



NALC Convention CHRONICLE

Covering the first session: Monday, Aug. 5, 2024



Grow. Rise. Together.

The 73rd Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers began on Monday, August 5, with a powerful clarion call for solidarity by NALC President Brian L. Renfro issued to the thousands of delegates gathered at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

“Our solidarity is what makes our union strong. It’s what grounds us in our rich history and it’s what will propel us to the future,” he said.

Looking back, Renfro noted that Boston was the birthplace of the American Revolution, the home of the first post office in America, and the host of NALC’s first convention.

“They convened here in 1890, just one year after our union was founded in Milwaukee, WI,” he said. “While this convention looks a little bit different than our union’s first... I do know that our mission is the same as it was in 1890: to come together to fight for the rights and working lives of city letter carriers.”

Banner.” Greene was followed by Dave Barbuzzo of Massachusetts Northeast Merged Branch 25, who led delegates in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Byron Shelton, president of Central Florida Branch 1091, gave the invocation.

Rhine then called to the stage Boston Branch 34 President Tom Rooney, who warmly welcomed delegates to the city.

Next, Rhine introduced the retired national officers in attendance at this year’s convention and asked Rick DiCecca, the national business agent (NBA) for Region 14 (which includes Massachusetts), to come to the microphone to introduce his fellow NBAs and to acknowledge the union’s regional administrative assistants, regional office assistants, regional grievance assistants, legislative and political organizers, regional workers’ compensation assistants and NALC Headquarters letter carrier staff.

Returning to the lectern, Rhine introduced NALC’s resident national officers before calling President Renfro to the microphone to deliver his keynote address.

Chicago convention in 2022. In that time, the union has been negotiating a new national agreement, protecting carriers as USPS oversees its 10-year Delivering for America plan, dealing with postal staff shortages with memorandums of understanding implementing all-career models in hundreds of installations, growing the Letter Carrier Political Fund while also advocating for letter carriers in the halls of Congress, hosting the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, and raising millions of dollars for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

“All this progress has only been possible through our collective effort—our empowered solidarity,” he said.

But NALC isn’t going to rest on its laurels. “Our theme here this week is Grow. Rise. Together,” he said. “As we look ahead to the next two years of our union, I encourage you all to embrace this convention theme.”

Back together in Boston

At 10 a.m., NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine called the convention to order. Asheboro, NC Branch 2560 member Tim Greene was next on stage to deliver a rousing rendition of “The Star-Spangled

‘Empowered solidarity’

After a look at what the city of Boston has meant to the union and the nation, President Renfro explained that NALC has been hard at work since the Chi-

Collective bargaining

NALC entered into negotiations on a new national agreement in February 2023 after having faced severe challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Letter carriers have long known the power of our network, our workforce and our craft, and the pandemic reminded the rest of the country,” he said. “We are the

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heartbeat of the Postal Service. We keep it running and we always will.”

Despite historically low unemployment rates and labor victories in the private sector, the Postal Service faces unique challenges.

“Even though the Postal Service had record-breaking increases in parcel revenue during the pandemic, and the crushing pre-funding mandate was repealed through the Postal Service Reform Act, higher-than-expected costs due to surging inflation, significant investments in new infrastructure, and the high employee-turnover costs all contributed to the Postal Service reporting a loss of \$6.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2023,” he said.

Still, NALC has seen an opportunity to negotiate a fair contract that strengthens the letter carrier workforce while helping USPS achieve the goals of its 10-year plan. NALC’s primary goals have been to:

- Obtain wage increases and maintain cost-of-living protections for letter carriers that reward carriers for their contributions to the Postal Service and that recognize the increasingly challenging nature of the work.
- Eliminate the two-table wage structure and replace it with a single pay table that not only increases starting pay, but also raises top pay while reducing the time it takes to get there.
- Maintain health care, leave and retirement benefits.
- Maintain protections against job threats such as subcontracting.
- Negotiate changes to work rules that would benefit NALC members.

Even as NALC continues to negotiate, it also has prepared for interest arbitration, including selecting Arbitrator Dennis R. Nolan to serve as the neutral chair of the

three-person interest arbitration panel. President Renfro remains hopeful that negotiations will succeed in getting the best agreement for letter carriers.

“Today, we are near agreement on the major economic pieces of a tentative agreement. It is very possible, even likely, that a tentative agreement to send out to NALC members to consider for ratification will be reached,” he said. “Such an agreement will address the goals that I’ve outlined from the start of this process last year.”

