

# National rap session

## Collective bargaining is a collective effort

**M**ore than a thousand NALC branch and state leaders representing letter carriers from across the country gathered in Cleveland, OH, Nov. 21-23 for NALC's 2025 National Conference, commonly called a "rap session." The *NALC Constitution* requires the national president to convene a national conference in non-convention years, attended by state and branch presidents or their designees.

In between registration and workshops, attendees had the opportunity to learn more about the programs NALC offers and to meet the letter carrier and professional staff that operate them in the exhibit hall, which featured the Disaster Relief Foundation, Emergency Response Team, Health Benefit Plan, Letter Carrier Political Fund, Mutual Benefit Association, Nalcrest and the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

### Roundtable discussions with collective-bargaining subcommittees

Saturday's schedule was devoted to workshops presented by NALC's six collective-bargaining subcommittees,

composed of Executive Council members and letter carrier staff. Throughout the day, attendees heard from each group and learned about the articles of the National Agreement they are working on, as well as the ideas and proposals the subcommittees have discussed so far. Committees explained how they consider proposals from all angles to assess how each idea could positively or negatively affect members in different areas of the country, at different sized offices, and at all steps of the pay scale.

A significant portion of each presentation was devoted to attendee questions and feedback. Any attendee could ask the subcommittee questions, and most importantly, offer suggestions for the subcommittee to consider as it continues to meet leading up to the opening of contract negotiations with USPS in February 2026. Subcommittee members heard the feedback, took notes, and will take these suggestions back as they continue working on their bargaining proposals.

Workshops featured:

- Director of Health Benefits Stephanie Stewart, Region 4 National Busi-



NALC President Brian L. Renfroe welcomes branch leaders from around the country to Cleveland, OH, for the rap session.

ness Agent (NBA) Dan Versluis, Region 9 NBA Eddie Davidson and Assistant to the President for Contract Administration Danielle Fake-Moorman covering Article 10—Leave, Article 11—Holidays, Article 16—Discipline Procedure and Appendix B—Section 1 of the 2013 Das Award.

- Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr. and Region 10 NBA Shawn Boyd covering Article 13—Assignment of Ill or Injured Regular Workforce Employees, Article 14—Safety and Health and Article 35—Employee Assistance Program.

On Saturday, roundtable discussions were held by each of the bargaining subcommittees for members to ask questions and offer suggestions.



Attendees were given either a red or black wristband to know which discussion to attend on Saturday, so that they could be part of the discussion about all of the National Agreement articles.

- Director of Retired Members Dan Toth, Region 2 NBA Nick Vafiades, Region 5 NBA David Teegarden, Region 14 NBA Rick DiCecca, National Trustee Charlie Heege and Assistant to the President for Contract Administration Greg Dixon covering Article 5—Prohibition of Unilateral Action, Article 15—Grievance-Arbitration Procedure, Article 17—Representation and Article 31—Union-Management Cooperation.
- Vice President James Henry, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack Julion, Region 6 NBA David Mudd, Region 15 NBA Bruce Didriksen and Assistant to the President for Administrative Affairs Ron Osborne covering Article 4—Technological and Mechanization Changes, Article 8—Hours of Work and Article 41—Letter Carrier Craft.
- Director of Life Insurance Jim Yates, Region 3 NBA Mike Caref, Region 11 NBA Mark Camilli, Region 12 NBA Brian Thompson and Assistant to the President for City Delivery Stephen Stewart covering Article 7—Employee Classifications, Article 12—Principles of Seniority, Posting and Reassignments and Article 26—Uniforms and Work Clothes.
- Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine, Region 13 NBA Vada Preston, National Trustee Sandy Laemmel and Assistant to the President for Contract Administration Jazzy Correa covering Article 1—Union Recognition, Article 2—Non-Discrimination and Civil Rights, Article 20—Parking, Article 22—Bulletin Boards, Article 23—Rights of Union Officials to Enter Postal Installations, Article 24—Employees on Leave with Regard to Union

Business, Article 25—Higher Level Assignments, Article 27—Employee Claims, Article 28—Employer Claims, Article 29—Limitation on Revocation of Driving Privileges, Article 30—Local Implementation, Article 33—Promotions, Article 36—Credit Unions and Travel and Article 42—Energy Shortages.

