Special Philadelphia Convention Edition

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Bulletin

Tuesday, July 22

With nod to past, NALC faces new challenges

Tuesday at the Pennsylvania Convention Center found delegates to the NALC's 69th biennial convention taking time to seriously discuss the various challenges carriers must overcome to progress toward future success, while gaining greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by earlier generations to preserve the pay, benefits and working conditions we enjoy today. Along the way, they dispatched the regular convention business and they heard from friends old and new. It was a day of nostalgia and pride as the National Association of Letter Carriers continues its common cause of delivering for America.

President Fredric Rolando

Down to business

NALC President Fredric Rolando called the convention to order at 10:01 a.m. and invited Philadelphia Branch 157's Estes Smith to the stage to sing the National Anthem, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Branch 157's Jay Nichols and an invocation by Rabbi Avi Winokur of Philadelphia's Society Hill Synagogue. Before the regular business of the convention got under way, delegates entertained a motion to pass the hat to help support the family of Mount Clemons, MI Branch 654 letter carrier David Jorah. The 42-year-old letter carrier died unexpectedly while attending his teenage son's out-of-state baseball game, and his family is dealing with significant financial hardship while it waits for various agencies to sort through a mountain of red tape before benefits get disbursed. The convention approved the motion, which under the convention's Rule 23 also needs to be approved by the National Trustees.

Next, President Rolando dispatched the Committee to Extend Greetings to the NALC Auxiliary, holding its 54th biennial convention at the Pennsylvania Convention Center this week.

NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine was at the podium next to give the report of the Executive Council on amendments to the *NALC Constitution*. Rhine then called to the stage National Trustees Chairman Larry Brown and Board of Trustees members Mike Gill and Randy Keller, who led discussion of the five proposed amendments.

Before the trustees began, the convention approved a motion to accept *en bloc* those amendments recommended for approval by the NALC Executive Council. Following divisions, the Committee's recommendations for disapproval were upheld for Amendments No. 1 (calling for a minimum dues structure for city carrier assistants) and No. 3 (regarding deduction of dues from a member's branch per capita check). Amendment No. 2 was withdrawn by its makers. A list of approved amendments will appear in the next *Postal Record*.

Amanda Renteria, candidate for Congress

Invited to the stage to speak next was Amanda Renteria, a Democrat running for a seat in the House of Representatives for California's 21st congressional district.

"Our city center is the post office," Renteria said of her small town located in California's Central Valley. "It's where everyone gathers, and letter carriers go around and share that community spirit.

"A postal job should be a good-paying, middle-class job," she said. "No matter how hot, how heavy, you deliver. And you don't just carry letters. You care for your community."

Special Review Committee

The president then asked the convention to suspend the normal rules for debate to allow for a free-flowing discussion about the future of the NALC.

"In Minneapolis two years ago, I created a Special Review Committee to dig into some ideas we had for the NALC to be more efficient and effective," Rolando said. "Since then, the committee has been meeting and gathering data, and the members are here to report on their initial findings as well as to share some ideas we've received since we gathered in Minneapolis.

NALC Board of Trustees Chairman Larry Brown

"The influx of CCAs has eased the pressure some," he said, "but this is still a valuable discussion for us to have."

The president then introduced the members of the committee, who he said represented every facet of the NALC's governance structure: Chicago, IL Branch 11 President Mack Julion; Mid-Michigan Branch 256 President Paul Gillie; Pawtucket, RI Branch 55 President Jim Langlois; Utah State Association President Philip Rodriquez; NALC Board of Trustees Chairman Larry Brown; NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine; and NALC Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel.

Julion, Gillie, Langlois and Rodriquez each took turns at the mic to review the various ideas the committee has discussed about revamping the union's structure as well as its method of planning and holding conventions.

Then, for about an hour, one delegate after another rose under personal privilege to offer a wealth of new ideas as well as to share some serious concerns they had over concepts presented in Philadelphia as well as in Minneapolis in 2012.

"This is the beginning of the process," Rolando stressed. "We've made no decisions or recommendations, but we're setting up a deliberative review process before we recommend any changes the next time we meet as a body in Los Angeles in 2016."

In closing the discussion, Rolando urged carriers to send their ideas to the committee, which will continue its work and present its recommendations at the 2016 convention in Los Angeles.

