



NALC Convention Chronicle



Wednesday, August 16
covering the
SECOND SESSION:
Tuesday, August 15



Delegates to the 65th Biennial NALC Convention moved briskly through their agenda Tuesday, dealing with constitutional amendments and resolutions while also learning about the national drive to expand vote-by-mail and hearing positive reports from key legislators about the prospects for postal reform.

President Young called the session to order at 10:01 a.m. in the Las Vegas Convention Center after the Salt Lake City Letter Carrier Band entertained arriving delegates with a patriotic medley.

Otis Hembray, a member of Las Vegas Br. 2502 and a former member of The Platters, sang the National Anthem. He was followed by Santos Luyanda, vice president of South Florida Branch 1071, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Rev. Phil Carolin of the Episcopal Diocese of Nevada offered the invocation.

As promised on Monday, President Young welcomed to the stage Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury, who addressed the delegates on his state's highly successful vote-by-mail program. The convention approved a resolution on Monday urging the NALC to work to institute mail balloting in every state, and President Young credited Bradbury with helping to "spark a movement that will place letter carriers at the center of our democracy."

Advantages of vote-by mail

Bradbury elaborated on the many advantages of vote-by-mail, starting with dramatically increased voter participation—86 percent statewide in the 2004 presidential election. He enumerated a litany of voter complaints from the 2004 election, including voters' "waiting for hours in the cold rain to vote. But not in Oregon. Worrying about touch-screen technology that is susceptible to fraud. But not in Oregon. Poll workers giving voters wrong information. But not in Oregon."

He said that voter convenience is a major reason for increased turnout—"you vote at your kitchen table"—plus there is a two-week window voters have to return their ballots, two weeks in which get-out-the-vote campaigns can be concentrated. Other advantages of the system are that it creates a paper trail, costs less, and is less susceptible to fraud, since each ballot envelope is signed by the voter and every signature is compared to the voter's registration card.

Oregon adopted vote-by-mail for all state elections in 1998 through a citizen initiative that won 70 percent of the old-style votes. Mail balloting is now widespread in California, and Arizona will vote this fall on adopting the practice. Bradbury is deeply involved in the Vote-by-Mail Project, a group dedicated to spreading the voting system.

The Oregon official praised letter carriers for their critical



Messages of support, solidarity enrich delegates' business day



Top: Delegates from Virginia escort Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) to the stage.

Above: Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) vows to fight for NALC's interests in the pending postal reform conference.

Left: NALC President Young thanks Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury (l) for continuing the push for vote-by-mail.



role in keeping elections in his state “clean and honest,” and said, “It’s pretty simple: We couldn’t do it without you and the Postal Service.”

President Young assured Bradbury that NALC will be front and center in promoting vote-by-mail nationwide and delegates cheered that declaration.

Rep. Davis’ address

Following Secretary Bradbury’s remarks, President Young recalled for the delegation remarks from his keynote address about the difficult road of postal reform and then introduced a champion of that effort, Illinois Seventh District Rep. Danny Davis. The five-term Democrat was escorted to the stage by members of Chicago Branch 11, Illinois State Association President Ron O’Brien and Region 3 National Business Agent Neal Tisdale.

Davis, who worked as a postal clerk in Chicago, received a sustained ovation. “After that introduction,” he quipped, “if I have to come back again, I am coming back as a letter carrier!”

A consistent friend of the NALC, Davis opened his remarks by quoting the poet Langston Hughes, urging letter carriers to “hold on to their dreams” as they pursue a new contract and postal reform.

As one of the four original co-sponsors of postal reform in the House—along with Reps. Tom Davis (R-VA), Henry Waxman (D-CA) and John McHugh (R-NY)—the Illinois lawmaker said he was optimistic acceptable legislation would reach a final vote

in Congress before it adjourns prior to the fall elections.

Admitting the legislative pace has been slow, Davis declared the goal “is to get postal reform right, not just to get it done.” He also told delegates that he is a strong supporter of the vote-by-mail movement and praised the NALC for fighting on behalf of working families.

Chairman Davis’ address

Next up for the convention was a second Congressman Davis—Republican Congressman Tom Davis, who has represented Virginia’s 11th District since 1994 and is the chairman of the House Government Reform Committee that oversees postal matters.

The chairman, a long-time friend of the NALC, amused delegates with an anecdote about his youthful days as a union grocery clerk before turning to the serious topic of postal reform.

Noting how polarized and bitterly partisan Washington has become, he called letter carriers “the anchors in the fight for postal reform.”

“Letter carriers are keeping the conference together,” Davis said, referring to the House and Senate negotiators working on a compromise version of the differing reform bills passed by both houses last year.

The congressman cited several major outstanding issues, including “our fight with the administration” over dumping military pension obligations onto the USPS. Disputes also persist over the rate-setting process, pricing flexibility, and preservation of collective bargaining rights.

Davis said he and his allies “have made it clear we are not going to tamper with collective bargaining rights.”

