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

NALC CONVENTION
CHRONICLE

Covering the **second session**: Tuesday, July 17, 2018

'WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK'

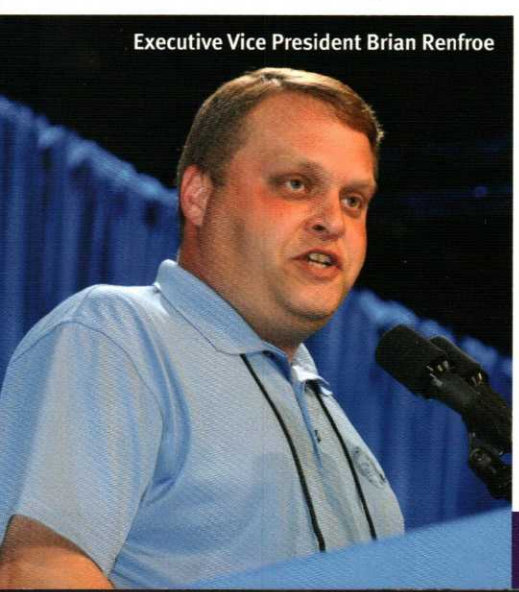
Standing shoulder to shoulder in unity, delegates to NALC's 71st biennial convention in Detroit on Tuesday celebrated the power of solidarity and heard from union leaders who pledged their support in the struggles ahead.

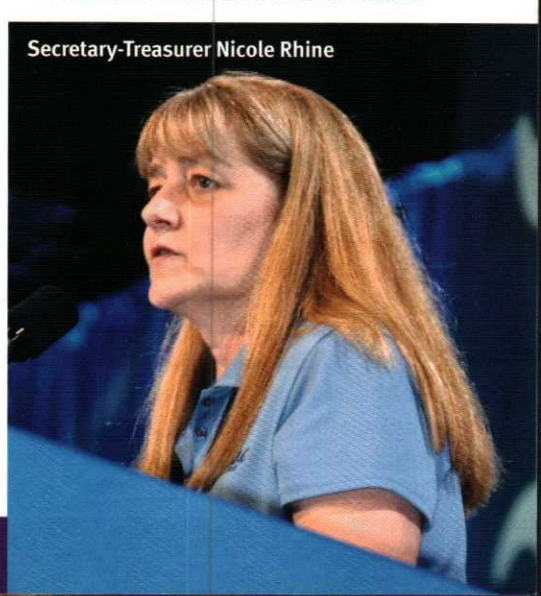
Leaders from sister postal unions and the broader labor movement encouraged letter carriers to rely on the power of unity in the battles to stop privatization, preserve retirement benefits and maintain a high level of service, six days a week, among other issues, and renewed their support for our cause.

Delegates recognized those among them who had served their country in a military uniform, many of them wearing special red NALC Veterans Group T-shirts reading "Veterans Helping Veterans." Their work wasn't done: On Tuesday afternoon, veteran carriers volunteered to help their fellow veterans in need.

And solidarity doesn't end when carriers hang up their satchels. Retired carriers and family members also must do their part to preserve the gains they helped win in the past through political activism, collective bargaining and the Great Postal Strike of 1970.

Letter carriers face many challenges, but speaker after speaker vowed that our fight is their fight. The spirit of solidarity shone through when each delegate turned to their neighbor and told them, "I've got your back."


Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe

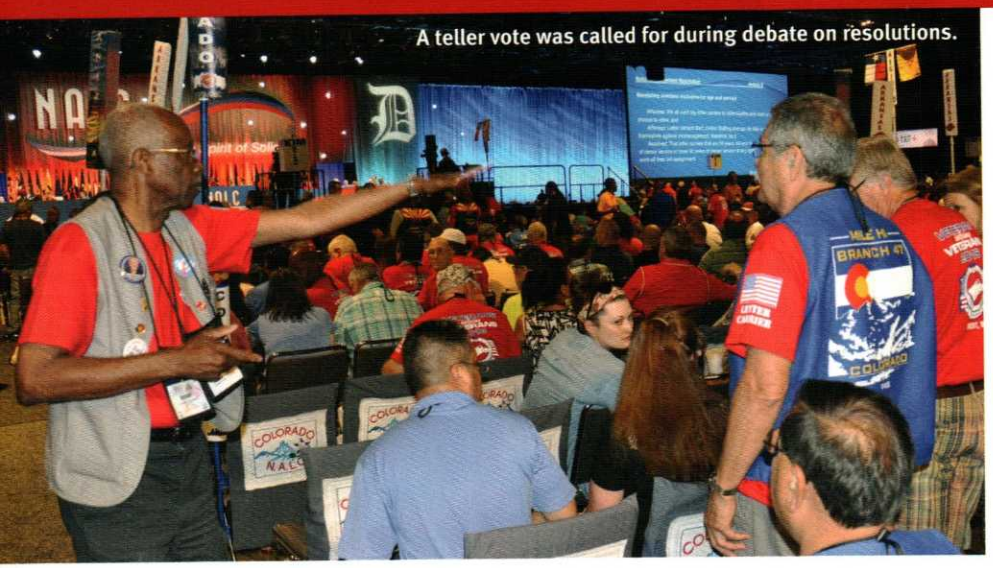

Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine

BUSINESS RESUMES

At 10 a.m. sharp, NALC President Fredric Rolando called to order the second day of the union's 71st biennial convention.

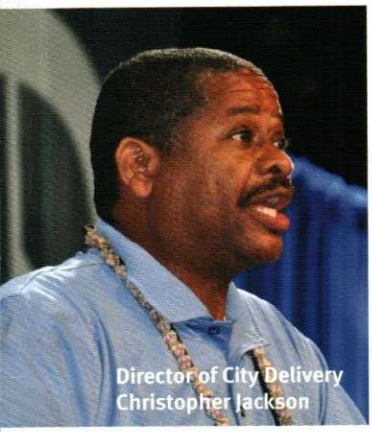
The president first called to the stage Lafayette, LA Branch 1760 Tiffany Rubin to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Western Wayne County, MI Branch 2184 President Mark Judd led delegates in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Delivering the day's invocation was Pastor Kenneth Flowers of Greater New Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church in Detroit.

Rolando next asked all letter carrier

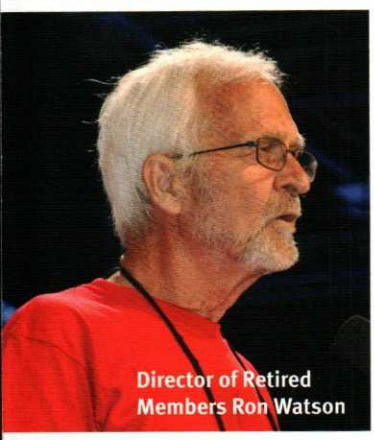


A teller vote was called for during debate on resolutions.

military veterans in the room to stand and be recognized in their red veteran T-shirts. He thanked them for their service and said he was confident that there would be enough volunteers Tuesday afternoon to pack 2,000 homeless care kits to be distributed to four veterans' homes in Detroit.



Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson



Director of Retired Members Ron Watson

He then released NALC Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe and the members of the Committee to Extend Greetings to the NALC Auxiliary: Elisabeth Goodwin of Houston Branch 283 (chairman); Laurie McLemore of Chattanooga, TN Branch 62; Jim Thigpenn of Northeast Florida Branch 53; Patrick VanEgeren of Green Bay, WI Branch 619; and Lou Wagner of Grand Rapids, MI Branch 56.

AMENDMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS

NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine was on stage next to kick off consideration of constitutional amendments. Leading the discussion of the four amendments before the convention were the members of the NALC Board of Trustees: Larry Brown (chairman), Mike Gill and Mack Julion.

Convention delegates ultimately approved three proposed amendments to the *NALC Constitution* that clarified existing language about the minimum monthly dues structure and retirees not having a vote in contract ratification.

NALC Vice President Lew Drass then announced that members who wish to make appeals to the convention will do so on Friday.

A delegate asked the convention to hold a moment of silence for John W. Bourlon, a longtime NALC member and president emeritus of West Coast Florida Branch 1477, who died on the first day of convention.