Organizing Awards

Rolando then presented awards to the best-organized branches in three size categories. The winners were: Branches with 1,000 or more members—South Florida Branch 1071 and Boston, MA Branch 34 (tie), both with a 97.8 percent membership rate; branches with 500 to 999 members—Rochester, NY Branch 210, with a 98.4 percent membership rate; and branches with fewer than 500 members—Albany, NY Branch 29, with a 100 percent membership rate.

Branches with the highest rate of organization of CCAs also received awards. The winners were: Branches with 1,000 or more members—Hartford, CT Branch 86, with a 95.4 percent rate of CCA membership; branches with 500 to 999 members—San Bernadino, CA Branch 411, with 100 percent of its CCAs signed up as members; and branches with fewer than 500 members—Albany, NY Branch 29, with a 100 percent CCA organization rate.

Mileage and Per Diem

Antonia Shields of Birmingham, AL Branch 530, chairman of the Mileage and Per Diem Committee, then came to the stage. Shields introduced committee members Kenneth Montgomery of Rochester, NY Branch 210, and Lyn Liberty of Phoenix, AZ Branch 576. Shields reported that the per diem amount was set at $441.08. The recommendations of the committee were adopted by voice vote.

Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick

Rolando introduced Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick, a Republican who represents Suburban Philadelphia's Bucks County. After being escorted to the stage by delegates from his district, Fitzpatrick told the convention that members of Congress from both political parties ought to share his strong support for the Postal Service, especially given the fact that it is enshrined in the *U.S. Constitution*.

Director of Safety and Health Manuel Peralta

"It is crucial that Congress do all that is possible to ensure [the Postal Service's] fiscal solvency," he said. "It's the letter carriers who are the front lines of making that happen."

Fitzpatrick described his struggles in Congress to preserve six-day delivery, solve the pre-funding of future retiree health benefits and stand up to congressional foes who don't see the value of the Postal Service. "Some have even hinted that the Postal Service is not needed in the 21st century, and to them I say, That's dead wrong," he said.

Rolando echoed the call for members of both political parties to commit to a strong Postal Service. Fitzpatrick, he said, is "a reminder that the Postal Service is not a blue state service or a red state service; it is an American service that deserves broad, bipartisan support."

Documenting 125 years

The delegates then watched a documentary, "125 Years of Delivering for America," that celebrated NALC's history, from the first letter carriers who worked for pennies a letter, to the struggle for rights, respect, safety and decent pay, to the strike of 1970 that lifted carriers into the middle class. Hosted by letter carrier and part-time actor Lorenzo Hudson of Long Island Merged Branch 6000, the piece concluded with the activism by today's letter carriers to protect their jobs, pay, benefits and work conditions—activism that follows in the footsteps of their predecessors. Following the video, Rolando introduced Hudson, who was rewarded with a letter carrier cheer.

The delegates then approved two resolutions offered from the floor to produce commemorative belt buckles and pins celebrating the 125th anniversary of the union.

Retirement Committee and Nalcrest

Rolando introduced NALC Director of Retired Members Ron Watson, who in turn introduced the members of the Retirement Committee: Ron Brown of Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126; Doug Gulley of Columbus, OH Branch 78; and John Walsh of Albany, NY Branch 29. Watson presented the committee's report to the delegates.

After showing a video about Nalcrest that focused on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the letter carriers' retirement community in Florida, Rolando gave the microphone to Nalcrest President Matty Rose of South Florida Branch 1071. Rose introduced Nalcrest trustees Tom Young of Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 and Don Southern of Lakeland, FL Branch 1779. Rose, Young and Southern each told the delegates about the many amenities available to retirees who choose to live at Nalcrest.

National Auxiliary

Rolando then presented the microphone to Executive Vice President Timothy O'Malley, who is liaison to the NALC Auxiliary. O'Malley introduced the chairman of the Greetings to the Auxiliary Committee, Ron Bergstrom of Green Bay, WI Branch 619, and committee members Emre Edwards of Austin, TX Branch 181 and Mary Smith of Greenwood, MS Branch 1080.

National Trustee Mike Gill

After presenting the committee's report, O'Malley introduced Auxiliary President Linda Kirby, who in turn introduced the Auxiliary's officers: Vice President Cynthia Lang, Secretary Marie Rasmussen, Assistant Secretary George Anna Myers and Treasurer Pam Fore. Kirby announced that she was retiring as president and that Lang had been elected to take the helm of the Auxiliary.

