

## NALC needs you



**James D. Henry**

**I**n recent years, USPS has been facing challenges that are sometimes difficult for it to manage. The landscape, due to technology and competition, has caused management to sometimes behave in a manner not consistent with our collective-bargaining agreement, thereby adversely affecting the work-room floor by requiring letter carriers to have to work inordinate amounts of overtime. It's NALC's mission to make sure management does not violate the requirement to not exceed the maximum work-hour limit and to maintain a

safe, hazard-free and harmonious work environment. Therefore, the need for NALC to formally address the contract violations and carriers' concerns through the grievance arbitration process has risen exponentially, resulting sometimes in an overwhelming volume of grievances for the local steward.

To face the ever-increasing—and seemingly willful and deliberate—contractual violations, the need for more shop stewards is at an all-time high. I sometimes like to refer to shop stewards as “warriors,” since they are on the front line every day fighting the good fight, representing letter carriers in every way necessary to redress wrongs and ensure that letter carriers' contractual rights are upheld. If you are already a steward, stay encouraged and maintain the line. However, I'm requesting all those who have ever thought about becoming a shop steward to now step up to the plate. If you have not previously considered becoming a shop steward, there is no time like the present.

It is easy for all of us to become comfortable and expect someone else to do the fighting. However, the right thing to do is to get in the ring, stand by, and, with your brothers and sisters, effect change and help uphold the integrity of our National Agreement. Doing the right thing generally means making decisions that are not based on your own personal needs and that don't expand your popularity or enforce your personal beliefs; it means doing what is best for the greater or common good.

**I realize that to become a shop steward would require a commitment. Commitment is a pledge to give your time**

and energy to something or someone you believe in. Practicing commitment is not always easy and requires incredible mental resilience to maintain, particularly in the face of adversity, but we all have the opportunity to live this core value every day. There are few causes more worthy than committing to becoming a shop steward to represent our fellow letter carriers and the values of the NALC.

Shop stewards provide a confidential way for members to bring forward their ideas and concerns. But most importantly, it is a steward's job to inspire, lead and build a sense of unity and solidarity among the wide range of workers in our union. These are some of the qualities of a good union steward:

- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Credibility
- Fairness
- Non-discrimination
- Leadership
- Trustworthiness
- Knowledge



The job of a shop steward is an essential part of the NALC. Shop stewards are important for the well-being of the letter carrier craft. They play the role of an intermediary between the employees and management to ensure the best working conditions and that all parties adhere to

the collective agreements. The duties of a shop steward include organizing workers, representing workers to management, negotiating workers' issues with management, ensuring implementation of agreements, building support for the union, and educating members about its principles.

**The time is now. The NALC wants you. The letter carriers need you.** You might say to yourself: I can't do the job because I don't know what or how to do the job of a shop steward. Have no fear. Anyone who decides to become a shop steward will be provided with the necessary training either through your local union or the national business agent's office. We're all in this together and the more “warriors” we have, the more formidable we become and the more expeditiously issues of the letter carrier craft are addressed.

Who out there will heed the call to stewardship? Who will commit to the greater and common good? Who will do the right thing just because it's right to do? Who will join me along with thousands of other NALC representatives and be willing to stand shoulder to shoulder, back to back, to collectively fight for one another? I hope it's you!