



NALC Convention Chronicle

Friday, July 25 covering the FOURTH SESSION: Thursday, July 24



Delegates celebrate carriers' generosity, political enthusiasm

The generosity and activism of America's letter carriers were the centers of celebration for the 66th Biennial NALC Convention Thursday as delegates honored the efforts of their brothers and sisters in the record-setting 2008 food drive, and displayed their commitment to political change with a sea of blue Super Delegate T-shirts.

History was made again as well when, for the first time ever, a member of the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors addressed the Convention and urged letter carriers to continue "spreading the love" their patrons pour on them. A short while later, delegates got an update on efforts to reform the system to inspect and adjust routes to defuse some of the hostility that plagues workfloors around the nation when managers abuse carriers to "make the numbers."

And Sen. Barack Obama, NALC's newly endorsed candidate for president, responded to the news that reached him on his overseas trip with a letter of thanks and a promise to halt subcontracting of letter carrier work by law when he is in the White House.

The Dayton Letter Carrier Band played Big Band favorites as delegates took their seats in the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center for a fourth day of union business.

NALC President William H. Young called the convention to order at 10:01 a.m. He first invited Gulf Coast Merged, Mississippi Branch 1374 member Greg White to the podium to sing the National Anthem, then asked Worcester, Massachusetts Branch 12 President Jim Servideo to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Rev. Terry McCall of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Brookline gave the invocation.

Young started the day's business by asking all delegates who participated in the Great Postal Strike of 1970 to rise and be recognized. A few hundred among the 7,000-plus delegates stood and received an ovation from the convention. Young also asked delegates to similarly honor members who had served in the military in either Iraq or Afghanistan, or who had family members who did, and later did the same for all delegate veterans.

The president then asked the delegation to approve a special resolution to honor Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy. Kennedy had been invited to speak at the convention but is being treated for an inoperable brain tumor and unable to attend.

The senator "is a steadfast supporter of organized labor," Young said. "He has shown the values of the NALC and supports the goal of rebuilding the



Above: Just a small portion of the thousands of NALC Convention Super Delegates

— members who have joined the e-Activist Network, Gimme 5 for COLCPE and the Carrier Corps—who stood tall on Trifecta Thursday.

Inset: COLCPMAN, whose secret identity is Regional Field Coordinator Matt Little, draws the names of the winners of the two 'Gimme 5' raffles. The winners took home a flat-screen TV and two tickets to two World Series games.

middle class.” The convention unanimously approved the resolution.

BOG Chairman Kessler

The Convention welcomed its second history-making guest—Alan Kessler, chairman of the Postal Service Board of Governors. Never since the Postal Service was created in 1971 had any member of the Board been invited to speak to the letter carriers’ biennial meeting.

Kessler was elected chairman this year, replacing James Miller III, who President Young called “our old nemesis” for his privatization, anti-labor views.

Saying he had “great friends in the organized labor movement,” the Philadelphia-based lawyer said he hoped his appearance delivered “a message long overdue and important,” that postal management recognizes the critical role carriers play in USPS’ success and the importance of good labor relations.

With that prelude, he asked President Young to come back to the podium and he presented the NALC leader a framed “Certificate of Appreciation” from the Board for letter carriers, both for their work delivering the mail and for the annual national food drive.

“I can’t tell you how proud I am of all you do on a daily basis. I’m giving this certificate to Bill but it belongs to all of you,” Kessler said, adding with a smile, “I just couldn’t carry 8,000 plaques with me on the plane.”

Kessler said that when he was appointed as a governor in 2000 by President Clinton he knew very little about mail. He soon discovered “a daily ocean of letters and packages, cresting every evening in our facilities and then receding every day” as letter carriers made their rounds, only to rise again.

Everyone has experienced the “intimacy and impact of a special piece of mail,” he said, whether a Valentine or a grandparent’s letter that preserves a piece of family history. Because mail is special, the letter carriers who deliver it are special, too.

Kessler reported the USPS achieved “record high service performance in the last quarter,” and that “productivity continues to climb,” but the impact of the Internet on



Board of Governors
Chairman Alan Kessler

revenue-rich mail and the struggling economy mean “this is a very challenging time.”

