NALC 71ST BIENNIAL CONVENTION
JULY 16-20, 2018 • DETROIT, MI

NALC CONVENTION CHRONICLE

Covering the **first session**: Monday, July 16, 2018

President Rolando spoke to delegates about the many difficulties facing letter carriers as a result of the 2016 elections.

'THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME'

The 71st biennial convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers began on Monday, July 16, with a rigorous assessment of the challenges facing letter carriers—especially political, legislative and regulatory—and a call to action by NALC President Fredric Rolando to the 5,000-plus delegates gathered at the Cobo Center in Detroit.

Rolando pointed to Detroit's historic role in building the U.S. labor movement, as well as to the city's ongoing economic rebound from the local ravages of the 2008 Great Recession, as symbols of resilience and resurgence.

"Just as Detroit's comeback is a work in progress, so too is the Postal Service's," Rolando said. Even as USPS has made significant progress in recent years, policy decisions in Washington, DC—including pre-funding and pricing—pose difficulties that need to be addressed.

"Ultimately, the fate of the postal comeback depends on what Congress and the [Postal Regulatory Commission] do on postal reform legislation and rate regulation," he said. "That, in turn, depends on how well we do our jobs at NALC. Starting with the delegates gathered here in Detroit, our task is to educate our members about the issues we face and the tools we have to respond. We must organize letter carriers and mobilize an army of activists to lobby Congress and inspire public support for a strong and vibrant public Postal Service.

"It's a lot of work, but guess what? We can and we will do it."

After Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine convened the convention (below), Detroit Branch 1 President Sandra Laemmel (bottom r) and Region 6 National Business Agent Patrick Carroll (bottom l) welcomed delegates.

PAST AND PRESENT

Shortly after 10 a.m., NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine called the convention to order.

Minneapolis Branch 9 President Mike Zagaros was next on stage to deliver a rousing rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." He was followed by Detroit Branch 1 Vice President Cornell Fears, who led delegates in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Father Ryan Adams of St. Anne Catholic Church gave the invocation.

Rhine then called to the stage Detroit Branch 1 President Sandra Laemmel, who warmly welcomed delegates to her city. She then introduced Detroit Chief of Police and Deputy Mayor James Craig, as well as Detroit Postmaster Derron Bray, who each made brief welcoming remarks.

Next, Rhine introduced the retired national officers in attendance at this year's convention and asked Patrick Carroll, the national business agent for Region 6 (which includes Michigan) to come to the microphone to introduce his fellow NBAs and to acknowledge the union's regional administrative assistants (RAAs), regional workers' compensation assistants (RWCAs) and NALC Headquarters letter carrier staff.

Returning to the lectern, Rhine introduced NALC's resident national officers before calling President Rolando to the microphone to deliver his keynote address.

CHALLENGES IN WASHINGTON

"Elections—they have consequences," Rolando said early in his speech, refer-

NALC President Fredric Rolando delivered his keynote address.

ring to the 2016 elections that put a single party in control of the White House as well as both congressional chambers, not to mention the courts. And those consequences, he said, have been "largely negative for the Postal Service, letter carriers and other American workers. Postal reform has remained stalled and federal employee unions have been targeted by the new administration and its Capitol Hill allies."

Rolando then explained some of the ramifications of those elections:

- The appointment of Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch helped lead to the negative decision in the *Janus vs. AFSCME* case.
- The $2 trillion tax cut is ballooning the federal budget deficit and exposing federal employees' jobs, pay and benefits to potential cuts.
- Executive orders are harming workers with the loss of overtime provisions and are gutting federal employees' union rights.

The Postal Service is not immune from the consequences, with vacancies on the Postal Board of Governors and Postal Regulatory Commission hindering its capabilities. Perhaps most troubling is the creation of an administration task force to develop ways to "restructure" USPS and to examine the definition of universal service.

Months ago, NALC organized a full-throated defense of the Postal Service and its business through the development of a white paper, together with the other three postal unions, that was presented to the task force, President Rolando said. It challenged the White House's assumptions and offered policy recommendations. With the task force's report due in August, NALC is preparing for an expected call for postal privatization.

"But we're not waiting," he said.

NALC mobilized behind the introduction of a bipartisan House resolution that calls on Congress to oppose postal privatization. H.Res. 993 was introduced in Congress by a group of 10 bipartisan House members Monday morning.

"You can count one thing for sure: NALC will be at the center of the fight to preserve and strengthen the Postal Service for the 21st century," Rolando said. He forcefully proclaimed that NALC will work against privatization and deregulation while protecting affordable universal service, the sanctity of the mail, the security of America's mailboxes and letter carriers' rights to collective bargaining. "You can take that to the bank," he thundered, drawing a sustained standing ovation. "And you can take it to the White House!"

