

NALC Convention
CHRONICLE
 Covering the second session:
 Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2024



President Renfro asks for a Letter Carrier Cheer for Roxanne Brown.

Standing shoulder to shoulder

On the second day of the 73rd Biennial Convention, delegates and speakers alike stressed the strength of solidarity as the union faces many challenges—from protecting our brothers and sisters from crime to protecting our democracy itself.

The delegates stood for the importance of togetherness. They embraced President Brian L. Renfro's call to include all voices in the union, passed a constitutional amendment making it easier for retired carriers to return to the fold as union members, and applauded the call by United Steelworkers International Vice President at Large Roxanne Brown to know their power and tell their own stories as they advocate for their rights and interests.

"Workers in this country are really powerful and they are leaning into their power," Brown told the delegates. "Letter carriers, know your power!" The delegates drew inspiration from speakers from other unions—the fire fighters, the mail handlers and the APWU—all of whom pledged to join letter carriers in passing vital pro-worker legislation and electing pro-worker representatives.

At the top of the election agenda, the convention voted to endorse Vice

President Kamala Harris for president. "The NALC proudly endorses the Harris-Walz ticket, and we will do all in our power to ensure that Kamala Harris is the next president of the United States," Renfro said to a standing ovation from delegates following the endorsement vote.

And, mindful of their role as not only voters and campaigners, but also as keepers of the sanctity of mail ballots, the delegates resolved to stand together to fight for the republic that was born more than two centuries ago here in Boston.

Business resumes

At 10 a.m., NALC President Renfro called the convention to order.

The president first called to the stage Doug Adams of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 to sing the national anthem. Boston, MA Branch 34 member Domenic Corsetti led delegates in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Delivering the day's invocation was Father Marc Bishop from Catholic Parishes of Arlington.

Renfro brought Executive Vice President Paul Barner to the microphone to introduce the chairperson of the Greetings to the Auxiliary Commit-



Kamala Harris and Tim Walz

tee, Elisabeth Goodwin of Houston, TX Branch 283. The committee members then introduced themselves: Keisha Bryant, Greenwood, MS Branch 1080; Al Friedman, Clearwater, FL Branch 2008; Emery Johnson, Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126; and Patrick VanEgeren, Green Bay, WI Branch 619. Renfro sent the committee, along with Barner, to greet the NALC Auxiliary.

Following a tribute and moment of silence for a member who died at the 2008 convention in Boston, Renfro called Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine to the lectern to present the Executive Council's report on constitutional amendments. NALC Trustees Chairman Larry Brown read the first group of proposed amendments. While the majority were not enacted, the delegates passed one to make it easier for NALC

members who were in good standing at retirement but did not submit a Form 1189 in a timely fashion to regain their membership in the union.

Know your power

Renfro welcomed Roxanne Brown of the United Steelworkers Union. Brown first turned her attention to the female delegates, urging them to know their worth and be confident in expressing themselves. "In every room that you are in, show up as yourself," she said. "Be authentically you, and all that comes with you."

Knowing your worth, she said, is essential in the struggle for good pay and retirement benefits, health care and the ability to return home from work safely. She reminded all the delegates that sharing their personal stories with decision-makers is the best path to success in advocating for a union's agenda.

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should not be the last—Brown called for continuing the progress she represents. "Let's keep knowing, and using, our power until we have a labor movement where everyone sees themselves and are not afraid to step up to the mic."

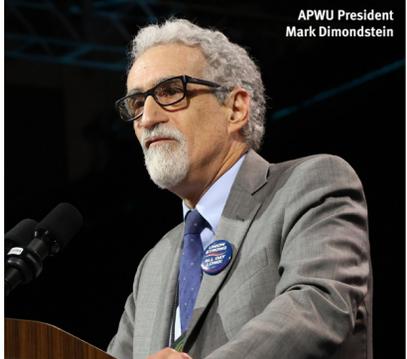
"Are you ready to use your power?" Brown asked. "Grow, rise, together!" The crowd gave her a spirited Letter Carrier Cheer.

