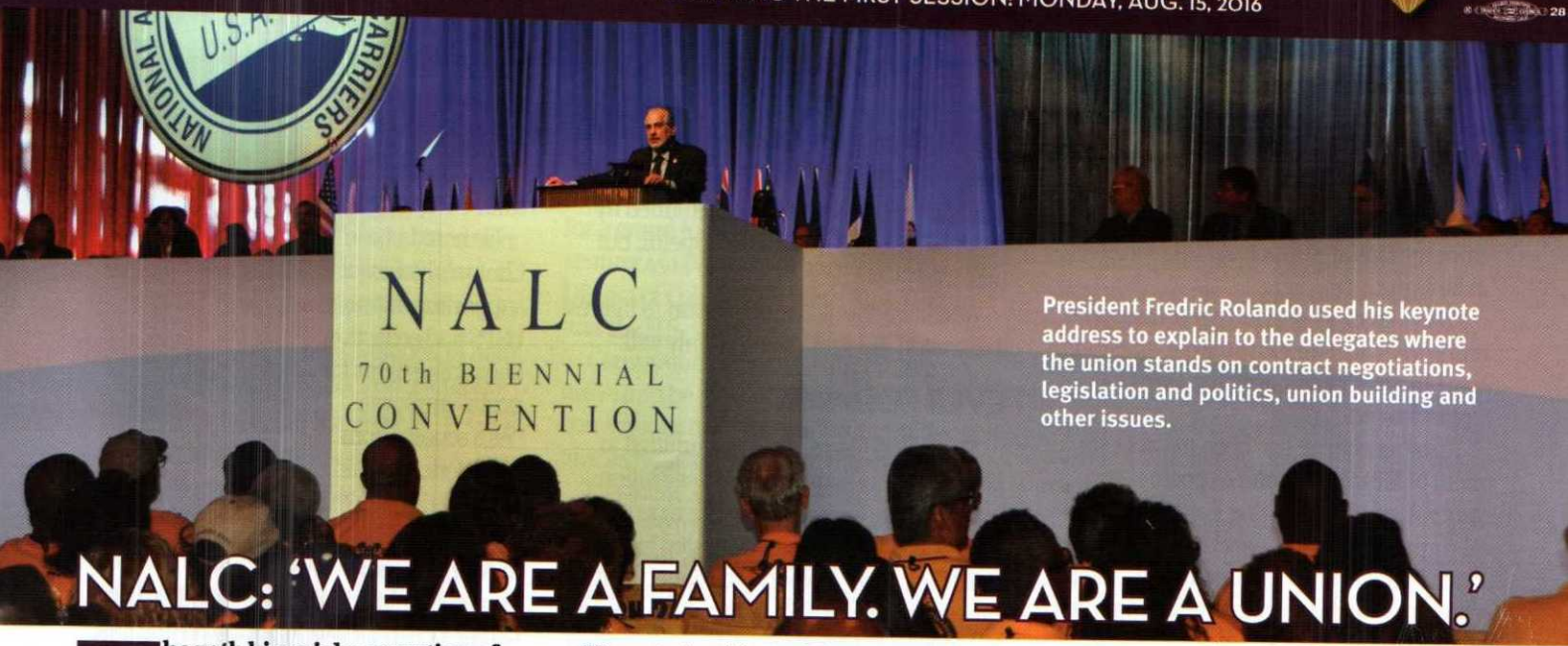
NALC CONVENTION CHRONICLE

COVERING THE FIRST SESSION: MONDAY, AUG. 15, 2016



President Fredric Rolando used his keynote address to explain to the delegates where the union stands on contract negotiations, legislation and politics, union building and other issues.

NALC: 'WE ARE A FAMILY. WE ARE A UNION.'

The 70th biennial convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers began on an enthusiastic and powerful note on Monday, Aug. 15, as NALC President Fredric Rolando, at one point during his keynote address, asked the nearly 8,000 delegates gathered at the Los Angeles Convention Center to look around the hall.

"Every union is like a family," he said. "Families often have disagreements. We may disagree with each other from time to time, but we are one. We are a family. We are a union. We are the NALC.

