Special Philadelphia Convention Edition

NALC Bulletin

Number 14-08 July 21, 2014

Remembering our past, finding future success

In his keynote speech on Monday, July 21, to the more than 5,300 delegates on hand for the National Association of Letter Carriers' 69th Biennial Convention in Philadelphia, NALC President Fredric V. Rolando highlighted the many victories letter carriers have celebrated since the 2012 convention in Minneapolis, while also laying out the challenges the union faces in the coming months and years.

President Fredric Rolando

With a balance of wit and gravitas—topped off by some good old-fashioned labor union passion—Rolando noted what a remarkable achievement it is within the labor movement that our union is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. He used that milestone as a springboard to review the NALC's past successes as they relate to the challenges that lie ahead—for the union and for the U.S. Postal Service.

"The task before us is a daunting one," he said, "because it involves a wide variety of fronts—political, legislative, managerial, commercial, not to mention the media and the public. But the National Association of Letter Carriers is up to the task. Our union is strong and unified, we know what's at stake, and we have the facts on our side."

Brotherly love, sisterly compassion

At 10 o'clock sharp, NALC Secretary-Treasure Jane Broendel called the convention to order and invited South Florida Branch 1071 letter carrier Stephanie Bostic to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Following Bostic were Philadelphia Branch 157's Leo Zachwieja for the Pledge of Allegiance and, for the invocation, the Rev. Al Rossi from Philadelphia's Church of the Living Hope.

Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel

Next, Broendel called for a moment of silence to remember and honor the NALC members who have died since the 2012 convention in Minneapolis.

Philadelphia Branch 157 President Randy Zebin was then invited to the stage to welcome delegates to his city. Zebin had the honor of introducing Philadelphia Postmaster Howard Sample and Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO President Patrick Eiding.

In his brief remarks, Eiding noted that the local Teamsters and Carpenters unions have a dispute with the facility that runs the Pennsylvania Convention Center, which was why some members from both of those unions were distributing leaflets to NALC convention-goers outside the center throughout the day. Although those unions are not calling the informational effort a picket line, their dispute was enough to prevent Rep. Bob Brady (D-PA)—a card-carrying member of the Carpenters union—from attending the convention. (NALC President Rolando later read a letter of regret from Brady.)

Returning to the podium, Broendel asked the retired national officers on stage to stand and be recognized. She then handed the mic over to NALC Region 12 National Business Agent Bill Lucini, who in turn introduced the other 14 national business agents and called on the regional administrative assistants to stand up and take a bow.

'Let's get to work'

Broendel returned to the microphone and introduced the NALC's resident national officers.

As Rolando took the stage to the sounds of Ike and Tina Turner's version of "Philadelphia Freedom," the letter carrier delegates stood and cheered.

Region 12 NBA Bill Lucini

"Not many institutions get to celebrate their 125th anniversary," Rolando said. "That's a remarkable achievement when one considers how much has changed since the NALC was founded in Milwaukee 125 years ago.

"Our union has endured and thrived through tumultuous times," the president continued. "It is a proud history of service, solidarity and progress—a history we celebrate this week."

Rolando noted that he had reported to the Minneapolis Convention in 2012 that immense challenges complicated the NALC's efforts to defend letter carriers at the bargaining table and in Congress—challenges such as the poor economy, congressional dysfunction, misguided USPS leadership and technological change.

"It is sobering to report that many of these obstacles remain with us today," Rolando said.

And while the Internet technology revolution shows no sign of abating, he said, "technological change may be one area where there is cause for cautious optimism." The Internet also is generating new business via soaring e-commerce deliveries, Rolando said.

Successes and loss

But despite the challenges of the past two years, the president said, letter carriers can point to several positive victories as well, particularly our work with the broader labor movement during the 2012 general election to halt the surge of anti-labor political forces in the United States, and the contract the NALC secured through interest arbitration.

"Although we did not emerge unscathed from the binding arbitration process, we achieved our most important strategic goals," he said. "We won pay increases, kept our COLA clause, maintained the ban on sub-contracting, won an all full-time career workforce and developed a pathway to career jobs for non-career bargaining unit letter carriers. We avoided a permanent two-tier workforce and helped position the Postal Service to become a major player in package delivery again."

Our satisfaction at these successes, Rolando said, was tempered by the January 2013 death of what he called "our union's animating spirit over the past 40 years," former NALC President Vincent R. Sombrotto.

"To call Vince a giant in NALC history would be an understatement," President Rolando said. "He was a leader like no other.