Dale Hart

In a heart-warming tribute, Rolando then welcomed former Director of City Delivery Dale Hart to the stage. Hart, who is in a wheelchair after breaking his neck in a fall, defied doctors who told him he would not regain the ability to speak.

Hart urged the delegates to harness the power of the labor movement to once again elevate the middle class. "You are the NALC—you're members of the strongest union in the United States of America," he said. "Stand up and show that."

Hart expressed gratitude for the donations, cards and well wishes letter carriers have sent him. "I'm deeply touched by your generosity." The delegates gave Hart a standing ovation and a letter carrier cheer.

Rolando recessed the convention at 3:19 p.m.

Wednesday, July 23

A day for strength, safety and solidarity

The third day of Convention Week saw delegates come together to stand up against conservatives in Washington who strives to destroy the middle class, stand shoulder to shoulder with postal and other labor unions, and stand together to make sure we all stay safe on and off our jobs. In Philadelphia, it was truly a day for brotherly love.

Radio and TV host Ed Schultz

Performing "The Star-Spangled Banner" to get the day started was Seattle Branch 79's Austin Cooper. Southeast Pennsylvania Merged Branch 725 President Jim McCullough led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by an invocation from Fr. Michael Reilly, pastor of South Philadelphia's St. Richard of Chichester Roman Catholic Church.

The day's first speaker was Ed Schultz, host of "The Ed Show" on the MSNBC cable TV network as well as host of his eponymous nationally syndicated radio show.

"There is no greater defender of unions and no stronger warrior for workers anywhere in the media than Ed Schultz," NALC President Fredric Rolando said in introducing Schultz.

Schultz described himself as a friend and advocate for letter carriers.

"I'm for the workers," Schultz said. "I know the righties [conservatives] are not, and that's just the way the world is turning right now."

But change is coming, he said. "The politicians who thought they had a better way for America? They're all losing. And they might defeat us individually, but they will never do that collectively.

"Our job—your job—is to make sure they don't get away with it," Schultz said. "That's our mission.

"You have my commitment that I will be there for you," he said to cheers and applause. "We will tell the story. We will make the change. And we will save the Postal Service and restore it to where it's got to be."

Health and safety focus

Rolando shifted gears to discuss what he called "a very important topic for letter carriers and the NALC: Protecting the health and safety of letter carriers.

National Trustee Randy Keller

"Over the past year," he said, "I have tried to talk about two very alarming threats to carriers that have been on the rise in recent years.

"The first is a very difficult topic to talk about, or even raise in polite conversation—which is a common problem for mental health issues," he said. "It is the threat of suicide. Over the past four years, a shocking 72 city letter carriers have taken their own lives."

Describing suicide as a heart-breaking problem, the president noted that although suicide does not arise primarily or exclusively from workplace pressures, "I think we need to talk about this problem and figure out what we can do to help."

The second health and safety issue is an "unacceptable increase" in park point accidents, the president said. These are where carriers are struck by cars or trucks while they work the mail from the back of their postal vehicles.

"Over the past couple of years," Rolando said, "there has been a spate of these kinds of devastating accidents." He then invited NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel Peralta to come to the stage to drive home the threat of unsafe park points.

Peralta noted that there had been a workshop that morning on this very topic. "But we feel this issue is so important that we wanted to come before the whole convention to raise the issue," he said.

The director went on to relate the story of Los Angeles Branch 24 letter carrier Anthony Dunn, who was struck by a car while standing at the rear of his vehicle. Dunn died from his injuries the following morning.

The director said that before Dunn's death, NALC had demanded that management address unsafe park points. It took Dunn's tragic passing to get management to listen and to work with the union to organize a national park point safety standup talk.

Director of City Delivery Brian Renfroe

"The hazard has not ended," Peralta said. "Since Anthony's death, more letter carriers have been struck while standing near their vehicles."

The director then introduced to delegates seven such carriers who traveled to Philadelphia to be a part of the convention. The post offices where some of these members worked had not provided the standup talk: Columbus, OH Branch 78's Doug Poole; Spokane, WA Branch 442's Keith Wagner; Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100's Joel Cabrera and Lydia Ray; New Hampshire Merged Branch 44's Dave Betts; Denver Branch 47's Dan Hohenstein, and Pawtucket, RI Branch 55's Timothy Fournier.