Renfro said that as much as he would like, he cannot make the process go faster, but he’s “committed to staying in this fight to get what our members have earned and deserve. We are almost there, and we are going to finish that job.” Still, he added, NALC is prepared to go to interest arbitration if negotiations fall apart.

“I can assure you of this: Any negotiated agreement that is sent to our members for ratification will be one that fairly rewards and compensates letter carriers for our vital contributions to the Postal Service, and one that will uphold our union’s 50-plus-year tradition of achieving the best results we can in collective bargaining,” he said.

Delivering for America

President Renfro updated delegates on the union’s role in the Postal Service’s 10-year plan. One part of the plan is the modernization of USPS’s vehicle fleet, especially through the design and manufacturing of the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV).

“As a result, all new vehicles will include air conditioning, advanced safety technology, and they will meet the needs of our work, not just today, but into the future,” he said. “Our goal has always been to ensure that the Postal Service acquires a delivery vehicle fleet that provides a safe and ergonomic working environment for letter carriers—and we’re finally well on our way to achieving that.”

Some gas-powered NGDVs already have been deployed to the Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC) in Athens, GA. More—including many of the electric-drive version—will be rolling into other offices soon.

NALC also has worked to modify USPS’s plans for establishing S&DCs. “We have been involved every single time the

Postal Service has proposed and subsequently established a new Sorting and Delivery Center,” President Renfro said.

NALC Headquarters representatives work with regional and branch leaders to identify issues that might arise. NALC then meets with the Postal Service to address those issues as the S&DC is implemented.

“We know the network must be modernized, which will not happen without some bumps in the road,” he said. “But it’s essential that NALC continue to have a voice as the plan moves forward—and we will make our voice heard.”

‘Enough is enough’

Next, President Renfro addressed the increase in crimes against letter carriers, noting that since 2020, more than 2,000 such incidents have been committed nationwide—including the murder of four carriers since the 2022 Chicago convention.

“It’s heartbreaking, it is appalling, and it is completely unacceptable,” he said.

When NALC realized how few of these crimes were being prosecuted, branches mobilized to raise awareness by holding “Enough is enough” rallies with the help of Headquarters. And while that has led to increased prosecutions in some areas, NALC also turned to Capitol Hill, where bipartisan legislation has been introduced.

The Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/S. 4356) seeks to deter the crimes by federally prosecuting anyone who attacks a carrier and by holding those found guilty accountable.

“We won’t stop until every single crime against a letter carrier has been prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” Renfro said. “The legislation now has more than 100 co-sponsors in the House. There’s a companion bill in the Senate, and we’re going to keep fighting every day until these provisions are signed into law.”

Heat safety

NALC has been working for more than a decade to push for a national rule to protect workers from extreme heat, which is starting to come to fruition.

“Just last month, the Department of Labor released a proposed heat standard work rule. This proposed rule includes all of the measures recommended by experts to mitigate the hazards of excessive heat,” President Renfro said. “We look forward



to doing our part to make it a reality. We are optimistic about the difference it will make for letter carriers and all workers who, year after year, are increasingly affected by working in excessive heat.”

Other priority legislation

NALC continues to push for the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset, as well as for a bill that would allow employees to buy back their non-career time to make it creditable toward retirement.

In addition, NALC is calling for legislation that would allow USPS to diversify its investment portfolio of retirement funds, as well as preparing for a possible bill to fix the miscalculated Civil Service Retirement System pension calculations.

Decision 2024

With national elections around the corner, President Renfro announced that the convention would consider a resolution to endorse Vice President Kamala Harris for president. In addition, he said that NALC would be active in the AFL-CIO’s Labor 2024 program to elect pro-labor candidates across the federal government.

“No one can predict the future, and no one knows what the outcome of the election will be; I know one thing for sure: We letter carriers are ready to defend our democracy and deliver America’s votes once again,” he said. “So please participate in our democratic process—not just through our work as letter carriers, but by having a plan to vote yourself.”

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Renfro then highlighted parts of an extensive plan for new NALC initiatives and expansions of existing ones:

- Standardize training and deliver it in a modular format to make it more widely accessible. Also, develop an eLearning virtual training platform.
- Increase pressure on management to comply with the contract.
- Grow the Letter Carrier Political Fund beyond the 12 percent of members who contribute.
- Work to organize other delivery workers, including Amazon and FedEx employees, especially by guaranteeing workers’ rights to organize and collectively bargain. Supporting the PRO Act

- is a first step.
- Expand the new NALC Emergency Response Team, which assists members who face challenges related to traumatic incidents.
 - Embrace diversity, equity and inclusion in the union.
 - Create a women’s mentoring program to identify, support and develop current and future women leaders.

