

# The Reciprocal Agreement/ obtaining a branch checking account



**Nicole  
Rhine**

**A**ll branch officers need to be aware of the Reciprocal Agreement and how it works.

The Reciprocal Agreement applies to all members of the NALC, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. Each union's procedures are slightly different, so representatives should refer to the Reciprocal Agreement handbook.

The Reciprocal Agreement is important as it provides a process that, if acted upon immediately, reduces the number of unintended dues withholding to two unions.

For example, if a clerk who belongs to the APWU transfers to the letter carrier craft and wishes to join the NALC and cancel dues withholding to the APWU, the member should complete the Form 1187 with the "Union Transfer" section completed by circling which union's dues they are requesting be canceled.

Upon receipt of the notation on the Form 1187, the NALC Membership Department will notify the APWU that the member belongs to the NALC and wishes to cancel dues withholding to APWU. In some cases, this can take two or more pay periods. The member may then make copies of paycheck stubs showing dues to both the NALC and the APWU to send to the membership department for review and possible reimbursement of the APWU double dues.

Keep in mind that the Reciprocal Agreement applies *only when the member transfers crafts and is joining another union*. If a member transfers crafts but does not join another union, they must wait until the window period of their anniversary date, per Section 925 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* to cancel their NALC membership. City carrier assistants may also cancel within 10 days after starting another term of non-career employment.

An important point: A change in crafts does not automatically cancel dues withholding to another union, nor is membership automatically transferred from one union to another.

One other important point: Not every letter carrier moving into another postal craft should terminate their NALC membership. If a NALC member changes crafts but still wishes to retain enrollment in the NALC Health Benefit Plan, they must continue membership in the NALC.

For more information, please see the Reciprocal Agreement handbook, which was mailed to every branch. The handbook can also be found on the NALC website from the "Secretary-treasurer" page. Click on the link to "NALC membership and dues."

**Since the passage of the Patriot Act in 2001, opening a checking account can be a trying experience for NALC branches.** Many branch officers have arrived at the bank only to find that they have not taken along the necessary documentation that banks are required to obtain from customers. The bank is required to identify an entity (non-individuals) and verify the entity's existence. Unfortunately, to verify the branch's existence, the bank may require multiple documents, resulting in redundancy of information.

The following is a list of items that NALC branch officers should have with them when opening an account with a different bank:

- The name and address of the branch and the branch's IRS identification number (Employer Identification Number). If you have a Form 990 or 990-EZ, take it with you, as well as an invoice billed to the branch's address.
- NALC and its branches are 501(c)(5) labor organizations, not a 501(c)(3) as many people incorrectly assume. You should print out the IRS Determination Letter available on the website at [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). (Click on the link on the secretary-treasurer page titled "What to do if your branch lost its tax-exempt status.") Although not all banks ask for the same documentation, you should have the letter available and be aware that NALC's Group Exemption Number (GEN) is 0685.
- NALC and its branches are also unincorporated associations. If the bank asks you for articles of incorporation, they are unaware of our status as unincorporated associations and are making the request in error.
- If the branch has bylaws, take a copy along as well as a copy of the *NALC Constitution*. Also take the branch charter if it is available, or a photocopy.
- A resolution must be submitted to the bank to identify the individuals who are authorized to use the branch's bank account. The resolution should include the name, address and position of each person authorized to use the account.

A resolution is separate from the actual signature card, which the bank should provide. Many banks will have a resolution ready which, if the officers are not all present at the bank, you may take with you to have signed and then return to the bank.