### National rap session

Following a full day of roundtable discussions with the collective-bargaining subcommittees, NALC President Brian L. Renfro called the rap session to order at 8 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 23. Renfro invited Andre Laney, executive vice president of Cleveland, OH Branch 40, to lead the Pledge of Allegiance; Johnny Taylor of Branch 40 to sing the national anthem; and the Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith, interim pastor of the East View United Church of Christ in Shaker Heights, OH, to deliver the invocation.

Renfro then introduced members of the NALC Executive Council, followed by the recognizing of regional administrative assistants (RAAs), Headquarters letter carrier and professional staff, legislative and political organizers (LPOs), regional grievance assistants (RGAs) and regional workers' compensation assistants (RWCAs).

Next, the president laid out the three primary challenges NALC faces in the immediate and long-term future: col-

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

SUPERIOR D

8 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

(Black Wristband)

1:15 a.m. - 3 p.m.

(Red Wristband)

Article 10 - Leave

Article 11 - Holidays

Article 13 - Assignment of Ill or Injured Regular Workforce Employees

Article 14 - Safety and Health

Article 16 - Discipline Procedure

Article 35 - Employee Assistance Program

Appendix B - Section I of the 2013 Das Award (CCA Provisions)

10 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

(Black Wristband)

3:15 a.m. - 5 p.m.

(Red Wristband)

Article 5 - Prohibition of Unilateral Action

Article 15 - Grievance-Arbitration Procedure

Article 17 - Representation

Article 31 - Union-Management Cooperation

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

SUPERIOR C

8 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.

(Red Wristband)

1:15 p.m. - 3 p.m.

(Black Wristband)

Article 4 - Technological and Mechanization Changes

Article 8 - Hours of Work

Article 41 - Letter Carrier Craft

10 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

(Red Wristband)

3:15 p.m. - 5: p.m.

(Black Wristband)

Article 1 - Union Recognition

Article 2 - Non-Discrimination and Civil Rights

Article 7 - Employee Classifications

Article 12 - Principles of Seniority, Posting, and Reassignments

Article 20 - Parking

Article 22 - Bulletin Boards

Article 23 - Rights of Union Officials to Enter Postal Installations

Article 24 - Employees on Leave with Regard to Union Business

Article 25 - Higher-Level Assignments

Article 26 - Uniforms and Work Clothes

Article 27 - Employee Claims

Article 28 - Employer Claims

Article 29 - Limitation on Revocation of Driving Privileges

Article 30 - Local Implementation

Article 33 - Promotions

Article 36 - Credit Unions and Travel

Article 42 - Energy Shortages

lective bargaining, what has unfolded in 2025 and the fights ahead, and the state of the Postal Service.

### Collective bargaining

Renfro began by detailing NALC's extensive ongoing collective-bargaining preparations. He explained that the bargaining subcommittees have met weekly since early September to go



## Rap session (continued)

through their assigned articles, review national convention resolutions, consider other union contracts and form proposals. “But we wanted to provide them with more information,” he said. Renfroe then explained that providing them with member suggestions was a top priority, and he detailed the various ways NALC is soliciting feedback from members to use in collective-bargaining preparations.

The first are ideas submitted from the Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees. Rank and file committees were established by President Renfroe in September to provide comprehensive feedback and suggestions from letter carriers on the workroom floor. The first group convened in September, and the second group is scheduled to meet in January 2026. The committees are comprised of branch leaders, contract enforcers, and newer members selected by President Renfroe at the recommendations of national business agents.

“They came up with some of their own concepts,” Renfroe said. “On the

economic front, we had an excellent discussion with them about priorities.”

Since then, the subcommittees have used the first Rank-and-File Bargaining Committee’s ideas and suggestions as they continue to form bargaining proposals related to their articles. The president said that the second Rank-and-File Bargaining Committee’s suggestions will be incorporated into the subcommittee’s ongoing work.

