



Retirees active at national convention

The recently concluded 65th Biennial Convention turned out to be the largest in NALC history. A whopping 9,199 delegates gathered together to decide the future course of the NALC. It was truly a remarkable sight looking out from the podium at the delegates gathered in session at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The power of such an enormous crowd was felt every time a “letter carrier cheer” was given to one of our guest speakers. I am quite sure that none of them will soon forget the nation’s letter carriers!

To date, I have attended 16 national conventions and never before have I heard a more exhilarating address from one of our guest speakers than the one given in Las Vegas by Debbie Wasserman-Schultz. The diminutive congresswoman from the 20th District of Florida raised the roof of the convention center with her message to the delegates, and they responded in kind. I only hope that the delegates remember her words this coming November!

One of the most enjoyable events of the convention for those of us who are retired usually comes at the Retirement Breakfast/Workshop, held on Thursday of the convention week. The breakfast gives us a chance to reunite and break bread with fellow retirees from across the country.

This year, we were treated to an opening address from Congresswoman Wasserman-Schultz, who later that morning wowed the general session. We also welcomed Dr. Christian Weller, chief economist with the Center for American Progress, who delighted the attendees with his presentation on the state of retirement benefits in the United States. There were many requests for copies of Dr. Weller’s presentation after the breakfast, so it has been made available on the NALC website at www.nalc.org.

One thing I found especially impressive at the convention was the number of retired delegates in attendance. There were 1,529 registered retiree delegates and 113 of them were Gold Card members! We had 118 retirees sign up for COLCPE at the convention and there were nearly 600 attendees at the retirement breakfast/workshop, the majority of them retirees. Many of our retired members maintain key positions in branches across the country. There were more than 100 retired members at the convention who were also local branch officers!

While presiding over the standing and supplemental retirement committees, one of the issues we chose to address was that of the role of the retiree in local branches and state associations. The committee was unanimously in favor of seeing that more branches and state associations elect or appoint someone to the position of Director of Retired Members to assist the ever-increasing number of retirees in our ranks. There is also a need for good retirement counseling for members planning their retirements, and a local officer could do wonders to fill the void left by the Postal Service’s move to eliminate local individual retirement counseling.

In addition to reporting on topics and legislation pertinent to our retired members at branch meetings, those Directors of Retired Members currently in office perform many other duties. They assist the survivors of deceased retired members, assuring speedy action on their survivor annuities, as well as health insurance and death benefits through consultation with the NALC retirement office. They also are instrumental in the success of the NALC Food Drive and MDA events, as well as many other local projects.

And who better to get involved in the legislative arena than those that have the experience? We are constantly looking for volunteers to be congressional district liaisons, but too often overlook our retirees! One thing to remember is that before we obtained collective bargaining, we had to go to the Hill just to get a salary increase. Many retirees know what it is like to make appointments and head to the local congressional district office to plead our case. What’s even better is that most of them have the time. The men and women who make up our 87,000-plus contingent of retired members have what it takes to get the job done. They proved it once again at the national convention in Las Vegas. They deserve our thanks. ☒

NALC Retirement Department

Toll-free number: 800-424-5186

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