“I’ve laid out a lot for you here this morning. We’ve talked about what we’ve been working on, what we’re working toward, and what we’re going to implement to get there,” President Renfro said. “The common thread to accomplish any meaningful results is to do it together.”

To enthusiastic applause, the NALC president concluded, “We won’t turn our backs on each other or just look out for ourselves. That goes against everything that being an NALC member is about. “We’ll look out for one another. Always. “We will grow. We’ll rise. And we’ll do it the way we always have done it—together.”

Back to business

Following Renfro’s remarks, the NALC president called the chairman of the Committee on the President’s Report, Alvin Matsumura of Honolulu, HI Branch 860, to the podium. Matsumura introduced committee members Janell Harris, Grand Forks, ND Branch 517; Louise Jordan, San Antonio, TX Branch 421; Sylvain Stevens, Charlotte, NC Branch 545; and Andy Tuttle, Lawrence, KS Branch 104. After the committee read its report, the convention voted to approve the report.

President Renfro then introduced AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who was escorted to the stage by NALC’s AFL-CIO delegates.

Shuler spoke of the energy and excitement surrounding the current political climate, but said that it’s about more than just winning the next election. “If you look around, something absolutely amazing is happening all over this country. Workers are reclaiming our power. Workers are realizing, ‘Hey, there is a way to fight back.’” she said.



The AFL-CIO president praised NALC for being at the forefront throughout the pandemic, reform battles and political attacks. “It hasn’t been easy for one second,” Shuler said. “This country does not work without you. And it’s about damn time that our leaders recognized that.”

The convention gave Shuler a hearty Letter Carrier Cheer following her remarks.

The delegates then heard from Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA). A former ironworker, Lynch praised the courage and dedication of letter carriers who risk their health to deliver the mail, recalling the anthrax attacks through the mail that occurred only days after his first election in 2001.

“You understood the duty you owed to your country at a very difficult time,” Lynch said. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, he said, “the true patriots of the NALC continued to report to duty in the face of a global pandemic.”

Lynch, a longtime friend of letter carriers, vowed, “I will be introducing legislation to require the Postal Service to modernize and diversify its strategy for investing postal retiree assets in order to generate much better rates of return for you.”

The convention delegates thanked Lynch with a Letter Carrier Cheer.

Following Rep. Lynch’s speech, President Renfro invited Delano Wilson of Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611, chairman of the Credentials Committee, to the podium to deliver a preliminary report. Wilson said that 5,109 delegates representing 602 branches were present.

Renfro then called Dan Tegreeny, chairman of the Rules Committee, to the podium. Tegreeny introduced the committee members: Michele Galda, Cherry Hill/Haddonfield, NJ Branch 769; Joe Henschen, West Coast Florida Branch 1477; Tonya Releford, Fort Smith, AR Branch 399; and

Charles Jonscher Jr., Kansas City, KS Br. 499; Yvette Kinard, New York, NY Br. 36; Ted Lee, Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84; Eric Lomax, Jamaica, NY Br. 562; John Long, Jamaica, NY Br. 562; Jamaal Mattocks, Raleigh, NC Br. 459; Miriah McMillan, South Suburban Mgd., IL Br. 4016; Guillermo McPherson, Austin, TX Br. 181; Marie Montana, Albuquerque, NM Br. 504; Lori Ann Mottolo, Willoughby, OH Br. 3688; Allen Muff, South Jersey, NJ Br. 908; Karen Nance, Washington, DC Br. 142; Joe Otero, New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38; Armando Pedreira, New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38; Casey Ritchie, Oklahoma City, OK Br. 458; Eric Salazar, Grand Junction, CO Br. 913; Percy Smith, Emerald Coast, FL Br. 4559; Jerri Stockberger, Lafayette, IN Br. 466; Derek Sykes, Chicago, IL Br. 11; Jim Thigpen, North FL Br. 53; Richard Thurman, St. Louis, MO Br. 343; and Dan Wheeler, MA Northeast Mgd. Br. 25.

Renfro then remembered former long-time Election Commissioner Joe DeRossi of Brooklyn, NY Branch 41, who died earlier this year, and invited Weiner back to the podium to speak about DeRossi and introduce a short video featuring the carrier’s unique sense of humor.