But the task force hasn't been the only battlefield. The administration's budgets have targeted federal and postal employee pension and health care, as well as USPS door and Saturday delivery. The Office of Personnel Management requested that Congress cut postal and federal workers' pension benefits. The Government Accountability Office initiated a study of the Mailbox Statute, with United Parcel Service and some Republican leaders in Congress falsely claiming it is an unfair subsidy to USPS. And Congress continues to refuse to lessen the impact on Civil Service Retirement System retirees of the Windfall Benefit Provision and the Government Pension Offset.

"So, as this wide range of legislative and regulatory activity should make clear to all of us, our capacity to lobby and represent letter carriers is crucial," Rolando said. "But at the end of the day, lobbying only goes so far. The best way to influence legislation and policy is to determine who serves in Washington. That requires political organizing and political action."

He added that every election—midterm or otherwise—is vital to our future, active and retired carriers alike.

RISKS, AUDIENCE AND TOOLS

Returning to a message he's delivered far and wide, Rolando spoke about how NALC must convince a bipartisan majority in both chambers of Congress to support letter carriers and the Postal Service.

"Fortunately, at least postal issues are not particularly partisan," he explained. "So we're well-positioned to appeal to our key audience, even in these polarized times. But that alone is not enough—we've also developed the tools to appeal to what matters most to Washington politicians: their desire to be elected and re-elected. That takes votes and money—and we can deliver both."

Rolando added that union members' political diversity is also a strength; because NALC members come from all points on the political spectrum, we can connect with politicians of all stripes.

He pointed to the NALC Member App as a way to help NALC influence votes, through push notifications sent directly to members' smartphones. This communication can help members know NALC's stance on which lawmakers to vote for and against. It also instantly alerts them when Congress is getting ready to vote on important postal matters.

"I urge every delegate to spread the word on the Member App to the carriers in their stations," Rolando said. "Downloading the app is free and easy. Best of all about that app, you can choose the type of communications that you want to receive from the union—making members who are interested in legislation and politics, which right now needs to be everybody, easy to identify and easy to activate."

For the money needed to help friends of letter carriers get elected, NALC relies on the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF), since by law union dues are not used for politics.

"Not everyone wants to donate to a fund that goes to politicians," he said. "But I'll tell you what: If we do our job and educate our members about the risks we face, the audience we must reach and the tools at our disposal, our members will step up and they will take action. We don't need a lot from anybody, we just need a few dollars from a whole lot of our members, and we've got our war chest."

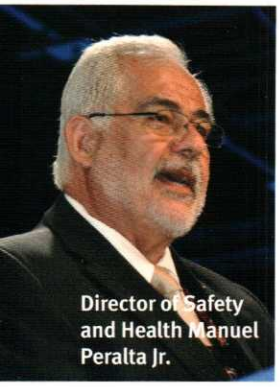
'TREMENDOUS UNITY'

The president's confidence stems from the accomplishments shown to be possible when NALC members stick together, as was the case with the most recent National Agreement. NALC successfully negotiated a contract that met the major goals the union had set for itself:

- Rewarding all city carriers for their exceptional service;
- Narrowing the compensation gap between city carrier assistants (CCAs) and career letter carriers;
- Improving CCAs' prospects for career conversion;

- Providing step advancements for certain former transitional employees; and
- Preserving our protections against contracting out and layoffs.

That agreement was overwhelmingly approved by members. "This tremendous unity within NALC is incredibly gratifying because it will be vital as we prepare for the next round of bargaining," Rolando said, pointing out that negotiations for the next contract will begin in June 2019, and that the union's priorities will be guided by the National Agreement resolutions adopted during this convention.


Director of Safety and Health Manuel Peralta Jr.

President Rolando also discussed the less noticeable work done to strengthen the union by deepening alliances, boosting solidarity within the membership and raising the capacity to serve those members. He spoke highly of the value of working with the AFL-CIO as well as with such organizations as A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service, UNI Global Union and the National Vote at Home Coalition. These allies are vital in promoting our goals as a union.

Within NALC, the Veterans Group continues to expand. Plans to organize a disaster relief program are being discussed. The union has created a Members Only section on the website to increase members' access to resources and information. And NALC continues to do training on a wide variety of topics, and will do more as necessary.

'THE SOLIDARITY OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD'

In closing, President Rolando called for letter carriers to continue working for the betterment of humanity as trade unionists and as good citizens. He cited both Pope Francis, who has called on people to be kind and decent as "artisans of the common good," and the late Walter Reuther, a longtime president of the Detroit-based United Auto Workers (UAW).

Reuther famously said, "There is no power in the world that can stop the forward march of free men and women when they are joined in the solidarity of human brotherhood." He also said, "There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well."