"While the NALC has real adversaries in postal management, in Congress and in the media," he said, "you have no enemies in here."

The president said that one of his goals is to take the convention's theme—"Solidarity in Action"—and use it to develop ways to improve the lives of America's letter carriers.

"Our mission this week is to organize, strategize and mobilize our entire membership to build a better union," he said. "I have no doubt that we will do just that."

PAST AND PRESENT

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

South Florida Branch 1071 letter carrier Stephanie Bostic was next on stage to deliver a rousing *a capella* rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." She was followed by California State Association of Letter Carriers President John Beaumont, who led delegates in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Rev. Johnny Harris, the director of retired members for the convention's host branch, Los Angeles Branch 24, gave the invocation.

Returning to the microphone, Rhine called to the stage Branch 24 President Larry Brown, who also serves as chairman of NALC's board of trustees.

Brown warmly welcomed delegates to his city. He then introduced Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, who noted that the last time NALC gathered here for a convention was 1941—75 years ago.

"We are here to say that we support you," Garcetti said. "Government at its best is reflected by you. You connect this nation."

Next, Rhine introduced the retired national officers in attendance at this year's convention and asked the national business agent for the region that includes California, Chris Jackson, to come to the microphone to

NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine (r) opened the convention on Monday morning. She introduced local leaders (from l), who welcomed the delegates to the city: Los Angeles Branch 24 President Larry Brown, L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti and Region 1 NBA Christopher Jackson.

introduce his fellow NBAs and to acknowledge the union's regional administrative assistants (RAAs).

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

COMPARE, CONTRAST

"The Postal Service's core business continues to get stronger," Rolando said at the start of his speech, with letter mail volume stabilizing and package deliveries rising sharply. And the city letter carrier craft has grown for the first time in 10 years, he said, since the Das arbitration award took effect in January 2013.

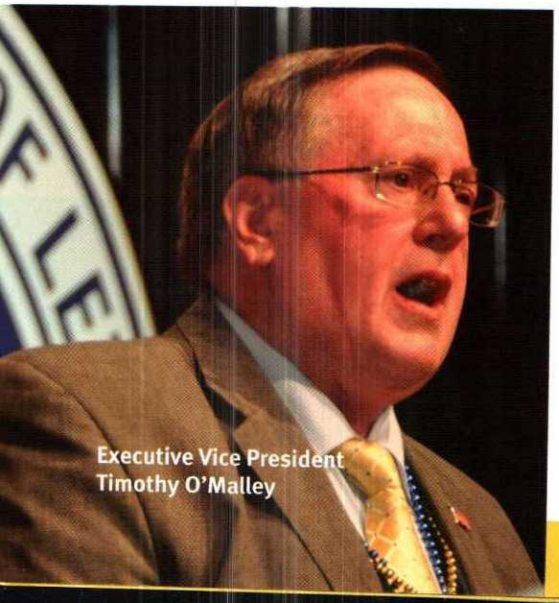
"More than 38,000 former transitional employees and new city carrier assistants have secured career appointments," Rolando said.

Another change has been the appointment of Megan Brennan as postmaster general in 2015, replacing Patrick Donahoe. "A former letter carrier and NALC member from Pennsylvania," Rolando said, "Brennan is pragmatic and straightforward—and unlike her predecessor, she is not single-mindedly zealous about slashing service."

While this new leadership hasn't solved all of NALC's problems with management, Rolando said, the union is at least able to deal with her in a professional manner.

Also different since 2014 is an ongoing change in the "conventional wisdom" regarding USPS, he said, thanks largely to our aggressive media efforts and coalition building. "There is a growing recognition among the public, its elected representatives and the media that the Postal Service can thrive in the digital age," he said.

Since the previous contract between NALC and USPS expired on May 20, the status of contract negotiations was no doubt top-of-mind for most delegates, and the president provided a general update.



Executive Vice President Timothy O'Malley

"I am happy to report that the quality of this round of negotiations has been good," he said, cautioning that he did not mean the process has been easy.