"These carriers came here to drive home the importance of safe park points," Peralta said. "Their message: We can help prevent these kinds of accidents by insisting that the standup talk be given often and by taking action to convince our members to be vigilant about the safety of the park points."

Returning to the podium, President Rolando said letter carriers should ask themselves two questions each day: How do I keep myself out of harm's way? And am I doing enough to protect the safety of letter carriers in my station?

"Safety is an element of our job that sometimes isn't taken seriously enough until we are struck by tragedy," the president said. "As union activists, we must work toward making a safer work environment every day."

Nomination of national officers

Shortly before noon President Rolando turned to the next order of business as required by the *NALC Constitution*: calling for nominations for national office. President Rolando ceded the chair to Executive Vice President Timothy O'Malley, since the first nomination was for the office of president. O'Malley called for nominations, and two were forthcoming from the floor—for Fredric V. Rolando of Sarasota, FL Branch 2148, and for David Noble of Washington, DC Branch 142.

Returning to the microphone, President Rolando sought nominations for all remaining offices, which were offered from the floor as follows (uncontested nominees were elected by consent; contested nominees are listed in alphabetical order):

Executive Vice President (contested)
—Catherine Jones, Minneapolis Br. 9
—Timothy C. O'Malley, Philadelphia Br. 157
Vice President (contested)
—Deidre Beal, South Florida Br. 1071
—Lew Drass, Huntsville, AL Br. 462
Secretary-Treasurer
—Nicole Rhine, Lincoln, NE Br. 8
Asst. Secretary-Treasurer (contested)
—Sharella Spikes, South Florida Br. 1071
—Judy Willoughby, Tallahassee Br. 1172
Director of City Delivery
—Brian Renfroe, Hattiesburg, MS Br. 938
Director, Safety & Health (contested)
—Travis Lober, Arizona Merged Br. 1902
—Manuel L. Peralta Jr., Garden Grove Br. 1100
Director of Life Insurance
—Myra Warren, Dallas Br. 132
Director Health Benefit Plan
—Brian Hellman, New York City Br. 36
Director, Retired Members (contested)
—Ken Ring, Minneapolis Br. 9
—Ron Watson, Corvallis, OR Br. 1274
National Trustees (three positions; contested)
—Erica Bloom, South Florida Br. 1071
—Lawrence D. Brown Jr., Los Angeles Br. 24
—William Haller, St. Petersburg, FL Br. 1477
—Brett Israel, Fort Lauderdale, FL Br. 2550
—Randall L. Keller, Mass. Northeast Mgd. Br. 25
—Mike Gill, South Florida Br. 1071
Region 1 NBA
—Christopher Jackson, Garden Grove Br. 1100
Region 2 NBA
—Paul L. Price, Portland, OR Br. 82
Region 3 NBA (contested)
—Michael Carey, Chicago Br. 11
—Tony Hutson, Galesburg, IL Br. 88
Region 4 NBA
—Roger Bledsoe, Oklahoma City Br. 458
Region 5 NBA
—Mike Birkett, Dubuque Br. 257
Region 6 NBA (contested)
—Patrick C. Carroll, South Macomb, MI Br. 4374
—Gary Smith, Grand Rapids Br. 56
Region 7 NBA
—Chris Wittenburg, St. Paul Br. 28
Region 8 NBA
—Peter S. Moss, Gulf Coast Mgd., MS Br. 1374
Region 9 NBA
—Kenneth Gibbs, Brunswick, GA Br. 313
Region 10 NBA (contested)
—Kathy Baldwin, Beaumont, TX Br. 842
—David Pratt, Albuquerque, NM Br. 504
Region 11 NBA
—Dan Toth, Lorain, OH Br. 583
Region 12 NBA
—William J. Lucini, Philadelphia Br. 157
Region 13 NBA
—Timothy W. Dowdy, Virginia Beach, VA Br. 2819
Region 14 NBA
—John J. Casciano, Boston Br. 34
Region 15 NBA
—Lawrence D. Cirelli, New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Shuler

President Rolando then introduced AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Shuler.

"As important as your work is to every family and business in America," Shuler said, "millions of people count on you for what you do besides deliver mail." She specifically cited letter carriers' work with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and our annual national food drive.

Shuler also said that the upcoming mid-term elections are very important. "If we want to elect the right leaders for working families," she said, "and if we want to build support for the things that make America work, like the Postal Service, we've got to engage all working people—working voters."