Executive Vice President Timothy O'Malley

"Nobody knew better than Vince that NALC conventions are about the future," Rolando added. "So while we celebrate our distinguished history this week and review the events of the past two years, we should also draw inspiration for the battles ahead."

Six-day in play

Philadelphia marks the third consecutive convention that finds the NALC battling USPS over Saturday delivery, Rolando said. "For L'Enfant Plaza, Saturday delivery is a cost, plain and simple," he said. "For us, Saturday delivery is the Postal Service's competitive advantage."

But our problems aren't limited to L'Enfant Plaza, the president said. "The past two years, we've defeated several legislative efforts that would have harmed the Postal Service, us, and the millions of businesses and people who depend on a robust Postal Service," Rolando said. "We beat back these proposals, thanks to excellent work from our legislative and political staff and you, our grassroots activists."

There is a silver lining in the legislative process, the president said. "The Obama administration has agreed to discuss alternative proposals for postal reform in next year's budget," Rolando said. "Plus, the recent financial turnaround at USPS and personnel changes at the Office of Management and Budget give us hope that we can turn the administration in our favor.

The NALC has made other progress, too. "We have changed the conversation by getting out the message about the actual financial condition of USPS. We have built unity among the four postal unions," Rolando said. "And with them we have reached consensus among key business groups, mailers and trade associations on a sensible industry coalition plan."

This plan, developed with the other postal unions as part of our recently formed alliance, became the core of a consensus plan the NALC hopes to offer Congress in the future.

Success beyond the bargaining table

NALC faced two major challenges in the last round of collective bargaining, Rolando said: The Postal Service's financial losses, and the agreement reached by APWU in 2011, which complicated the task of resisting USPS' concessionary demands.

Vice President Lew Drass

"Thanks to the tireless efforts of the NALC's officers, staff, legal team and expert witnesses," the president said, "the Das Award in January 2013 allowed us to meet most of our strategic goals: Producing a fair contract for letter carriers and for the Postal Service."

The Das award created a path to career employment for part-time letter carriers as well via the city carrier assistant (CCA) position. "The CCA workforce remains a work in progress," Rolando said. "Looking forward, we will focus on reducing the percentage of non-career carriers, raising CCA compensation by achieving general increases and COLAs, improving their health benefit coverage and winning pension credit for CCA service.

"But we are not waiting for the next round of bargaining to make progress for CCAs," he said, noting that the NALC has entered into multiple memorandums of understanding with the Postal Service that have resulted in thousands of part-time flexible and CCA conversions to full-time career status.

"The stakes in organizing CCAs are high," he said, "because CCAs, who are more numerous and who have a clear path to career status, are pivotal to the future of the NALC."

But even as the NALC fights for long-term job security, the president said, the union remains dedicated to preserving the safety, health and well being of our active members.

"That has been the focus of the joint Safety-Service Committee," Rolando said, "set up to deal with routine delivery outside traditional delivery hours and to combat unsafe work conditions, whether in sunshine or after dark."

The work of the committee, he said, has resulted in major staffing improvements, hundreds of route adjustments, changes to starting times, revised transportation schedules and improved safety equipment and practices.

A look ahead

"At the Minneapolis Convention we began a discussion about the future of the NALC, its structure and possible reforms to become more efficient and effective," Rolando said. To advance that debate, Rolando appointed a Special Review Committee composed of branch, state and national leaders to report on these matters to the Philadelphia Convention. "Our goal," he said, "is to maintain our powerful union so letter carriers can shape their destinies together.

"It's up to us to save the Postal Service, just as we have always done," he said. "We cannot count on USPS management or Board of Governors members. We have to stay strong and mobilize enough allies to force change in Congress. We need a new USPS governance structure and new management.

Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine

"Imagining and building a dynamic postal service for the 21st century is the challenge for the next two years and for the next 25 years as well," the president said.

"That's the mission we must embrace in Philadelphia," Rolando said. "Together, brothers and sisters, nobody can defeat us. Nobody can divide us, and nobody can get in our way."

"Let's get to work!" the president said to thunderous applause.

Credentials Committee

Following his keynote address, Rolando called to the stage the chairman of the Convention Credentials Committee, Rod Holub of Manhattan, KS Branch 1018, to give the committee's preliminary report.