“I don’t know how all the i’s are going to be dotted and the t’s crossed,” he said, but the end result will be “a bill you’re going to like.”

Davis received a thundering ovation, reflecting what President Young had said when introducing him as a bipartisan champion of postal reform: “No Democrat deserves our support more than this Republican.”

Organizing awards

President Young then called to the stage representatives of branches being honored for their organizing success and presented them with plaques:

Best organized

Small branches (up to 500)

Albany, NY Br. 29—100% (298 of 298)

Medium branches (500-999)

Western Mass. Br. 46—98.4% (611 of 621)

Large branches (1,000+)

South Florida Br. 1071—98.4% (4,079 of 4,144)

Most improved

Medium

Central California Br. 231—93.1% to 96.3%

Large

Sacramento, CA Br. 133—83.8% to 88.2%

“These are the best of the best,” President Young said, “but there are hundreds of branches with exceptional organizing records.” The video monitors in the hall then displayed a list of all branches between 95 and 100 percent organized.

Constitutional amendments

As specified in the *Constitution*, constitutional amendments are taken up on Tuesday of the convention, and President Young called on Lawrence D. Brown Jr. of Los Angeles Br. 24,



Tribute to Richie O'Connell

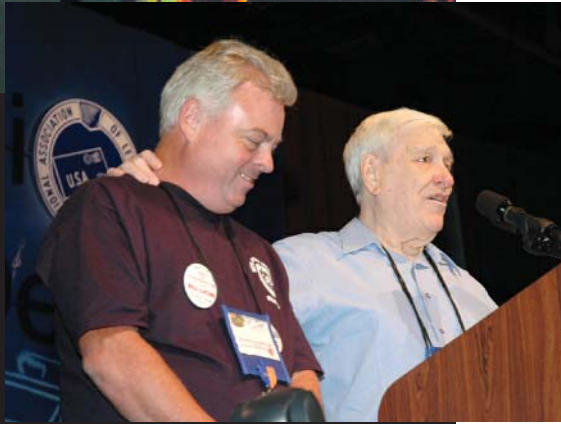
President Emeritus Vincent R. Sombrotto came to the podium Tuesday to lead a tribute to Richard P. “Richie” O’Connell, who served for 14 years as national secretary-treasurer and died last October at the age of 82.

Following a three-minute video-photo montage set to the tune “They Can’t Take that Away from Me,”

President Sombrotto reminisced about the years he and O’Connell served together as top NALC officers.

“I miss him. I miss him so much,” Sombrotto said. “He loved this union and he did so much for this union. He wasn’t a perfect man, but he was a man I wish we could replicate in the millions.”

One of O’Connell’s seven children, his son Richard P. O’Connell Jr., a member of New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38, was present on the stage for the tribute and was introduced to the delegates.



Richard P. O’Connell Jr. joins President Emeritus Sombrotto in remembering his father, a former secretary-treasurer.

chairman of the Board of Laws, and board members Dan Rupp of Cleveland Br. 40 and Randall Keller of Mass. NE Mgd. Br. 25 to the podium to present the proposals.

The delegates approved six minor amendments without debate, eliminating obsolete language concerning a former NALC property, branch membership transfers, and conduct of national elections; eliminating a requirement that convention proceedings be published within 30 days; removing language about pay levels for part-time RAAs, who are not currently being used; and changing the regional rotation system for National Conventions.

Three related amendments offered by the Executive Council to facilitate implementation of the new political Field Plan and education structure also were approved, albeit after some debate. One changed the defined duties of the NBAs, another specified that state association funds are to be spent on their primary function of legislative action, and the third changed the wording of the duties of state education directors to conform with the other changes.

Two proposed amendments were defeated. One would have increased the annual per-member allotment of funds for the Band Fund from 20 cents to 30 cents and required at least five bands be brought to each convention. The other sought to ban from the NALC Health Benefit Plan any member who did not maintain NALC membership into retirement.

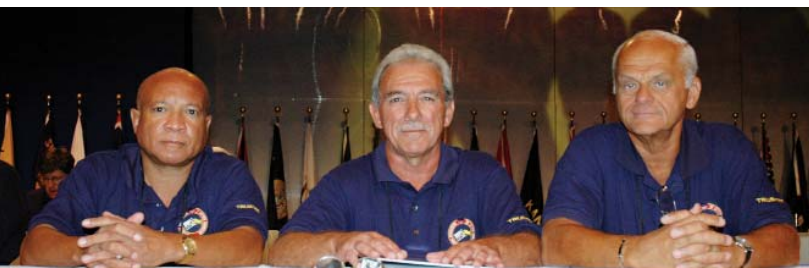
President Young called to the stage the Mileage and Per Diem Committee, Chairman Don McQuigg of Anchorage, AK Br. 4319, and members Alvin Matsumoa, Honolulu, HI Br. 860 and Calvin Brooks, Van Nuys, CA Br. 2462. The committee was to report back to the convention later.