Rolando next brought NALC Director of City Delivery Chris Jackson, followed by NALC Director of Retired Members Ron Watson, to the podium to resume discussing three resolutions that were not included in the *Resolutions and Amendments* book. Convention delegates approved two:

- A resolution to provide for the option of darker blue uniforms and cargo pants with large pockets, and
- A resolution to negotiate the placement of the blind spot negating front area view Pot Lid mirror in all ProMaster vehicles.

A lively debate took place around a proposed resolution suggesting that letter carriers who are at least 55 years of age with 20 years of service or have 30 years of service at any age, should not be forced to work off their bid assignments. Delegates ultimately voted down this resolution via a teller vote of 2,197 to 2,075.

'SOLIDARITY IS EVERYTHING'

At noon, President Rolando called to the stage Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA.

In a fiery speech, Nelson spoke about the challenges her union has faced from corporate interests. She stressed the importance of unions during these times and urged convention delegates not to let the powers that be divide us.

"The attacks on federal workers, the attacks on our union rights, are really about getting rid of the last roadblock to those who have the power and money to control everything," she said.

She told the delegates that postal unions are not the only ones fighting against privatization. Nelson became emotional remembering flight attendants who died when United Airlines Flight 175 hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. "My friends died and, by God, this country will not forget," she said. Nelson used that emotion in a successful fight against privatizing TSA workers at the Orlando airport.

She vowed that her union would stand in solidarity with postal workers in our own fight against privatization.

"We know one thing: We work. They don't," Nelson added. "Which side are we on? We're on your side. We've got your back. Solidarity is everything. It's a force stronger than gravity, and solidarity will win."

She said that solidarity comes in many forms: Sometimes we fight by rallying. Sometimes we fight by marching. Sometimes we fight by voting. Sometimes we fight by singing. Sometimes we fight by striking—but above all else, when we fight, we fight together."

After she led a singalong of "This Land is Your Land," delegates gave Nelson an enthusiastic letter carrier cheer.

President Rolando then called Rhine to the microphone to deliver her secretary-treasurer's report.

After that, the president welcomed American Postal Workers Union (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein to the podium. Dimondstein warned delegates to take seriously the recent proposals to privatize the Postal Service.

"Those in power mean business and want their hands on the $70 billion of public postal revenue for their private profit—and they believe their time is now," he said. "For us, it must be a call to arms and action."

Pledging his union's support for coordinated advocacy against privatization and other threats through the group A Grand Alliance to Save the Postal Service, Dimondstein urged letter carriers to redouble their efforts.

"Maximum joint work of all four postal unions around our common cause is more vital than ever in this moment of crisis," he said. "Sisters and brothers, see you in the trenches, and solidarity forever!"

The delegates showed their appreciation with a letter carrier cheer.

COMMUNICATING OUR MESSAGE

Emphasizing the vital need for external and internal communications, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe explained NALC's latest communication tools, including a new emphasis on social media and the members-only portal accessible through the union's website, nalc.org. Renfroe announced that NALC is testing a members-only smartphone app to track work hours. The new app should be available soon.

President Rolando then presented the first place awards for branch publications:

- Best Website—Boston, MA Branch 34.
- Best Cartoon or Photo—Philip Navaro, Tri-Valley, CA Branch 2902.
- Best News or Feature Story—"Reflections of World War II Veteran Ted Hempen" by Tom Schulte of St. Louis, MO Branch 343.
- Promoting Unionism—"What Has the Union Done For Me?" by Kevin Flaherty of Boston, MA Branch 34.
- Best Editorial or Column—"Dicktation" by John Dick of Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126.
- General Excellence among Small Branch Publications—*The 44 Magnum*, New Hampshire Merged Branch 44.
- General Excellence among Large Branch or State Association Publications—*Branch 34's CLAN*, Boston Branch 34.

The delegates then viewed a video, the first in a series to be shown throughout the week that highlights how letter carriers stepped up in a time of crisis. The video focused on the massive flooding suffered by the people of Houston and the Gulf Coast in August 2017 as a result of Hurricane Harvey.

President Rolando then called Paul Hogrogian, president of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, to the stage. Pointing to previous wins and the struggles ahead over privatization and retirement benefits, Hogrogian called for all postal union members to remain united and resist the urge to bicker over small issues.

"We've got bigger battles to fight," he said. "We can't be fighting each other."