Following Brown's speech, the delegates continued consideration of constitutional amendments presented by NALC Trustees Sandy Laemmel and Charlie Heege.

Endorsing Harris-Walz

After viewing a video titled "Foot Soldiers of Democracy," President Renfro informed the delegates that Vice President Kamala Harris had selected Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as her running mate for vice president. The NALC president then introduced a resolution to endorse Harris for president, which the delegates adopted.

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in our power to ensure that Kamala Harris is the next president of the United States," Renfro said after delegates approved the motion.

Renfro then introduced American Postal Workers Union President Mark Dimondstein. "I salute all of you front-line fighters," he addressed the letter carrier crowd, praising members for enforcing the contract, fighting for a safe environment, and standing in solidarity with all workers. "I see a rainbow of delegates from all walks of life, united in our common struggle for justice."

Dimondstein addressed the fall elections, saying that union members will

require resiliency and determination in the face of growing political extremism, deepening attacks on civil rights, and coordinated voter suppression, including the undermining of vote-by-mail.

Dimondstein referenced the looming threat posed by the conservative Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 initiative, closely linked with the former president, and pointed out the power of unions: "While we have much work ahead of us, let's also take stock that workers are on the march and rising in the face of these crises."

Support of unions is the highest it's been in decades, Dimondstein continued, and he said that the significant organizing efforts of late, with workers ready and willing to strike if need be, are reminiscent of the Great Postal Strike of 1970 when crafts stood together. "The APWU today deeply values our continuing fraternal relationship," he said, adding that cooperation and unity propel our cause further.

He promised to stand with NALC on our individual and shared issues, and said that, though both unions accept that the mail mix has changed, we cannot accept the chaotic way in which plans are being implemented. The APWU stands by its sister union in contract negotiations, too, he said, telling the assembled letter carriers, "Delegates, count on us as you struggle to bring home a good new union contract. As we know firsthand, negotiations are never easy, and we're engaged in the process as we speak as well."

Dimondstein concluded by saying that we must grow the labor movement as we rise together. "It's so good to be with you in these trenches, as the struggle for justice always continues," he said. "Solidarity forever!"

Delegates gave Dimondstein a lively Letter Carrier Cheer in response.

Vice President James Henry then explained the appeals process to the delegates. Two motions were adopted by the convention to pass the hat for the families of two carriers who died on the job, along with a matching donation from NALC Headquarters. Next, Rhine delivered the secretary-treasurer's report, and a short video was shown to the delegates.



President Renfro gives a token to IAFF President Ed Kelly to thank him for speaking to the convention.

'Be strong in the political game'

Renfro then welcomed Ed Kelly, president of the International Association of Fire Fighters, to address the convention. Kelly noted the similarities between his union's members and NALC members from their first days on the job. "We knew being part of a union was a path to a better life," he said.

Letter carriers and firefighters also share a struggle as public-sector workers. "If you notice, whenever you get a check," he said, "there's a politician's signature on it. Whether we like it or not, we're in the political game. We have to be strong in the political game."

Like letter carriers, firefighters are harmed by the Windfall Elimination Provision and are working as allies with NALC to pass legislation to repeal it. "The government chose to rob us," Kelly said. "When they passed the Windfall Elimination Provision in 1980, they robbed us right before our eyes."

Kelly also pledged to work to enact the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act: "We will fight in every congressional district to get that passed."

Kelly reminded the delegates that their roles as activists are part of a continuum where each generation has a responsibility. "Everything we have was fought for by those before us," he said. "Let's keep up the fight. Let's keep the righteous path that we've been on for generations as union members and leave it better than we found it for those coming behind us!"

The delegates responded with an enthusiastic Letter Carrier Cheer. Next, President Renfro invited Paul Hogrogian, president of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU), to the podium.

He began by saying that the Post Office that he joined a half-century ago is very different from today's Postal Service, but that NALC and NPMHU have retained a strong fraternal bond that has proven beneficial to both sets of members.