Rolando then introduced the NALC's delegates to the AFL-CIO convention held last September: Ingrid Armada of Providence, RI Branch 15; Denise Brooks of Medford, OR Branch 1433; Anita Guzik of Los Angeles, CA Branch 24; Steve Hanna of York, PA Branch 509; Charles Heege of New York, NY Branch 36; Lloyd Doucet Jr. of New Orleans, LA Branch 124; and Elise Foster of Chicago, IL Branch 11. Guzik presented the delegation's report.

Back to business

The delegates then discussed resolutions related to the National Agreement. Delegates voted to approve two resolutions after the sponsors agreed to changes recommended by the Executive Council, and also approved a resolution calling for USPS to provide traffic cones for postal vehicles to improve safety. The delegates upheld the Executive Council's disapproval of a resolution related to time limits on emergency placements and another calling for USPS to give letter carriers a percentage of the funds brought in by the Customer Connect program. A list of approved resolutions will appear in the next *Postal Record*.

Rolando then introduced Stephen Sombrotto, son of former NALC President Vincent Sombrotto, who passed away last year. Stephen Sombrotto shared memories of his father and his family's experiences with the NALC. "We've always looked at NALC members as our stepbrothers and stepsisters," he said. "The letter carriers will always be attached to our lives and our families."

Rolando then handed the microphone to the Credentials Committee, whose final report stated that 6,276 delegates representing 588 branches from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were in attendance, along with 72 at-large delegates and 28 national officers.

The president next gave the awards for e-Activist Network participation. The winners were: Branch with the highest percentage of e-Activists with 50 to 99 members—Pearl City, HI Branch 4682, 85 percent; branch with the highest participation, 100 to 499 members—Eugene, OR Branch 916, 72 percent; branch with the highest participation, 500 to 999 members—Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126, 60 percent; branch with the highest participation, 1,000 to 1,999 members—Kansas City, MO Branch 30, 33 percent; branch with the highest participation, 2,000 to 3,999 members—Philadelphia Branch 157, 28 percent; branch with the highest participation, 4,000 or more members—South Florida Branch 1071, 26 percent; state with the highest participation—Alaska State Association, 42 percent; and region with the highest participation—Region 5 (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas), 27 percent.

APWU President Mark Dimondstein

The delegates viewed a video greeting from American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein, who thanked letter carriers for their participation in the Postal Union Alliance, the four postal unions that are working in unison to protect the Postal Service and postal jobs, including the struggle to save six-day delivery and stop closure of postal facilities.

Director of Retired Members Ron Watson

"The Postal Union Alliance is a vital step in the process of building a grand alliance with the people of this country in defense of the public's Postal Service, in defense of their national treasure," he said.

As an expression of solidarity, Rolando announced that following the end of the day's session, delegates would rally against the arrangement between the Postal Service and Staples that outsources postal clerk jobs. At the "Stop Staples" rally, letter carriers signed a petition that was delivered to a Philadelphia Staples store; a video of the events was sent to the APWU convention being held this week in Chicago.

History lessons

The delegates then enjoyed a film made from restored color footage taken at the NALC's 32nd biennial convention held in Milwaukee in 1939, the year NALC turned 50.

Rolando next welcomed former letter carrier Phil Rubio, associate professor of history at North Carolina A&T University, to the mic. Rubio described in his book, *There's Always Work at the Post Office*, how postal jobs have offered upward mobility to African-Americans. Rubio has asked convention delegates who participated in the strike of 1970 to provide him with their recollections of it.

Next, Rolando welcomed author and playwright Calvin Ramsey to the podium. Ramsey explained the historical framework of his children's book, *Ruth and the Green Book*, which tells the almost forgotten story of *The Green Book*, published by letter carrier Victor Green before the civil rights era, which listed places where traveling African-Americans could find places to eat, sleep, use restrooms or get medical care without facing discrimination.

Committee reports

Rolando then invited the Board of Trustees to the microphone. Trustees Chairman Lawrence D. Brown Jr. of Los Angeles Branch 24, assisted by trustees Randall Keller of Northeast Massachusetts Merged Branch 25 and Michael Gill of South Florida Branch 1071, gave the trustees' report.

Next, Rolando introduced the members of the Band Committee—Chairman Charles Sexton of St. Louis Branch 343 and Ernest Phillips of Cleveland Branch 40—who gave their committee's report.

Rolando recessed the convention at 3:14 p.m.

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