Adding to that idea, Rolando concluded, "Let's embrace this power and this calling this week in Detroit. And more importantly, over the next two years, let's embrace them and the spirit of solidarity to improve the lives of our members, their families and our fellow workers in America and around the world."

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Following a spirited standing ovation for Rolando, Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611 letter carrier Delano Wilson came to the stage to deliver the preliminary report of the Convention Credentials Committee.

Wilson reported that by 10 a.m. on Monday, July 16, the convention had registered 28 national officers, 60 delegates-at-large and 5,256 delegates, for a grand total of 5,344 delegates representing 595 branches from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Convention delegates will continue to arrive and be registered throughout the convention; the Credentials Committee will give its final report later in the week.

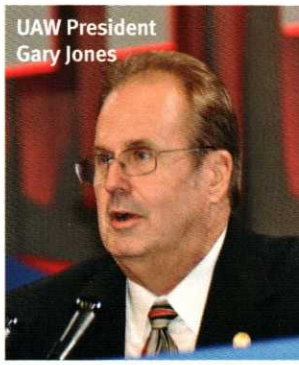
President Rolando next called the Rules Committee to the microphone to deliver its report: Dan Tegreeny, Central Florida Branch 1091 (chairman); Troy Scott, Baton Rouge, LA Branch 129; Margaret Parker, Aurora, IL Branch 219; Tim Foote, Harrisburg, PA Branch 500; and Carol Bailey, Columbus, GA Branch 546. Delegates approved a motion to accept the convention rules as listed in the *Amendments and Resolutions* booklet.

Invited to the stage next was Board of Tellers Chairman Andrew Weiner, a member of Jamaica, NY Branch 562 who also serves as election commissioner. Weiner then introduced the members of his committee: Raquel Acasio, San Diego Branch 70; Helen Amill, New York, NY Branch 36; David Barbuzzi, Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25; James Brown, Nashville Branch 4; David Bugay, Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84; Alvin Charleston, Chicago Branch 11; Rene Eberhardt, Casper, WY Branch 1681; Rich Folmer, Princeton, NJ Branch 268; Henry Gomez, Youngstown, OH Branch 385; Corey Grotte, Eau Claire, WI Branch 728; Robert Hamilton, Brunswick, GA Branch 313; Mike Harazmus, Western Massachusetts Branch 46; Jeff Hartman, Centennial, CO Branch 5996; Colleen Haynes, Southeast PA Merged Branch 725; Bob Henning, Northeast Florida Branch 53; Keith Hooks, Washington, DC Branch 142; Brad Johnson, Salina, KS Branch 486; David Kennedy, Cincinnati, OH Branch 43; Jim Lostumbo, Syracuse, NY Branch 134; Vincent Mase, New Haven, CT Branch 19; Guillermo McPherson, Austin, TX Branch 181; Mark Meyers, Seattle Branch 79; David Miller, Oklahoma City, OK Branch 458; Marie Montano, Albuquerque, NM Branch 504; Ronny Morgan, Chicago Branch 11; Dishonte Munnings, South Florida Branch 1071; Karen Nance, Washington, DC Branch 142; Carmen Penny, Montgomery, AL Branch 106; Francisco Pecunia-Vega, Fayetteville, NC Branch 1128; Salvadore Rodriguez, El Paso Branch 505; Gary Smith, Northern Kentucky Branch 374; Jerri Stockberger, Lafayette, IN Branch 466; Richard Thurmon, St. Louis, MO Branch 343; Timothy Whelan, Philadelphia, PA Branch 157; and Traci Wyrick, Killeen, TX Branch 4217.

President Rolando invited Director of Safety and Health Manuel Peralta Jr. to the podium to read resolutions for consideration. The delegates then discussed, debated and adopted several resolutions. Among the resolutions adopted was one that supported converting CCAs with TE time to career status and another supporting additional limits on CCA temporary reassignments.

President Rolando then called UAW President Gary Jones to the podium. Jones derided the recent Supreme Court *Janus* decision as a political decision, but said unions would resist as they have throughout their history when necessary.

"I guarantee we've been hit even harder in our shared history and we've come back to win again and again and again," Jones said. He cited the recent successes by teachers in several states as an example of how determined workers can win even in a hostile political environment.


UAW President Gary Jones

The delegates rewarded Jones with a letter carrier cheer.

The letter carriers in the convention hall viewed a film featuring new carriers talking about the demands of their jobs, what they like best about carrying the mail and how the Postal Service can do a better job of retaining and converting CCAs to career status.

In a video, Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) greeted delegates, telling them, "Your work keeps our communities connected to the whole world," and pledging to fix the Postal Service's financial challenges

Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe

without cuts to health or retiree benefits for postal employees.