However, "we narrowed the topics to focus on issues of mutual interest," he said, "enough to extend the talks beyond May 20 while leaving the terms of the 2011-2016 contract in place.

"NALC remains committed to bringing these negotiations to a successful conclusion," Rolando said. "Our goal is to reach a contract that can be strongly ratified by NALC members. We remain hopeful, but realistic."

And if we should need to resort to interest arbitration, he said, "we certainly will."

EVER FORWARD

The union also remains committed to getting positive postal reform legislation passed in Congress. Calling the recently introduced H.R. 5714 "a huge step in the right direction," Rolando cautioned that a provision to give USPS authority to require businesses to convert to curb or centralized delivery prevents NALC from endorsing the bill. And while the bill supports greater integration of Federal Employees Health Benefits Program coverage with Medicare, it fails to grant a hardship exemption for current annuitants who would be required to sign up for Medicare Part B.

"Fortunately, our opposition to the door delivery cuts is shared by most business partners in our coalition" of mailers, postal unions and other stakeholders, he said. "We will continue to use the legislative process to try to fix the major problems in the House bill."

The outlook for any type of postal reform by the end of the year remains uncertain, though. "No matter what, the NALC and our coalition will be players in the legislative debate," Rolando said before turning to a related topic: political activity.

"Few workers have more at stake in national elections than do letter carriers," Rolando said, "given how Congress and the president can affect our day-to-day work lives." That's why NALC has no choice but to mobilize members to help elect pro-letter carrier candidates, he said.

"Getting into politics can be controversial and divisive," Rolando admitted, "because our membership embodies the political diversity of America."

But that's a strength, not a weakness, he noted. "We welcome, and need support from, every coordinate on the political spectrum," he said.

Rolando stressed that, regardless of their political party, NALC backs candidates who support letter carriers, USPS and workers' rights. That's why the NALC Executive Council voted unanimously in July to endorse former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to serve as the next president of the United States, he said.

Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren reads a resolution

He noted Clinton's history of supporting a strong USPS and collective-bargaining rights for postal employees. "As a senator from New York," he said, "she was among the first in the Senate to support legislation prohibiting the contracting out of letter carrier jobs to low-wage private contractors." She also has defended six-day mail delivery and has supported federal workers.

"This endorsement was not a difficult one to make, given the choice before us," Rolando said: "Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump."

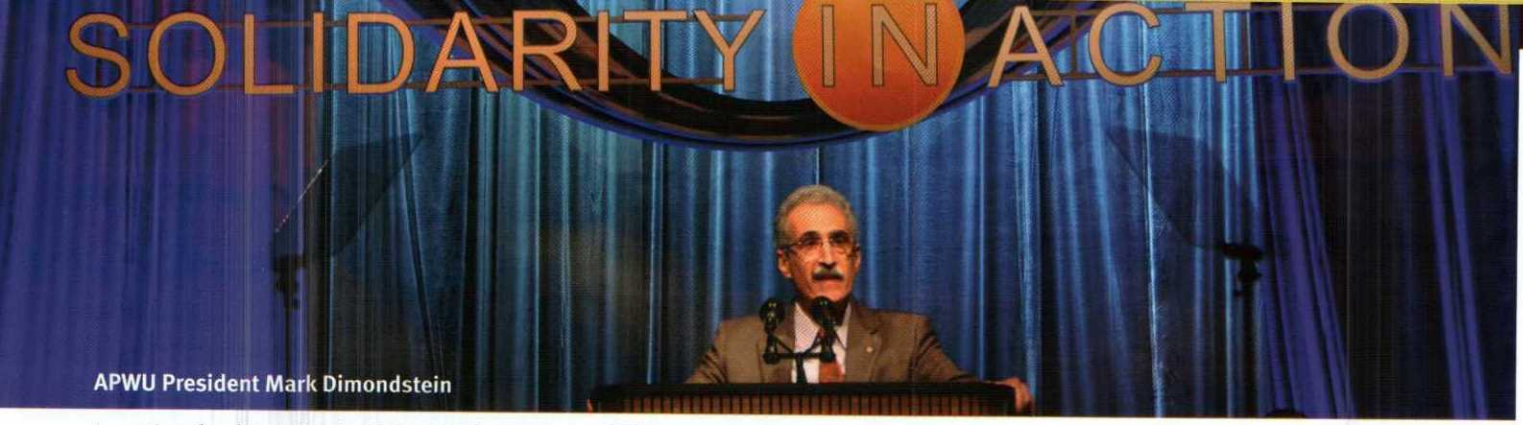
Trump, the president noted, would not acknowledge—let alone answer—NALC's candidate questionnaire. "Moreover," Rolando said, "we've learned a lot about Trump's views toward workers and unions, over this campaign." For example, Trump has refused to accept the vote to unionize workers at his Las Vegas hotel, he opposes an increase to the federal minimum wage (arguing that American workers are overpaid), and he strongly supports so-called "right to work" laws.