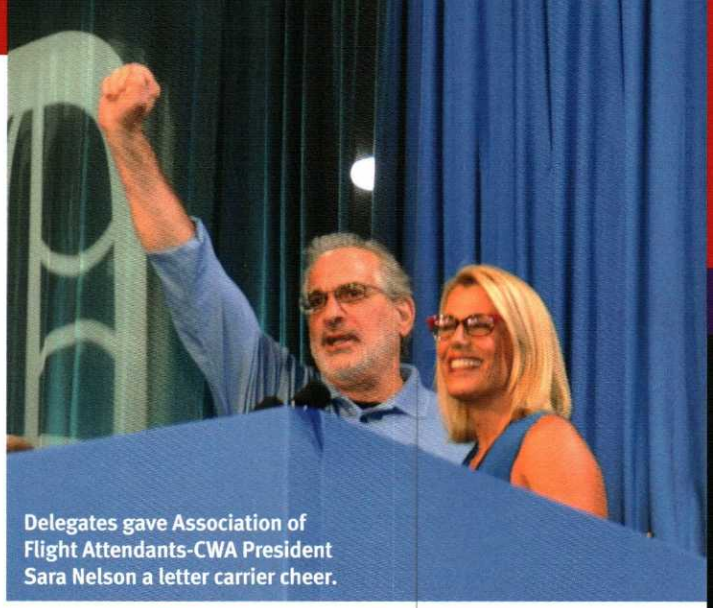
Hogrogian harkened back to his union's cooperation with NALC on issues affecting each craft: "That's how it works—we support you, you support us."

Contrasting the Trump administration's claimed goal of building trust in government with the Postal Service's high public trust rating in surveys, year after year, Hogrogian derided the administration's proposal to privatize USPS.

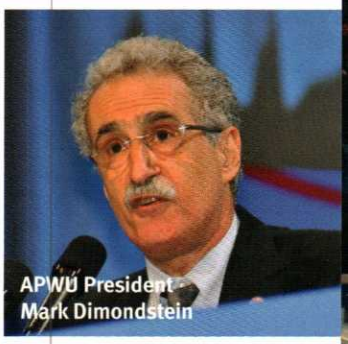
"If they want to restore trust in the government, they should work with us, not against us," he said. "Work with us to fix it—don't sell it to the highest corporate bidder who will just run it into the ground."

Looking toward the coming struggle, Hogrogian invoked the power of solidarity. "We've got to let them know we're not alone," he said. "It's not just the postal workers; we've got the federal workers. It's not just the federal workers; we've got the whole labor movement behind us. It's not just the labor movement behind us; we've got the American people behind us!"

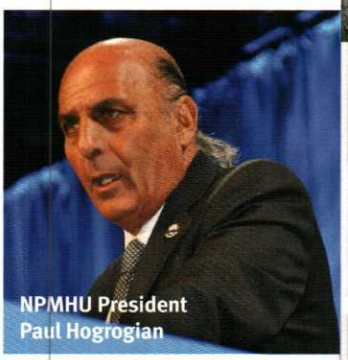
The delegates showed their appreciation with a letter carrier cheer.



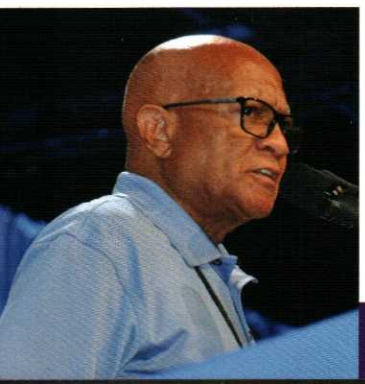
Delegates gave Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson a letter carrier cheer.

