

National Business Agent's Report
Mike Weir
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The theme of the NALC National Convention was; Honoring the Past---Imagining the Future. Certainly, we can look back with pride on all that we have accomplished as a union over the course of our 121 year history. Through contract negotiations and advocacy at interest arbitrations, we have gained significant increases in wages and benefits; and we have created good, solid middle-class jobs that are the envy of the private sector. We have strengthened contractual provisions to protect letter carriers' rights and have been very successful at representing our members through the grievance procedure. It is entirely appropriate that we recognize and honor retired and active NALC activists who have contributed so much to the successes we have achieved. But, unfortunately, we find ourselves, once again, in the fight of our lives.

In his keynote speech, President Rolando did a remarkable job laying out the challenges we face, now and in the coming years. His intelligent, thoughtful approach and the scope of his vision for the future of the NALC and the Postal Service became readily apparent to all of the delegates. At this critical juncture in our history, President Rolando is truly the leader we need to make the difficult decisions and to shape a successful strategy to deal with the many complex and conflicting issues impacting our survival.

The challenges include; the worst recession since the 1930's, the dramatic drop in volume, 12.8% in 2009 alone; the on-going electronic diversion of first-class mail, which is altering the traditional cycle of volume growth spurring revenue generation; management's idiotic plan to eliminate Saturday delivery; the onerous pre-funding payments for future retirees' health benefits; the 50-75 billion dollar overpayment to the CSRS retirement fund; and the upcoming negotiations for a new National Agreement.

On the surface it seems like quite an overwhelming doom and gloom scenario. But we also have a number of positives working in our favor. The Postal Service has a good infrastructure in place; we have the best last-mile delivery network in the country; we continue to be the most trusted federal agency; NALC's finances are sound; we negotiated a moratorium on contracting out work; we have an agreement assigning most new deliveries to our craft; we elected a labor-friendly Congress, which supports us on the issue of retaining six-day delivery; and we have entered into joint programs with the Postal Service giving us more control over the grievance process, the

evaluation and adjustments of routes, etc, thereby protecting the rights of letter carriers and addressing the current financial crisis.

Additionally, NALC is 93% organized. While this is quite an accomplishment in an open-shop business, we need to do more given the seriousness of the challenges we currently face. We need to speak with one, strong, untied voice as we work in the legislative, political and contractual arenas to protect our rights and preserve our jobs. I encourage all Branch officers to contact their non-members and convince them of the need to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their fellow brother and sister letter carriers by contributing their fair share to help support our efforts.

NALC has several goals as we look ahead to contract negotiations: to extend and enforce the ban on outsourcing our jobs; to create more letter carrier jobs by renewing the MOU on the assignment of city delivery and capturing a large percentage of the new deliveries; to continue to develop a better and fairer system for evaluating and adjusting routes; and to maintain the middle-class wages and benefits we have fought so hard to achieve. This is an ambitious agenda which will be difficult to accomplish under current economic conditions. But, at the convention, President Rolando made the union's position on contract negotiations quite clear. If the Postal Service comes to the table with the approach of exploring creative ideas for dealing with our issues, they will find a willing partner in the NALC. However, if management just wants to exploit the current economic situation to attack our wages and benefits, they will have a bloody fight on their hands. Recession or not, we will use all the resources at our disposal to protect our good, middle-class jobs.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2011 Leadership Academy classes. I strongly urge anyone who wants to enhance their ability to represent their members to submit an application. They are available on the NALC website. Those who have previously applied need not complete the entire application again. Simply update your information and have your mentor do the same. The Academy's curriculum is geared toward strengthening an activist's leadership skills and preparing him/her to take on additional responsibilities on behalf of letter carriers. As we move forward with our efforts to protect our jobs and preserve the Postal Service, we will need leaders to help make the future we have imagined a reality. You could be one of those leaders. Think about it.

Mike Weir
National Business Agent
NALC St. Louis Region 5

