

Bargaining in transition



**Brian L.
Renfro**

One of NALC's most important and impactful missions is to negotiate our collective-bargaining agreement with the Postal Service. Our contract determines our pay, our rights on the job, and is the blueprint for us to work from in our ongoing fight to improve our members' working lives.

As I've mentioned in previous articles, collective bargaining today looks different than it did in years past. It's not an old-school, stuffy process with a series of pre-scheduled meetings. We're constantly bargaining with the Postal Service, whether

an agreement has just been settled or a contract is in its final days. Whether in person, by phone, video call, email, or even text message, we constantly exchange ideas with our counterparts at the Postal Service, regardless of where we are in the negotiation cycle.

We have officially been in negotiations with the Postal Service for our next contract since earlier this year. During that time, we have continued the near-constant exchange of ideas and back-and-forth with our counterparts referenced above. At our national convention this summer, I announced that we were moving forward with selecting an arbitration panel to begin the interest arbitration process. While that work continues—and we are still working with the Postal Service to agree on a neutral arbitrator—regular, everyday bargaining has not stopped.

As our union prepares to install its 28 new national officers next month, including a new president, bargaining has not paused. Negotiations and interest arbitration preparations have continued. NALC's next leader will be fully brought up to speed on where negotiations and arbitration preparations stand when they assume office, and my goal is for them to seamlessly pick up where we left off and determine the best way to proceed.

A change in leadership inevitably means change for our union. There were changes when I assumed office four years ago, just as there were under my predecessors. But I am confident that the central goal of our union will re-

main, because that hasn't wavered since our founding 137 years ago. NALC is, and always will be, about achieving the best possible contract, securing our jobs and retirements, protecting our members on the job, and serving our members in every way possible.

Change could also be on the horizon in Congress. I am writing this article days before the midterm elections. While pollsters and pundits predict Democrats will take control of at least one chamber of Congress, we know anything is possible.

If Democrats assume leadership in the House, Senate or both, Washington will look different next year. If Democrats prevail in the House and the Senate, they will set the legislative agenda for the next two years.

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Regardless of midterm outcomes, NALC will continue to work on both sides of the aisle because, as we all know, what Congress does, or doesn't do, deeply affects us. As we continue to pursue legislation that will guarantee an on-time and fair retirement for letter carriers, protect our members from violent crime on the job, and more, we know the Postal Service's financial situation cannot be ignored.

Securing our jobs and retirements begins with ensuring that we have an operational, financially sound employer. Congress could make meaningful, commonsense changes to help chart the Postal Service's course to financial solvency. Urgent action is needed. As always, NALC will lead those conversations, push for reforms, and ensure that letter carriers' voices are heard as any changes are considered or pursued.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brian L. Renfro'.