Holub stated that by Sunday evening, a total of 5,365 delegates had reported to the Philadelphia Convention, representing 487 branches across 49 states. He also reported that the committee had investigated a protest by a member who claimed to be an elected convention delegate omitted from his branch's delegate eligibility list. Holub reported that the committee's investigation had found the protest to be without merit.

Rolando said that the committee's figures meant that the convention had a quorum under Article 3, Section 3 of the *NALC Constitution*. The Credentials Committee will submit its final report later in the week.

Rules Committee

President Rolando next invited Convention Rules Committee Chairman Dan Tegreeny to the stage. Tegreeny, a member of Central Florida Branch 1091, introduced the other members of the committee: Baton Rouge, LA Branch 129's Troy Scott and Central Iowa Merged Branch 352's Stephanie Stewart.

By acclamation, the convention voted to accept the convention rules *en bloc*.

Board of Elections

President Rolando then introduced his appointee as election commissioner and chairman of the Board of Tellers, Joe DeRossi of Brooklyn, NY Branch 41, who listed the Board's members:

President Emeritus William Young

Helen Amill, Branch 36, New York, NY; David Barbuzzi, Branch 25, Mass. NE Merged; Bill Bauder, Branch 442, Spokane, WA; James Beach, Branch 644, Muscatine, IA; Steve Bilzing, Branch 155, Belleville, IL; Kevin Boyer, Branch 763, Columbia, MO; Scott Correll, Branch 115, Wilkes-Barre, PA; Terry Davis, Branch 1358, Tulsa, OK; Tonya Detrick, Branch 443, Hagerstown, MD; Marcus Garcia, Branch 24, Los Angeles, CA; Jim Gleason, Branch 920, Bux-Mont, PA; Richard Griffin, Branch 2502, Las Vegas, NV; Mike Harazmus, Branch 46, Western Massachusetts; Bob Henning, Branch 53, Northeast Florida; Ernest Knight, Branch 1071, South Florida; Doug Lape, Branch 43, Cincinnati, OH; Jim Lostumbo, Branch 134, Syracuse, NY; Wayne Martin, Branch 47, Denver, CO; Vincent Mase, Branch 19, New Haven, CT; Kathy McGarrity, Branch 2805, New Braunfels, TX; Mark McGrady, Branch 38, New Jersey Merged; Timothy McKay, Branch 531, Charleston, WV; David Miller, Branch 458, Oklahoma City, OK; Marie Montano, Branch 504, Albuquerque, NM; John Paige, Branch 927, Pocatello, ID; Margaret Parker, Branch 219, Aurora, IL; Francisco Pecunia-Vega, Branch 1128, Fayetteville, NC; Darla Peterson, Branch 491, Sioux Falls, SD; Jeffrey Rainey, Branch 30, Kansas City, MO; Carlos Rodriguez, Branch 1456, Brownsville, TX; Paul Roznowski, Branch 3126, Royal Oak, MI; Perry Sprachmann, Branch 196, Elyria, OH; Paul Toms, Branch 39, Indianapolis, IN; Chris Verville, Branch 4, Nashville, TN; Andrew Weiner, Branch 562, Jamaica, NY and Timothy Whelan, Branch 157, Philadelphia, PA.

Resolutions

The delegates voted to approve *en bloc* all proposed resolutions that had been recommended for approval by the Executive Council. They then debated some of the resolutions recommended for disapproval. Two resolutions were approved after the sponsors agreed to make changes recommended by the Executive Council.

The delegates voted to uphold the Executive Council's disapproval of a resolution that would have called for limiting the percentage of CCAs as a proportion of the total carrier workforce at the installation level rather than the district level. Following a division, delegates upheld the Executive Council's disapproval of a resolution that would have called for NALC to negotiate for different pay levels in different parts of the country. Several other resolutions were withdrawn. A list of approved resolutions is in the *Convention Chronicle* and will appear in the next *Postal Record*.

Saluting former NALC presidents

Rolando then turned the microphone over to President Emeritus William H. Young, who noted the NALC's work of protecting the Postal Service and letter carriers' jobs.

"I congratulate all the members of this great union," Young said.

Rolando then read a letter from President Emeritus James H. Rademacher. The former president expressed his regret that health problems kept him from attending the convention. The delegates later viewed an inspirational video about Rademacher's vital role in the NALC's history, including negotiating with the Nixon administration for legislation that created the modern Postal Service and gave letter carriers collective-bargaining rights.