President Rolando read a letter of greeting from NALC President Emeritus William Young, who could not attend this convention. "The danger we face is clear," Young warned. "All the gains we have made in negotiations can be taken away by Congress. We must elect as many worker-friendly candidates as possible."

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) also greeted the convention in a video. "Every day, you're moving our nation forward," she said, "and just as importantly, you're fighting for our working families."

Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe presented awards for branches with the best organizing rates, noting that the union's overall organization rate is 92.1 percent of letter carriers, the best among national open-shop unions in the country. The winners were:

- Under 500 members—Joliet, IL Branch 325—100 percent organized
- 500-999 members—San Bernadino, CA Branch 411—97.36 percent organized
- 1,000 or more members—Boston, MA Branch 34—97.6 percent organized

President Rolando welcomed Thea Lee, president of the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), to the stage. Lee called letter carriers "heroes of the American economy."

Lee explained how EPI presents data and analysis to counter anti-labor messages by pro-corporate think tanks. Pro-union policies boost economic growth and improve equality, she said, not the failed ideas that help only the wealthy and corporate interests.

"A healthy, vibrant economy is one where we actually invest in our workforce," Lee said. "If workers don't have money in their pockets, consumers don't have money in their pockets and the economy cannot be strong."

The delegates gave Lee a hearty letter carrier cheer.

President Rolando called Alvin Matsumura of Honolulu, HI Branch 860, Chairman of the Committee on the President's Biennial Report, to the podium. Matsumura introduced committee members Tony Diaz of Tampa, FL Branch 599, Andy Tuttle of Lawrence, KS Branch 104, Amanda Greer of St. Paul, MN Branch 28 and Louise Jordan of San Antonio, TX Branch 421. The delegates approved a motion to accept the president's report.

EPI President Thea Lee

The president also called to the podium Special Assistant to the President Paul Barner, who introduced Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Davidson. Barner said the NALC Veterans Group would distribute 2,000 personal care knapsacks to homeless veterans in Detroit this week, including postcards from delegates thanking them for their service. The postcards, available at the Veterans Group booth, should be filled out and returned to the booth by 2 p.m. today. Veterans Group members who want to help fill the knapsacks will gather this afternoon from 3:15 to 4:45 in Exhibit Hall E.

Throughout the day, the delegates honored letter carriers who deserve special recognition. They remembered carriers who had died since the previous biennial convention; recognized delegates who are CCAs, former CCAs and participants in the Great Postal Strike of 1970; honored deceased broadcaster Ed Schultz (a friend of letter carriers); and memorialized six letter carriers who recently died while on the job.

The convention adjourned for the day shortly after 3 p.m.

Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Davidson and Special Assistant to the President Paul Barner

NALC AUXILIARY

MONDAY, JULY 16

The meeting for the National Association of Letter Carriers Auxiliary was called to order by President Cythensis Lang at 10:14 a.m.

The color guard, consisting of Rick Baird (WA) and Timothy Meurer (FL) presented the flag. All members recited the Pledge of Allegiance and was followed by the collect. The National Anthem was sung by Austin Cooper (Branch 79, Seattle, WA).

We welcomed our three past national officers, Linda Kirby, Marie Rasmussen and Edith Pottenger.

First-time delegates were asked to introduce themselves. We were happy to have seven new delegates.

Lang announced the committees for the week. The Committees were as follows:

Mileage and Per Diem: Linda Davis (WA), Jennifer Scott (CA) and Janice Vandenberg (NE).

Rules and Resolutions: Cythensis Lang (AL), Gaye Meredith (TX) and Doris Lauer (NY).

Bylaws: Cynthia Martinez (AZ), Samatha Yerg (OH) and Margret Castilleja (TX).

Sergeant-at-Arms and Color Guard: Rick Baird (WA) and Timothy Meurer (FL).

Credentials: George Anna Myers (MO), Linda Kirby (WI) and Tessy Fisher (NM).

Audit: George Anna Myers (MO), Linda Becker (TX) and Ann Borewski (WI).

Nominations: Linda Davis (WA), EveLynn A. Jones (MD) and Patsy Davis (MO).

Teller: Rick Baird (WA) and Timothy Meurer (FL).

The Credential Committee reported that 25 auxiliaries were represented from 14 states with two past national officers and five state presidents, and a total of 47 voting delegates.

Rules for the convention were adopted. Six bylaws were approved, three were not approved and one was tabled.

President Lang reminded delegates about the Veterans Group project on Tuesday. Auxiliary members will wear their Auxiliary shirts. Bags will be stuffed at 3:15 p.m. in Hall E. Donations for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Letter Carrier Political Fund will be collected on Wednesday.

President Lang recessed the meeting at 1:49 p.m.

—Submitted By George Anna Myers, NALCA Secretary