

NALC's structure designed to help, defend members

There has been a major influx of new members into the NALC over the past couple of months due to the surge in hiring of city carrier assistants (CCAs). As we welcome our new brothers and sisters into our union family, now seems like a good time to review how the union is structured to serve the membership.

Our message to all carriers and especially to the new CCAs: "You are the union." The NALC is designed to provide the best representation for you, both on the workroom floor and at the national level, through collective bargaining. Your union, headquartered in Washington, DC, is led by 10 elected national resident officers, 15 officers known as national business agents (NBAs) overseeing the 15 geographical regions that make up the country, and locally elected officers who lead our branches.

There are also NALC state associations responsible for legislative and political

Within each local branch, letter carriers are designated as union shop stewards in each individual station. Whether you're a newly hired city carrier assistant or a 30-year veteran, you should know that NALC business starts, and often ends, with the work of the shop steward. From filing grievances to offering workplace advice, these frontline defenders of the contract are the union's main presence in a carrier's station.

"It's long been said that stewards have the hardest job in the union," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "and I believe that to be true. But the work stewards do is among the most important, too, because it all starts with them."

No matter how big or small your issue is, your steward is the person to approach. If your work schedule is incorrect, consult with your steward. If you see an issue with your paycheck, talk to your steward. Whatever the issue, bring it to your steward. The steward will know whether management is violating the contract, and if so, what to do about it.

The contract, known as the National Agreement, is the "law of the workplace" for letter carriers. It guarantees your wages, hours and working conditions. ("Working conditions" covers a wide range of job-related topics, such as seniority, promotions, job security, and so on.)

The steward is empowered by the National Agreement to investigate, present and process grievances on behalf of any letter carrier, group of letter carriers or the union. A grievance is, according to the National Agreement, "a dispute, difference, disagreement, or complaint between the parties, related to wages, hours and conditions of employment." While this technical definition is very broad, most grievances involve complaints by employees and/or the union about unfair treatment on the job or violations of

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matters that affect letter carriers. State associations work closely with branches, NBAs and headquarters on legislative and political issues. This work is important as we fight in Congress for the future of the Postal Service and for our jobs.

Frequently dialed

Telephone NALC Headquarters: Weekdays, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Eastern Time

Main Switchboard: 202-393-4695

Supply Department (publications and merchandise): 202-393-4695, ext. 874

Legislation and Political Action: 202-393-4695, ext. 833

Retirement: 202-393-4695, ext. 877, or 800-424-5186 (Monday, Wednesday and Thursday 10-noon and 2-4 p.m. EST)

Communications (media contact, public relations): 202-662-2850

Membership and Dues (address changes): 202-662-2836

Mutual Benefit Association (MBA): 202-638-4318, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. ET; 800-424-5184, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday

Health Benefit Plan: 888-636-6252, 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. ET
20547 Waverly Court, Ashburn, VA 20149-0001

Community Services: 202-393-4695, ext. 489

Compensation (on-the-job injuries and OWCP): 202-393-4695, ext. 878

Contract Administration Unit: 202-393-4695, ext. 867

By-Laws: 202-393-4695, ext. 865

Finance: 202-393-4695, ext. 870

Research: 202-393-4695, ext. 828

Information Center: 202-393-4695, ext. 879

the rights that the NALC has bargained for you.

The grievance process has several steps. It begins with the steward filing and discussing the grievance with your immediate supervisor. If its not resolved, the grievance is elevated to the branch president and postmaster (or their designees). If still not resolved, it is sent to a team—made up of one NALC member and one USPS member—called the dispute resolution team (DRT). Any grievance the DRT is unable to resolve is forwarded to the appropriate national business agent, who may appeal the grievance to arbitration. In the arbitration process, both sides present evidence and testimony to a neutral arbitrator, who writes a final and binding decision on the grievance.

While there are grievances that go all the way to arbitration, the vast majority are resolved in the lower steps of the process. There is one constant—the steward investigates, develops and files the grievance initially. If you have a problem, always notify your steward as soon as possible so he or she can have ample time to investigate the situation, correct it and/or prepare a grievance.

If your steward is unavailable, contact your branch. In a small branch, that could mean contacting the branch president directly. In a larger branch, you might be directed to talk to a specific officer who is responsible for your area. If the officer isn't in your station and you can't talk to him or her in person, call the branch.

Your steward and branch officers can and will handle most contractual situations. If you are unable to contact the steward or branch officers, that's when you should contact your national business agent's (NBA) office. You can find your NBA on page 2 of any issue of *The Postal Record* or online at nalc.org. NBAs can help you deal with just about any issue, and provide you with answers.

"NALC is here to make sure the Postal Service follows the contract, and we all know management doesn't always follow the letter of the contract," Rolando said. "So remember, when you have an issue, no matter how big or small, start with your steward, then your branch, then your NBA. Help us so we can help you."

Contact us

Much like the rest of America, many letter carriers are turning to the Internet to communicate. There is a wealth of information available to you on the NALC website. However, when it comes to communicating with your union representatives, the best way to do it is in person, by letter or by phone. While stewards and branch officers can be contacted locally in person or by phone, sometimes your NBA's office may be a few states away. To communicate with your NBA, call or write his or her office. The office numbers and addresses are listed on page 2 of any issue of *The Postal Record* or online at nalc.org.

(For your own privacy and security, never send personal information to the NALC Health Benefit Plan by e-mail.)

Additionally, NALC National Headquarters is made up of many departments—all designed to serve you.

A list of departments and phone numbers can be found above. **PR**