But he said he is confident that “somehow, we’re going to get a grip on it.” Carriers can help, he added, by promoting use of on-line postal services like Klik’n’Ship and building revenue through Customer Connect leads.

“Let’s face it,” he said. “Customers love their letter carriers. I know my family does. Keep on spreading that love.”

Return to resolutions

After President Young entertained a few questions and motions from the floor, the convention returned to consideration of general resolutions. They were presented by Assistant Secretary-Treasurer George Mignosi, Director of City Delivery Dale Hart and Director of Retired Members Ernie Kirkland.

The convention upheld most of the Executive Council’s recommendations. A general resolution calling for the NALC and the Postal Service to jointly negotiate local exemptions of mandatory cluster box unit (CBU) delivery for business customers was approved by the Executive Council after the makers of the resolution, the California State Association, agreed to modify the resolution’s language.

Food drive honors

Next, the delegation watched a 12-minute video that chronicled this year’s National Food Drive, which collected 73.1 million pounds of non-perishable food items. Not only was that a record haul, it brought the 16-year total to 909 million pounds.

“Next year, we have the chance to reach a milestone,” Young said, “when we can claim we have raised a billion pounds of food.”

Branches that collected the most food in each of 10 size categories were then

recognized. Each winning branch received an NALC plaque plus a framed certificate from the drive’s principal corporate sponsor, Campbell Soup, which noted Campbell’s donation of 1,000 cans of soup for the winner’s food bank of choice. The winners were:

- ▶ **Category 1 (fewer than 50 members):** Inverness, Florida Branch 6013—67,970 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 2 (50-99):** Ocala, Florida Branch 1130—184,120 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 3 (100-199):** Billings, Montana Branch 815—171,000 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 4 (200-349):** Ft. Myers, Florida Branch 2072—371,000 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 5 (350-499):** Ponce, Puerto Rico Branch 826—410,510 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 6 (500-699):** Maine Merged Branch 92—298,000 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 7 (700-999):** Clearwater, Florida Branch 2008—1,349,018 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 8 (1,000-1,499):** West Coast, Florida Branch 1477—1,717,218 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 9 (1,500- 1,999):** San Antonio, Texas Branch 421—859,404 lbs.
- ▶ **Category 10 (2,000-plus):** Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3—1,612,659 lbs.

Resolutions and elections

President Young invited Director of Life Insurance Myra Warren and Director of Health Benefits Tim O’Malley to resume consideration of resolutions. The Executive



Top: Region 9 NBA Judy Willoughby enjoys her region’s win in total food collection over challenger NBA Manny Peralta and Region 1. Above: President Young, NALC Food Drive Coordinator Drew VonBergen (r) and his food drive assistant, Kathy Carriere, receive certificates from America’s Second Harvest’s Doug Montgomery.



George Mignosi



Dale Hart



Ernie Kirkland

Council had disapproved a resolution asking that the national union recommend that members boycott Voice of the Employee surveys. Although the convention overturned the council's disapproval, it ultimately failed in a teller vote to approve the measure, 2,738-to-2,141.

Next, Young asked Election Commissioner Joe DeRossi of Brooklyn, New York Branch 41 to come to the stage and outline the AFL-CIO delegate election process. Delegate nominations were held Wednesday, and the election for seven delegates took place immediately following adjournment. The results will be announced Friday.

Letter from Obama

Without disclosing the author, President Young read a letter to delegates that began, "I'm sorry I can't join you in person for your convention, but I want to thank...all the brothers and sisters for your support."

The assembled activists quickly recognized that the author was Sen. Barack Obama, who continued, "I am honored that you voted to endorse our movement for change on Monday. We are grateful to you for devoting your time and hard work."

"It's a testament to the lesson I first learned as a community organizer more than two decades ago, when I was helping working families devastated by the closure of local steel mills...that together, ordinary people can do extraordinary things," the Democratic presidential candidate wrote. He was on an extended trip abroad and unable to accept the NALC's invitation to attend the convention.