Renfroe then explained that in the coming weeks, a survey will be distributed to all active NALC members, allowing them to share their thoughts and priorities on both the economic and workroom floor elements of collective bargaining. Finally, the president emphasized that the national rap session is another key opportunity to get feedback on collective-bargaining preparations. “What we’ve done here this weekend, and we’ll do the rest of this morning, is a very important piece of our preparation,” he said. “All of this information will be used by the end of January as our subcommittees finalize the drafts of their proposals for bargaining.”

Renfroe next turned to discussing the economic side of bargaining, explaining that all members of the Executive Council share the same economic goals, including higher pay across the entire pay scale, higher general wage increases, equal cost-of-living increases for every step, a shorter time to reach top step, and an all-career workforce. The council must consider how to achieve them through what all recog-

nize will be a difficult set of negotiations with the Postal Service.

Crucial to the economic preparation is information about which goals members would like the Executive Council to prioritize. To this end, Renfroe shared that NALC solicited a poll of members in September to understand their economic priorities in the upcoming negotiations. The Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees and upcoming member survey will also help with this exercise. The president encouraged members in attendance to share their opinions on these priorities during the “rap” portion of the day’s program.

### Fighting like hell in 2025

Renfroe then pivoted to all that had unfolded in 2025, starting in February with the union’s first “Fight Like Hell!” event in Washington, DC, teeing up the many battles in the year ahead.

Renfroe reminded attendees that only a few weeks after launching the union’s “Fight Like Hell!” campaign, the administration threatened to issue an executive order restructuring the Postal Service, ultimately threatening letter carriers’ jobs and retirements, as well as the institution’s future.

He detailed the many ways the union had fought back in Washington and with our activists nationwide, culminating on March 23 when NALC held more than 250 rallies to raise public awareness of the imminent threats to the Postal Service. He credited “the most active membership of any union in this country” for successfully fighting against these attacks. “Nobody else has the influence; nobody else has the resources; certainly nobody else has the activism and the numbers of members that we do,” he said.

More than 1,000 NALC members attended the rap session.





The president then pivoted to Postal Service leadership, referencing the administration's pushing of former Postmaster General Louis DeJoy out of his position earlier this year. Following DeJoy's departure, at the urging of private shippers, the USPS Board of Governors selected David Steiner as the next postmaster general. Although he has been in the position only a few months, and it is unclear what, if any, significant changes Steiner will make, this selection "illustrates the power of the influence of corporate America, and in our case, corporate America in the shipping industry," Renfro said.

The president then turned to another battle: the budget reconciliation fight that unfolded this summer. He referred to it as a "fight that was more intense than any fight in the 15 years I've been at NALC Headquarters."

Renfro reminded attendees that in this one-party-controlled process, letter carriers' retirement benefits were under attack. Various proposals that would have reduced letter carriers' retirement benefits or increased what they pay for them were considered throughout the process. Working together, and answering NALC's calls to action, letter carriers successfully defeated all these proposals, thereby saving their retirement benefits and those of millions of other federal employees.

Renfro emphasized that more fights remain. The threats of stopping dues collection through payroll deduction and the elimination of official time, or

"steward time," are still lingering. While there is no current appetite or clear path forward for these ideas in the current Congress, Renfro emphasized that "it's a clear intention."

"We've been successful on all fronts, but have prepared for any outcome," President Renfro said. He assured attendees that legally, financially and representation-wise, NALC is prepared for any attacks that come our way.

"The influence of our union in the legislative and political arena is larger than it's ever been before," he said, "but we have to push to continue to grow our influence long term." He then explained recent departmental changes and additions that will help achieve that, including two new LPOs, with more to be added soon; a new director of legislative and political affairs, Paul Swartz; and the appointment of John Beaumont from San Francisco, CA Branch 214 to serve in a new position, special assistant to the president for legislative and political affairs.