Our two organizations have worked closely on a number of initiatives, he said, including six-day delivery, door-to-door delivery, postal reform, fighting to prevent privatization, and the current postal network design. "We

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fully support you on your issues and you support us on ours, and that's the way it should be," he said, pledging to continue working together on issues into the future.

Hogrogian said his union supports NALC's efforts to secure a fair agreement at the bargaining table. "But, we know too well," he said, "whatever they ram down your throat today, they're going to shove [on us] next year. So, we're fully supportive that you get a good contract."

He assured delegates that the two unions will work together to elect a worker-friendly, postal-friendly and union-friendly candidate to the White House: Kamala Harris.

"So, it's up to us," the NPMHU leader said. "We must work together to preserve democracy for the American public. The whole country is watching us, the whole country is depending on us."

Postal workers have spent much blood, sweat and tears building the Postal Service into the greatest postal service in the world, he continued. "We have to make sure we stay united on our issues and make clear to the powers that be that we will not be divided," he said. "The mail handlers remain committed and stand shoulder to shoulder with letter carriers and all postal workers to fight any battles that need to be fought!"

The convention hall gave Hogrogian a passionate Letter Carrier Cheer.

Wrapping up

Renfro called Executive Vice President Barner back to the podium to introduce NALC Auxiliary President Cynthia Martinez of Phoenix, AZ Auxiliary 377. After introducing Auxiliary



President Renfro thanks NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian.

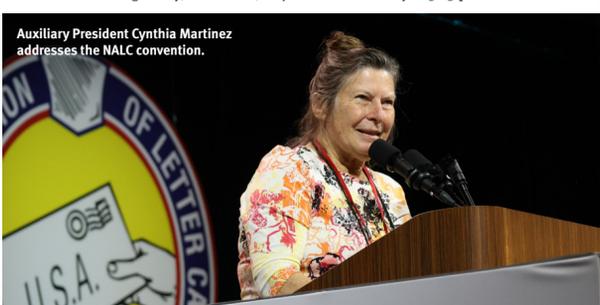
Secretary Crystal Bragg of Decatur, IL Auxiliary 153 and Treasurer Samantha Yerg of Toledo, OH Auxiliary 158, Martinez told the convention that she used to be a letter carrier and later joined the Auxiliary.

"We hope you will think about having your significant others join the Auxiliary," Martinez said. "We are growing!"

Renfro introduced Mileage and Per Diem Committee Chairperson Antonia Shields of Birmingham, AL Branch 530, who introduced committee members Kenneth Montgomery, Rochester,

NY Branch 210; Jose Romero, Albuquerque, NM Branch 504; Amanda Mitchell, New Hampshire Merged Branch 44; and Denise Howard, Bloomington, IL Branch 522. Shields reported that the committee had recommended \$4,236 for mileage and per diem and \$67,300 for stipends for a total of \$71,536. Trustee Chairman Larry Brown reported that the trustees had approved the report, and the delegates voted to accept it.

Following some housekeeping announcements, the convention adjourned for the day at 3:23 p.m.



Auxiliary President Cynthia Martinez addresses the NALC convention.

NALC Auxiliary Tuesday, August 6 —Submitted by Auxiliary President Cynthia Martinez

Tuesday was a busy day. We started our day with an audit report from George Anna Meyers, Gaye Meredith and Margaret Castilleja. The per diem and transportation report followed from Chairman Renita Bostic, Tessa Fisher (chaplain) and Teré Petrey.

Tessa Fisher decorated for our memorial service. Cynthia Martinez and Tessa Fisher conducted the service for our 21 departed members since the last convention.

All the members of the NALC Greetings to the Auxiliary Committee came on stage at our convention and shared

ideas with us about the future of the Auxiliary. All of the Auxiliary delegates were then invited by NALC Executive Vice President Paul Barner to come on stage at the NALC convention.

We were welcomed warmly by the carriers. What a great day for our Auxiliary.