of layers to it.

“This problem is growing, not just here in Compton, not just here in Southern California, but around the entire country,” Renfroe added. “Nearly every single day, we hear of additional incidents of violence against our members. Think about this: Targeted armed

robberies, assaults, shootings and even murder have become part of our job.”

NALC is leading the call for strong action that will stop the trend.

“Over the past several weeks, we’ve had [rallies] like this in Chicago,” Renfroe said. “We’ve had events in Cincinnati to bring attention to these violent attacks against our members. And that’s why we’re here once again tonight, to send a very clear message. This violence against our members has to stop.”

He told the media covering the rally that since 2020, there have been more than 2,000 violent attacks on letter carriers. Of that, only about 14 percent have been prosecuted federally, he said adding to the audience, “Let that sink in.”

“You know what that tells me? That there’s a strong message being sent that 86 percent of the people who do this get away with it, and that has to change,” he said.

Eight days later, Greater East Bay Branch 1111 organized a rally in Oakland to spread the word in the Bay Area.

“We have lost some employees. They have resigned after being robbed,” Branch 1111 President **Ed Fletcher** told the attendees on Oct. 12. “Some of them are still out and have not come back because of the post-traumatic stress of being robbed.”

In Oakland, Renfroe repeated his call for the community to help protect letter carriers. Even though letter carriers are federal employees and crimes against letter carriers performing their duties are federal crimes, the prosecutions that have occurred have often been at the local level, watering down sentences compared to the penalties available to prosecutors.

It takes a joint investigation among the Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. attorney general’s office and a local



**NALC President Brian L. Renfroe and Region 1 National Business Agent Keisha Lewis helped lead the rally in Compton.**

police force to hand over the case to federal prosecutors. That, combined with the low number of such cases being prosecuted in the first place, leaves much to be desired in terms of deterring potential lawbreakers who aim to attack letter carriers.

“When these crimes are not prosecuted, it sends a message to criminals that they can get away with robbing a letter carrier,” President Renfroe said.

“I am furious that our members continue to be targeted and harmed with no end in sight,” he said. “I have said many times that there is no single solution to this disturbing problem, but more can be and must be done, and it must be done immediately.

“Every employer has a duty and obligation to protect its employees on the job. The Postal Inspection Service is not protecting us, and the U.S. Department of Justice is not doing its job prosecuting these crimes,” he added.

In a positive sign, two days before the Oakland rally, the U.S. attorney of Northern California and U.S. postal inspector in charge announced the indictments of 10 people involved with the theft of postal keys, mail truck



break-ins, assaults on letter carriers and other criminal acts involving the interference with the delivery of mail. They also raised the reward for information leading to arrests and convictions in such cases to \$150,000 from \$50,000.

“For folks who are out there threatening letter carriers, committing these robberies, stealing these keys, we will charge these cases federally and there will be severe consequences,” U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California Ismail J. Ramsey said.

“To any copycats or wannabes out there who might consider robbing a postal worker, I ask you to consider the years you will face in federal prison, the price on your head, and that postal inspectors will not stop hunting you. The proceeds of this crime are not worth your freedom,” Postal Inspector in Charge Rafael Nuñez said.

In addition to federal prosecution, President Renfroe has called on the USPS Inspection Service to increase its efforts at preventing these violent attacks before they occur.

“Postal inspectors and postal police officers work diligently to investigate and prevent instances of violence against our employees,” he said, “and yet, current methods of prevention clearly are not working. The situation is worsening.”

Renfroe called on the Inspection Service’s leaders to do more: “Times have drastically changed, and methods for protecting our members while we do our job must reflect the current circumstances.”



President Renfroe joins members of Garden Grove Branch 1100 at the Compton rally (above) and with members of Greater East Bay Branch 1111 at the Oakland rally (top).

The rallies are part of NALC’s effort to get out a multifaceted message—to the Postal Service to better protect letter carriers on their routes; to residents to alert authorities if they see anything worrisome and to preserve evidence, such as doorbell or other surveillance videos, for use by investigators; to their elected representatives to be aware of the need for solutions; and to locally based federal prosecutors to take these cases and apply the more harsh federal penalties that local prosecutors do not have available.

Another way NALC is getting the message out is through regional TV broadcasts, radio shows and print articles about the rash of violence nationwide. Bringing the letter carrier perspective to these media reports increases community awareness of the issue and helps strengthen NALC’s

call for solutions. That is especially so because of the widespread public support for letter carriers, who in poll after poll have for years topped the list of the most trusted and highly regarded federal employees.

President Renfroe called on local branches to hold rallies such as the initial four. Branch leaders are encouraged to contact their national business agents’ offices for information and material to help organize a rally or for help contacting the media to amplify our message to their communities.

“Events like these make a difference and bring awareness to this growing problem. I encourage all NALC branches, especially in areas that are experiencing an uptick in crime, to mobilize and plan similar events,” he said. “When we all come out with a unified message, we are heard.” **PR**