### State of USPS

Prompted by the release of the Postal Service's Fiscal Year 2025 financial results only the week before, Renfro then turned to another fight coming NALC's way, concerning the future of the Postal Service. "The path forward is not clear," he warned, due to years of decreasing volume, lack of invest-



Attendees show off "Fight Like Hell!" T-shirts (above), which they were encouraged to wear to the rap session held on Sunday (top).

ment in the network, and a deteriorating balance sheet.

He gave an overview of the financial results, noting that the 2025 loss of \$9 billion brought the Postal Service's three-year total losses to \$25 billion. He contextualized the losses within technological and market changes in the postal sector, emphasizing that the changes have fundamentally altered the Postal Service's financial outlook. Total mail volume has declined by 49 percent since its peak in 2006, while the network has grown by 24 million delivery points (more than 16 percent). Today, Renfro explained, "we have more delivery points to deliver less mail, and therefore less revenue."

Another issue exposed in the Postal Service's financial results is the agency's lack of cash to invest in modernizing its infrastructure to be able to handle today's e-commerce business, which is particularly important given the stiff competition the Postal Service



## Rap session (continued)

faces in parcel delivery. The financial results also revealed that the Postal Service's parcel volume declined by almost 6 percent in 2025, likely due to increased competition from Amazon, which continues to invest in expanding its own delivery network. The Postal Service must modernize, Renfroe said: "Our infrastructure is outdated. Our current processing and delivery networks cannot meet the service needs of our customers."

Renfroe also described how the long-term decline in volume and revenue has forced the Postal Service to make decisions about how to preserve cash to fund operations, pay salaries, and invest in modernizing its network. Since 2014, the agency has defaulted on more than \$32 billion in amortization payments to its Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employee Retirement System accounts, including defaulting on \$3.9 billion in 2025. Renfroe emphasized that no one's retirement benefits are in danger. However, the Postal Service will eventually need to fund these accounts, and the cost to do so will continue to increase each year. By 2032, the Postal Service's annual retirement payments are projected to increase to \$18 billion, absent legislative reform.

Unfortunately, the Postal Service's failure to make these payments has also affected the benefit that legislative impacts can have on postal finances. Even so, Renfroe explained that NALC's legislative goals of investment reform and implementation of the Segal report are still very much worth pursuing, as they will help stabilize the Postal Service in the long term. "Those two things alone will not solve our problems," he explained, but "they must be done, and they will

buy valuable time and money to make investments to modernize our infrastructure."

While there is reason to be concerned about the long-term sustainability of the Postal Service, Renfroe underscored the political dangers of the Postal Service's precarious financial position. "The more immediate danger," he said, "is the opportunities that this current financial situation and the things that we can project in the near future create for those that push for action like privatization and slashing benefits legislatively."

Renfroe pointed to international examples of recent changes to postal services in response to financial crises. Many governments are making changes to their universal service obligations, like reducing delivery frequency or slowing the speed of delivery. For example, the Danish government announced the end of letter mail delivery altogether at the beginning of this year and the Canadian government announced the end of door delivery in September. No matter what the change, Renfroe explained that in nearly every case service worsens and jobs are cut.

How do we avoid these changes and protect letter carrier jobs? Renfroe

presented a three-prong approach: We continue to advocate for the policy changes we need, we keep pushing the Postal Service on service improvements and smart investment in modernization, and, most importantly, the Postal Service's business model must change. "We have to be part of developing what the Postal Service's business looks like in the future," Renfroe said, adding that he will be convening a group of members to explore what this new business model should be.

"Of course, for us," he continued, "a business model that values letter carriers and protects our jobs is of utmost importance and at the top of the list."

Renfroe ended his remarks by returning to collective bargaining, announcing that NALC will launch a comprehensive campaign related to bargaining early next year. It will include a national day of action, similar to the one organized in March of this year. "The public supports us in virtually everything we do. We have to be strategic about what's going on and how they can help us," he said.

Renfroe then moved to the "rap" portion, answering attendees' questions. To see videos from the two-day conference, go to [nalc.org/2025rap](https://nalc.org/2025rap) or scan the QR code below. **PR**



Branch leaders take the opportunity to ask President Renfroe questions after his prepared remarks.