Obama noted he is a cosponsor of the Mail Delivery Protection Act and vowed, "As president, I will stand by you in the fight to pass that bill and I will sign it when Congress sends it to my desk."

The Illinois lawmaker concluded by saying he is "counting on you to keep pushing—keep knocking on doors, keep making phone calls, keep talking to friends and neighbors and co-workers. And if you do, I'm confident we won't just defeat John McCain in November—we'll lift up our middle class, strengthen our economy, and bring about fundamental change in our country."

Delegates viewed another video, "Turn Around America," produced by the AFL-CIO, that made the case for sweeping political change in November's election in order to preserve the middle-class lifestyle letter carriers enjoy, and spread its benefits to more working people through the passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. It promoted the Million Member Mobilization petition project for EFCA, which was being

conducted at the Political Action booth in the registration area.

Fighting economist

After the video promoting economic fairness, President Young welcomed to the microphone "a real fighter for the labor

movement," Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

Baker began by noting he was involved in helping NALC with preparations for arbitration last year, before the 2006-2011 contract was settled. "You got a pretty good contract, didn't you?" Baker asked, eliciting applause.

"I know you're enjoying a really good convention,"

he continued. "I'm sorry I have to get up here and tell you a lot of really depressing things about the economy."

No matter what the "official" definition, Baker said, "We are in a recession." Between 2.5 and 3 million homes will be lost to foreclosure in the next year and he called the collapse of the housing bubble "a preventable disaster."

"The people in charge should have seen it coming," he said. "There really was no reason for them not to know."

Baker said big-time bankers and federal policy makers rejected warnings about the housing bubble. When it burst, he said he thought regulators would "really stick it to them."

Instead, the people responsible have escaped largely unscathed. "They're not paying a price," Baker said. Wall Street banks like Bear Sterns have been bailed out by the taxpayer-backed Federal Reserve. The head of Freddie Mac, who "ran his company into the ground," still has his \$19-million-a-year job, which shows "how corrupt the system has become."

Trying to end on an optimistic note, Baker said, "Hopefully, we'll get the right person elected president this fall." If so, it will be time to work for not only corporate accountability, but also health care reform, repeal of tax cuts for the wealthy, and EFCA.

Route evaluation report

In the early afternoon, Executive Vice President Fred Rolando gave a half-hour report on the task force studying possible new methods to evaluate and adjust routes. It also is addressing problems with minor route adjustments.

Rolando said the NALC is pursuing a system that is "simple, inexpensive and non-

intrusive to letter carriers." He said any new process "not only will have to be jointly developed, it also must be jointly implemented."

He described tests being conducted in 12 locations around the country of methods developed by the NALC and the Postal Service. The union and USPS are sharing, comparing and averaging results, trying to find a "win-win" solution.

The effort began after the 2004 Honolulu Convention, where President Young called for a complete overhaul of the inspection and adjustment system. At that time, DOIS was becoming a major source of conflict between carriers and managers.

Calling DOIS a "file cabinet," Rolando said it remains a source of problems because its calculations are still subject to manipulation and abuse, and office time often is not translated into DOIS. A similar problem occurs with COR, which is also the sub-

ject of ongoing tests in three locations.

"COR takes out the time for things that carriers don't do often," he said sarcastically, ticking of a half-dozen items, like accountables and handling packages. The routing system also "sets its own reasonable speed limits, like, say, 115 miles an hour." Delegates chuckled and nodded their heads.



Myra Warren



Tim O'Malley



Dean Baker



Executive Vice President Fred Rolando reported on the alternative route evaluation process task force.

Rolando, who was director of city delivery before becoming EVP, said the current six-day count method "has the potential to work but management chooses to cheat" and abuse the process to steal street time and office time.



NALC AUXILIARY

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When supervisors “manage their by office by intimidation, they get results,” he said, but those results include grievances, especially Article 8 violations that are clogging the Dispute Resolution Process.

The task force will continue trying to move forward, seeking a mutually agreeable method, he said.