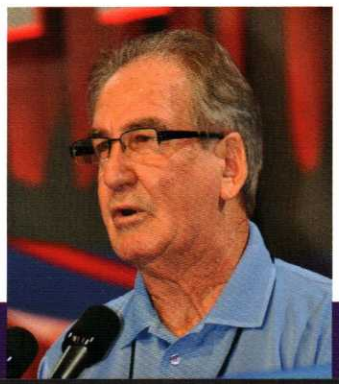


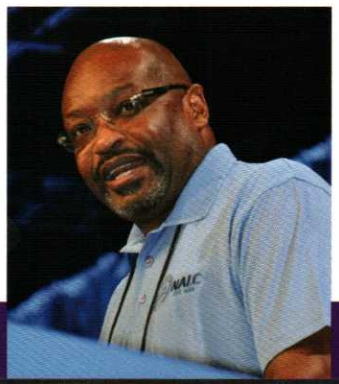
APWU President Mark Dimondstein



NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian







The NALC trustees, from l: Chairman Larry Brown, Mike Gill and Mack Julion

NALC Auxiliary President Cynthesis Lang introduced members of the Auxiliary Board.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

President Rolando then brought the Mileage and Per Diem Committee to the stage: Antonia Shields of Birmingham, AL Branch 530 (chairman); Barry Bode of Jonesboro, AR Branch 1131; Kenneth Montgomery of Rochester, NY Branch 210; Vanessa Sanchez of San Antonio, TX Branch 421; and William Wray of Raleigh, NC Branch 459. Shields announced that the committee had set a per diem rate of $180. The recommendations of the committee were adopted by voice vote.

The president then brought the members of the Nalcrest Committee to the stage: Matty Rose of South Florida Branch 1071 (chairman); Tom Young of Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100; and Don Southern of Lakeland, FL Branch 1779. The committee members gave delegates an update on activities at Nalcrest, including improvements to make the retirement facility more environmentally friendly.

Renfroe then introduced NALC Auxiliary President Cynthesis Lang, who introduced Vice President Cynthia Martinez, Secretary George Anna Myers and Assistant Secretary Linda Davis. Lang urged delegates to support the Auxiliary and to ask family members of their fellow branch members back home to join.

"We want to grow this Auxiliary," Lang said. "The Auxiliary are the people who are going to stick with you through thick and thin."

President Rolando then called on Director of Retired Members Watson, who introduced the Retirement Committee: Chairman Ernie Kirkland of Lexington, KY Branch 361; Doug Gulley of Columbus, OH Branch 78; JoAnn Pyle of Seattle Branch 79; Michael Sheridan of South Macomb, MI Branch 4374; and John Walsh of Albany, NY Branch 29. Kirkland delivered the committee's report.

After a few housekeeping announcements, the session adjourned shortly after 3 p.m.

With an overwhelming turnout, hundreds of veterans in red shirts helped stuff 2,000 bags with toiletries and food during the Tuesday afternoon workshop session. The bags will be delivered to organizations in the Detroit-area serving homeless veterans.

NALC AUXILIARY

TUESDAY, JULY 17

President Cythensis Lang reconvened the meeting at 10:14 a.m. All members recited the Pledge of Allegiance and the collect.

President Lang then asked the members to read over the minutes from the previous day. There were a couple of minor corrections, and the minutes were approved as corrected.

President Lang then called Auxiliary Vice President Cynthia Martinez to the podium for the memorial service. Martinez gave greetings to the members before reading Psalm 23, leading the members in prayer and reciting a poem. Members lined up to bring flowers to the table for each of the 36 deceased members whose names were read. Austin Cooper of Seattle, WA Branch 79 honored our members with a song, "It's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday."

NALC Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe brought his committee over to speak with us about the importance of the Auxiliary in our current political climate, as well as how much he appreciated what we are doing to help our letter carriers. The committee consisted of Elisabeth Goodwin of Texas (chairman); Patrick VanEgeren of Wisconsin; Laurie MacLemore of Tennessee; Jim Thigpenn of Florida; Lou Wagner of Michigan; and Larrissa Parde of Nebraska.

Ohio State Association President John Dyce came over to thank the Auxiliary for all that we do.

President Lang asked the members to send in items they have going on in their states, along with pictures, so that she may submit them to *The Postal Record*.

Bylaws Chairman Cynthia Martinez returned to continue with bylaws. Six were adopted, one was not and one was tabled.

Washington State Association President Brian Wiggins stopped in with some supporting words and appreciation for the Auxiliary.

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Chairman Linda Davis, Patsy Davis and EveLynn Jones, had two nominees, which were Crystal Braggs of Illinois and Samantha Yerg of Ohio, for the national secretary position. Voting will take place at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, followed by our luncheon at 11:30 a.m.

—Submitted By George Anna Myers, NALCA Secretary