Secretary-Treasurer Rhine explained the resolutions process. Delegates then approved a resolution by acclamation introduced by President Renfro to bestow the honorary title of president emeritus on former NALC President Fredric V. Rolando.

Renfro then called Rolando to the stage. Rolando urged the delegates to remain focused on the job of representing and advocating for their members back home.

“With all these issues facing letter carriers,” he said, “we have got to be at full strength and capacity as a union to deal with all these issues, don’t we?”

Rolando urged unity as the union moves forward: “We all need to put aside our politics, our egos, any anger, and together focus on the best way to serve our members—that’s what we’re elected to do.”

The delegates responded with a hearty Letter Carrier Cheer.

President Renfro returned to the podium to deliver a presentation honoring the fallen letter carriers who have died on the job since the Chicago convention in 2022. The 26 names were displayed while bagpipers Kevin Conroy and Dan Norton from Boston Branch 34 played “Amazing Grace.”

After that, President Renfro recognized winners of NALC’s publications contest for 2022-2024. Here are the first-place winners:

- Overall Excellence among Large Branch Publications: Boston, MA Branch 34’s CLAN.
- Overall Excellence among Small Branch Publications: Fort Collins, CO Branch 849’s 849 Express.
- Best News or Feature Article: North Carolina State Association of Letter Carriers for “Mark Wilson: A Rare Breed,” written by Richard Thayer.
- Promoting Unionism: Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126 for “Looking Back, Moving Forward,” written by John Dick.
- Best Editorial or Column: Duluth, MN Branch 114 for “From Your President,” written by Joel Tracey.
- Best Cartoon or Photo: North Carolina State Association of Letter Carriers, for the cartoon by Fred Vance.
- Best Website: Cleveland, OH Branch 40 for its Facebook page.

Following some closing business, the session adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

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Troy Scott, Baton Rouge, LA Branch 129. The convention voted to approve the rules as printed in the convention guide.

The convention discussed a motion to overturn President Renfro’s ruling that three members do not have standing to appeal decisions by the Executive Council that found the NALC president not guilty of three charges. The president had previously ruled that the NALC Constitution recognizes only the party found guilty as being aggrieved. In a teller vote, the motion carried 2,221 to 1,596.

The president then called to the floor Andrew Weiner of Jamaica, NY Branch 562, election commissioner and chairman of the Board of Tellers. He introduced the members of the board: James Brown, Nashville, TN Br. 4; Keith Deason, Wichita Falls, TX Br. 1227; Ed Ditzel, Philadelphia, PA Br. 157; Daniel Estep, Toledo, OH Br. 100; Tim Fisher, Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902; Corey Grotte, Eau Claire, WI Br. 728; Mike Harazmus, Western MA Br. 46; Alison Harpe, Anchorage, AK Br. 4319; Keith Hooks, Washington, DC Br. 142; Todd Homyak, Columbus, OH Br. 78; Tim Houx, Fort Wayne, IN Br. 116; Star Jester, Garden Grove, CA Br. 1100; Sanjera Johnson, Texarkana, TX Br. 569;

Mgd. Br. 38; Armando Pedreira, New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38; Casey Ritchie, Oklahoma City, OK Br. 458; Eric Salazar, Grand Junction, CO Br. 913; Percy Smith, Emerald Coast, FL Br. 4559; Jerri Stockberger, Lafayette, IN Br. 466; Derek Sykes, Chicago, IL Br. 11; Jim Thigpen, North FL Br. 53; Richard Thurman, St. Louis, MO Br. 343; and Dan Wheeler, MA Northeast Mgd. Br. 25.

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NALC Auxiliary Monday, August 5 —Submitted by Crystal Bragg, NALCA Secretary

The Auxiliary attended the NALC opening ceremony. Lots of introductions were made and NALC President Brian Renfro had an informative video that we all enjoyed. When we returned, we opened the meeting with song and flag ceremony by Daniel CdeBaca and prayer by Tessa Fisher. The credential report was read by

Secretary Crystal Bragg: Auxiliaries registered—22, states represented—13, delegates registered—35, national officers registered—three, past national officers registered—two, and no visitors. A quorum has been met.

Committees:

- Audit Committee—George Anna Myers,
- Gaye Meredith, Margaret Castilleja
- Per Diem and Transportation—Tessa Fisher, Renita Bostic, Tere Petrey
- Bylaws Committee—Daniel CdeBaca, Rick Baird, Karen Heil
- Gay Meredith of Aux. #28, Dallas, TX, presented an activity for all delegates to participate in.