PREPARING FOR WHAT'S NEXT

Rolando then briefly outlined the union's plans to mobilize members to vote for letter carrier-friendly candidates this fall, regardless of their party.

"Politics, legislative action or media relations aren't for everybody," Rolando said. "But every letter carrier can do something to strengthen our union and improve the lives of their fellow letter carriers."

The president explained that this is why providing a variety of ways for members



APWU President Mark Dimondstein

to get involved in union-building will be crucial going forward:

> The NALC Member App for smartphones, which will be officially presented to delegates on Tuesday, has been designed to help activists get information they need to fully participate in the union.

> Programs have been developed to help organize and train CCAs, and a national conference for CCAs was held in St. Louis earlier this year.

> Training workshops for branch officers, stewards, arbitration advocates and retiring letter carriers continue to be worked on and rolled out across the country.

> Seven regional workers' compensation advocates have been assigned to represent injured letter carriers in dealing with the Office of Workers' Compensation and to train others on such issues.

> Letter carriers' charitable work with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive will be furthered with help from the recently revived Public Relations Committee, as will be the case with the union's significant new outreach to the military veterans among us with the formation of the NALC Veterans Group.

"Union building is hard work," he said. "And don't forget what makes us strong as a union: It's all of you, and thousands more like you across the country—letter carriers who step up and serve your brothers and sisters."

"So it's time to get to work," he said.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Following an energetic standing ovation for Rolando, Secretary-Treasurer Rhine returned to the microphone for a few announcements, and Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611 letter carrier Delano Wilson was asked to come to the stage to deliver the preliminary report of the Convention Credentials Committee.

Wilson reported that by the end of the day on Sunday, August 14, the convention already had registered 28 national officers, 39 delegates-at-large, and 3,916 delegates, for a grand total of 3,955 delegates representing 491 branches from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. 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, Orlando, FL Br. 1091 (chairman); Troy Scott, Baton Rouge, LA Br. 128; Margaret Parker, Aurora, IL Br. 219. 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 Joe DeRossi, a member of Brooklyn, NY Branch 41 who also serves as election commissioner. DeRossi then introduced the members of his committee:

Helen Amill, New York Br. 36; David Barbuzzi, Massachusetts NE Mgd. Br. 25; Bill Bauder, Spokane, WA Br. 442; James Beach, Muscatine, IA Br. 644; Pete Bednarz, New Jersey Mgd Br. 38; James Brown, Nashville, TN Br. 4; Gary Butts, Tulsa, OK Br. 1358; Tonya Detrick, Hagerstown, MD Br. 443; Brent Fjerestad, Sioux Falls, SD Br. 491; Rich Folmer, Princeton, NJ Br. 268; Henry Gomez, Youngstown, OH Br. 385; Richard Griffin, Las Vegas Br. 2502; Robert Hamilton, Brunswick, GA Br. 313; Mike Harazmus, Western Massachusetts Br. 46; Ricky Holmes, South Florida Br. 1071; Keith Hooks, Washington, DC Br. 142; Elaine Jones, Detroit Br. 1; David Kennedy, Cincinnati Br. 43; James Kimbrell, San Antonio, TX Br. 421; Joseph Kohler, Philadelphia Br. 157; Jim Lostumbo, Syracuse, NY Br. 134; Kim Marshall, Bloomington, IL Br. 522; Wayne Martin, Denver Br. 47; Vincent Mase, New Haven, CT Br. 19; Kathy McGarity, Burkburnett, TX Br. 1227; David Miller, Oklahoma City, OK Br. 458; Marie Montano, Albuquerque, NM Br. 504; Anna Mudd, Louisville, KY Br. 14; Mark Nembhard, Virginia Beach, VA Br. 2819; John Paige, Pocatello, ID Br. 927; Francisco Pecunia-Vega, Fayetteville, NC Br. 1128; Jeffrey Rainey, Kansas City, MO Br. 30; Carlos Rodriguez, Brownsville, TX Br. 1456; Paul Rozzi, Mon-Yough, PA Br. 332; Derek Sykes, Chicago Br. 11; Andrew Weiner, Jamaica, NY Br. 562; Timothy Whelan, Philadelphia Br. 157.

Later this week, the convention will nominate delegates to the AFL-CIO.

HONORING O'MALLEY

Following a few more announcements from Secretary-Treasurer Rhine, President Rolando invited NALC Executive Vice President Timothy C. O'Malley to the stage to begin the process of reviewing proposed convention resolutions. Rolando announced that O'Malley is retiring at the end of the convention this week, and he invited the executive vice president to make a few remarks before proceeding with the resolutions.

"NALC has been instrumental in ensuring the rights and benefits of postal employees and the entire labor movement," O'Malley said with admiration. "It fights for you all the time; our unity is our strength.

"It's been a great ride," a visibly emotional O'Malley said as he closed out his remarks. "Thank you."

Delegates gave O'Malley a letter carrier cheer.

RESOLUTIONS

The delegates voted to approve a motion to accept all proposed resolutions that had been recommended for approval by the Executive Council. Among the resolutions adopted was one offered by San Francisco, CA Branch 214 that calls for the NALC to work for improved working conditions and benefits for CCAs, including at least one day off per week; more training time; the same sick leave, annual leave, health insurance and pension benefits as regular carriers; no second probation and career seniority from the date of hire.

President Rolando then welcomed American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein to the stage. Dimondstein reiterated his union's support for the efforts of all the postal unions, and of the labor movement as a whole, in the struggle for economic justice and for resisting corporate efforts to privatize postal delivery.

Pointing to the united effort of all postal unions known as A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service, Dimondstein told

the delegates that "solidarity is not an option we have, but rather the key to rebuilding our labor movement—a movement on the defensive at the lowest unionization rate in 100 years."

Dimondstein said that efforts by some in Congress to weaken or dismantle USPS have been stymied by the trust the public has in letter carriers. "Since the people trust the Postal Service, and trust you, outright privatization is not so easy," he said.

The delegates thanked Dimondstein with a letter carrier cheer.

HONORING THE DEPARTED

The convention then watched a video honoring NALC President Emeritus James Rademacher, who died last December.

Rolando next read a letter from NALC President Emeritus William Young, who could not attend the convention. Young extolled every NALC member to work to elect pro-union candidates in the elections this fall, saying that strengthening unions is the solution to the anger many voters feel.

"Every member should volunteer to work on a worker-friendly candidate's election," Young wrote. "It may be our last chance to save the labor movement."

President Rolando then recognized with sadness four letter carriers who have been killed in the line of duty since the last convention in 2014. Their names will be added to the plaque in the lobby of NALC Headquarters in Washington, DC, that lists carriers who died on the job.

The delegates honored these lost brothers with a moment of silence.

WE ARE 'EVERYWHERE'

The convention delegates then viewed a video that explained to members of the public, to legislators and to other decision-makers how letter carriers do their jobs, the first video in a series NALC has commissioned to demonstrate five particular ways they serve the public interest through universal service, heroism, innovation, compassion and recovery following natural disasters.