Trifecta Thursday

The convention then turned to awards for COLCPE contributors. President Young said he was surprised and pleased that so many delegates were wearing the special blue T-shirts in honor of Trifecta Thursday that the convention floor looked like a sea of blue. “God bless the Super Delegates,” he said. “They are the real trade unionists of America.”

Young then handed out awards to branches, state associations and regions that generated significant COLCPE contributions since the last convention—from August 4, 2006 to July 8, 2008:

LARGEST DOLLAR AMOUNT:

South Florida Branch 1071
California State Association
Region 1 (California, Guam, Hawaii and Nevada)

HIGHEST PERCENT OF MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING:

Waipahu, Hawaii Branch 4683
North Dakota State Association
Region 8 (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee)

MOST MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING THROUGH AUTOMATIC PAYROLL

DEDUCTION: South Florida Branch 1071

HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF AUTOMATIC CONTRIBUTORS:

50 to 100 members: Pascagoula, Mississippi Branch 2241
100 to 500: Newport, Rhode Island Branch 57
500 or more: Honolulu, Hawaii Branch 860

President Young also presided over the drawing to select winners of two COLCPE contest raffles. In the drawing from automatic Gimme 5 for COLCPE contributors, the winner of a 32-inch flat-screen high-definition television was Samuel Willis Jr. of Tulsa, Oklahoma Branch 1358.

In a second drawing, from a pool of all Gimme 5 donors and other qualifying contributors, Elmhurst, Illinois Branch 825 member Arthur Biladeau was picked for a prize package that includes a trip for two to two games of the 2008 World Series.

Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel made some announcements before adjourning the convention at 1:50 p.m. until 10 a.m. Friday.

Delegates vote for AFL-CIO delegates.



The Auxiliary shows its solidarity by wearing NALC blue.

The Cleveland Letter Carrier Band provided

welcoming entertainment as delegates proudly wearing their Super Delegate and Carrier Corps T-shirts entered the general session. Delegates joined in the singing of the National Anthem and followed in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Patsy Mester (Aux. 21–Springfield, Illinois) presented a moment of grace and led the delegation in reciting the collect.

Oklahoma State Auxiliary President Sue Prather provided a preliminary report of the Country Store. Support for this revenue generator has been strong and Prather thanked all who donated and/or volunteered. Prather gave special recognition to Ralph Honda (Aux. 145–Fargo, North Dakota) and Bill Prather (Aux. 141–Oklahoma City, Oklahoma) for their many hours of service to keep the store open throughout the week. A final report of income will be given on Friday.

NALC’s Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Jennifer Alvarez addressed the delegates. Alvarez opened her comments by reiterating that there is an aggressive program in place to motivate and activate as many carriers, Auxiliary members and family members as possible for a successful outcome in the November 2008 elections. Alvarez commended Auxiliary members for the heart and passion they put into each activity to support the union’s legislative and political activities. President Kirby handed Alvarez \$2,093 for COLCPE, which represents the funds raised by the Auxiliary during this convention.

Jacque Ragsdale (Aux. 351–Wichita, Kansas), chair of the Resolutions Committee, introduced her committee, which brought forward three resolutions: a resolution to wish Gloria Alexander a happy retirement after 12 years of service to the NALCA board, a resolution offering a “toast” to the NALCA officers for their commitment and leadership, and a resolution formally endorsing Illinois Sen. Barack Obama as the Democratic nominee for president of the United States. The committee was sustained in their actions.

The following donations were made to charities during this convention: Doherty Scholarship Fund, \$240; American Cancer Society, \$126; MDA, \$1,533; American Heart Association, \$55; St. Jude’s, \$50; American Diabetes Association, \$20.

NALC MDA Director Jim Williams was welcomed to the podium with a standing ovation from the officers, delegates and guests. Williams gave a moving statement about his personal reasons for working hard to find a cure for muscular dystrophy. Williams’ goal is to reinvent and re-enthuse members of the NALC and Auxiliary to continue to raise levels of support for his worthy and important organization. President Kirby announced that since last convention, state and local auxiliaries and individual Auxiliary members have donated over \$2,000 to MDA.

*M. Marie Rasmussen,
NALCA Assistant Secretary*