Greetings from Sen. Warren

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) then greeted the delegates in a video message. Warren noted that she is a co-sponsor of the Postal Service Protection Act (S. 316), legislation supported by NALC that would take actions to put the Postal Service on a footing to thrive and compete, including ending the mandate to pre-fund future retiree health care benefits and preserving six-day delivery. Warren also called for expanding the Postal Service's role in the economy by allowing access to financial transaction services for rural, low-income and other people who have been shut out of the banking system.

"We need a strong Postal Service to strengthen and grow our economy," she said. "The Postal Service is a critical part of our community, and hard-working letter carriers are the key to its success."

The delegates returned the favor of Warren's video by recording a letter carrier cheer to be delivered to her.

Customer Connect

Executive Vice President Timothy C. O'Malley then presented awards to carriers who, since the last convention, have generated leads of more than $1 million through the Customer Connect program since the last convention.

Richard Nash, eBay

eBay's Richard Nash

Next, Rolando introduced Richard Nash, eBay's head of U.S., Canada and Latin America government affairs; eBay is one of the Postal Service's largest parcel shipping customers. A quarter of all parcels handled by USPS, Nash said, are generated by eBay, bringing in $2.2 billion in postage paid.

Nash said the Postal Service is essential to his company's success, and eBay is a committed partner in NALC's efforts to protect the Postal Service. "For every individual or small business with something to sell on eBay, someone needs to pick up the package," he said, "and someone needs to deliver it to the home or business of the buyer. And that someone is you.

"It goes without saying that eBay especially loves the six-day delivery schedule," Nash said.

Secretary-Treasurer's report

Secretary-Treasurer Jane Broendel then presented her secretary-treasurer's report and financial report to the delegates, noting the opportunities and challenges that the influx of CCAs has brought to the union. Membership levels, she said, have halted their rapid decline of the last decade—the number of active members remains steady at about 180,000, and retired members at about 89,000. Taking full advantage of the Postal Service's hiring trend will require a focus on organizing, since NALC membership among CCAs lags behind career carriers.

Broendel's report was poignant because it was her last—she will retire at the end of her term in December. She has served as national secretary-treasurer since 2002, after becoming the NALC's first female national officer when she was sworn in as assistant secretary-treasurer in 1998.

"I say thank you, and goodbye, to all of you for all the wonderful years you have allowed me to serve as your national secretary-treasurer," Broendel said. "It's certainly been an honor and a pleasure." The delegates responded with extended standing applause. Rolando then led delegates in a letter carrier cheer for Broendel.

Committee on President's Biennial Report

Rolando next introduced the chairmen of the Committee on the President's Biennial Report, Ken Christy of Aurora, IL Branch 219. Christy introduced committee members Kimberly Arnhold of Pasadena, TX Branch 3867 and Joe Henschen of West Coast Florida Branch 1477. A motion to accept the biennial report was approved.

Honoring the deceased

Delegates watched a video, "Remembering Vince," in which many NALC activists and Sombrotto family members shared their memories of the hero of the 1970 postal strike, Vincent Sombrotto, who passed away last year. The video was an expanded version of the one shown at a celebration of the former president's life that followed the memorial service held in New York in January.

The delegates then observed a moment of silence as Rolando read the names of nine carriers killed in the line of duty since the 2012 convention. Their names will be added to the memorial at NALC Headquarters honoring carriers lost on the job: Atzelia Borges, San Juan, PR Branch 869; John A. Watzlawick, Independence, MO Branch 30; Stephen K. Bishop, Phoenix, AZ Branch 576; Robert R. Rochester, Wilmington, DE Branch 191; Kenneth C. Carrano, Brick Town, NJ Branch 5420; Juan C. Riestra, West Palm Beach, FL Branch 1690; Alan R. Nobile, Long Island Merged, NY Branch 6000; Leo M. Brandt, Minneapolis, MN Branch 9 and Leo R. Sucharski, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3.

Rolando recessed the convention at 20 minutes past 3 p.m.

National Association of Letter Carriers
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144
202-393-4695 | www.nalc.org

Fredric V. Rolando, *President*

EDITORIAL STAFF:
Philip Dine, *Director of Communications and Media Relations*
Mike Shea, *Designer/Web Editor*
Joe Conway, *Internet Communications Coordinator*
Rick Hodges, *Writer/Editor*
Jenessa Kildall, *Editorial Assistant*

NALC Bulletin is published semi-regularly by the National Association of Letter Carriers. Postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Membership Department, NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

CHANGE of ADDRESS? Contact the Membership Department.

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Circulation: 10,000. Union-printed using soy-based inks.

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