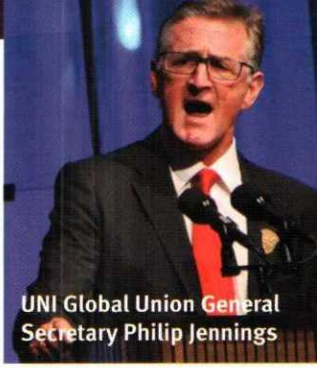
President Rolando then welcomed special guest Philip Jennings, general secretary of UNI Global Union, which represents the interests of postal employees in 150 countries and other international organizations, including NALC. "We fight everywhere, all the time, for you and the ideas you represent," Jennings told the delegates.

Jennings criticized international trade agreements that harm workers, and he said that the growth of e-commerce points to a bright future for public postal services. "We need to make our mark in the e-commerce space—we know how to do this," he said. "We are not dying, we are living, and we are going to grow this business."

The delegates thanked Jennings with a letter carrier cheer.

SPECIAL REVIEW

President Rolando then introduced the Special Review Committee: Mack Julion of Chicago Branch 11; Paul Gillie of Mid-Michigan Branch 256; Jim Langlois, president of Pawtucket, RI Branch 55; and Phillip Rodriquez, president of the Utah State Association. The Special Review Committee was charged by the NALC convention in Minneapolis in 2012 with considering reforms and adjustments that might become necessary to keeping the union ready for the challenges ahead.


UNI Global Union General Secretary Philip Jennings

The committee's members gave a progress report on its consideration of several ideas, some of which already have been implemented and others that will be voted on during Tuesday's session, all to help make the union more efficient and effective. The committee tabled an idea to consider merging with the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, and it is continuing an effort to assure that all NALC members belong to functioning branches. After considering another of the committee's ideas—to alter NALC's regional structure—the Executive Council recently resolved to study realigning the borders of the union's 15 regions to better serve NALC members.

The president then introduced Kevin Boyer of Columbia, MO Branch 763, chairman of the Committee on the President's Biennial Report. Boyer introduced committee members Kimberly Arnhold of Pasadena, TX Branch 3867 and Tony Diaz of Tampa, FL Branch 599. The committee recommended accepting the president's biennial report; the delegates approved a motion to accept the report of the committee.

Following a few more announcements from Secretary-Treasurer Rhine, the Monday session was adjourned shortly after 3 p.m.

NALC AUXILIARY

MONDAY, AUG. 15

The sounds of the St. Louis, MO Letter Carrier Band greeted Auxiliary delegates at the opening of its 55th Biennial Convention.

Donald Becker (Auxiliary 111, Austin, TX) presented the colors. The band performed the national anthem.

National Auxiliary Vice President Cynthia Martinez (Auxiliary 377, Phoenix, AZ) presented a moment of grace followed by the collect.

President Cythensis Lang introduced past national officer Edie Pottenger (Auxiliary 444, Denver, CO). First-time delegates introduced themselves and were welcomed.

President Lang went over the rules of the convention and introduced the national board members.

Credentials Committee Chair George Anna Myers (national secretary, Auxiliary 4, Kansas City, MO), and committee members Geneva Robinson (Auxiliary 4) and Patsy Davis (Auxiliary 4) were introduced and gave the preliminary credentials report of 20 auxiliaries represented by delegates from 15 states, five national officers, seven state presidents, 33 delegates and 33 voting delegates.

Rules Committee Chair Linda Davis (national assistant secretary, Auxiliary 194, Yakima, WA) and committee members Sandy Williams (Auxiliary 138, Dayton, OH) and Deborah Parr (Auxiliary 353, Tuscaloosa, AL) presented the rules, which were approved as presented. President Lang thanked all for their service.

The keynote speakers were NALC Director of Legislation and Political Affairs Kori Keller and NALC Political Director Ed Morgan, who spoke particularly about the Letter Carrier Political Fund. Morgan gave important information on the support that is needed this election year.

Bylaws Chair Cynthia Martinez (national vice president, Auxiliary 377) introduced bylaw changes.

The meeting was recessed at 12:54 by President Lang.

—Submitted by George Anna Myers, National Secretary