Representatives from the NALC Auxiliary came to the microphone next, extending fraternal greetings from the NALCA, also meeting in convention this week at the Las Vegas Hilton.

Branch publications awards

President Young then introduced the first award winners in the biennial Branch Publications Competition, announced Monday. Here is the complete list of contest winners:

L-R, NALC Trustees Larry Brown, Randy Keller and Dan Rupp, who also serve as the NALC Board of Laws.



Still time to register for Gimme 5 campaign

Sign-up continues Wednesday at the Legislative booth in the registration area for delegates seeking “Gimme 5 for COLCPE” T-shirts, which will be worn to the convention session on Thursday. Delegates who meet the “Gimme 5” automatic donor level will be entered in Thursday’s raffle with a grand prize of an expenses-paid trip for two to Hawaii.



General Excellence, large branches (501+ members) and state associations: First, The “B” Mike, Portland, OR Br. 82; Second, Branch 34’s CLAN, Boston, MA Br. 34; Third, Branch 1111 News, Greater East Bay, CA Br. 1111; Honorable Mentions, The Buzz, Buffalo-Western NY Br. 3, and The Mail Bag News, Tri-Valley, CA Br. 2902.

General Excellence, small branches (500 or fewer members): First, You, Me and the NALC, High Point, NC Br. 936; Second, The Maine Letter Carrier, Central ME Mgd. Br. 392; Third, Spartan Views, East Lansing, MI Br. 2555; Honorable Mention, The Owl, Norwalk, CT Br. 147.

Best Editorial or Column: First, Javier Rodriguez, South Florida Letter Carrier, South Florida Br. 1071; Second, Paul Gereffi, Venice of America Branch Bulletin, Fort Lauderdale, FL Br. 2550; Third, Susan Lewis, The Buzz, Buffalo-Western NY Br. 3; Honorable Mention, Jerry Sutherlin, Branch 828 Update, South Central IN Br. 828.

Best News or Feature Story: First, Richard Thayer, The North Carolina Letter Carrier, NC State Association; Second, Wendy Doucette, The 44 Magnum, NH Mgd. Br. 44; Third, Sandy Davenport-Kane, Spartan Views, East Lansing, MI Br. 2555; Honorable Mentions, Kate McGuire, Branch 1111 News, Greater East Bay, CA Br. 1111; Pam Donato, Branch 9 News, Minneapolis, MN Br. 9.

Promoting Unionism: First, James Henry, The Union Carrier, Garden Grove, CA Br. 1100; Second, Phil Bzura and branch stewards, Branch 758 Newsletter, Wyandotte, MI Br. 758; Third, Robert J. McLennan, The Buzz, Buffalo-Western NY Br. 3; Honorable Mentions, Marcelo Meza, Dwight Palser Branch 324 Newsletter, Greeley, CO Br. 324; Lou Shaw, Mon-Young Branch 332 Newsletter, Mon-Young, PA Br. 332, and Ken Hill, Branch 828 Update, South Central IN Br. 828.

Best Cartoon or Photo: First, Mark Logue, Branch 34’s CLAN, Boston, MA Br. 34; Second (tie), Ed Cuadra, The Voice, San Francisco, CA Br. 214, and Javier Rodriguez, The South Florida Letter Carrier, South Florida Br. 1071; Third, Patty Briseno, The Union Carrier, Garden Grove, CA Br. 1100; Honorable Mentions, Kevin Wrede, The “B” Mike, Portland, OR Br. 82; Carol Garnto, Branch 9 News, Minneapolis, MN Br. 9; Bong M. Tongol, Branch 1111 News, Greater East Bay, CA Br. 1111, and Laird Atkin, Orlando Carrier, Central Florida Br. 1091.

Speaker from Japan

Next, President Young introduced Yuitsu Yoneda, the director of the Japan Postal Workers Union (JPU), which has been struggling against plans to privatize Japan Post.

"The global postal industry is changing rapidly in the face of technological advancements," Yoneda told the delegates, noting the JPU and the NALC "have much to learn from each other." He thanked the NALC for supporting JPU's fight to preserve his nation's postal service.

The JPU unsuccessfully battled Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's push to divide and privatize Japan Post, which not only delivers the mail but also sells life insurance and is the world's largest retail bank.

"We may have lost the fight against privatization," he assured the delegates, "but we will never stop defending workers' rights" over the next decade as the break-up of Japan Post unfolds.

After inviting the convention to give Yoneda a letter carrier cheer of "hip-hip-hooray," President Young introduced the NALC's delegates to the AFL-CIO. Both President Young and Secretary Treasurer Jane Broendel are automatic delegates.

The elected delegates are:

President Emeritus Vincent Sombrotto, New York, NY Br. 36; Ingrid Armada, Providence, RI

Br. 15; Denise Brooks, Medford, OR Br. 1433; Prissy Grace, Houston, TX Br. 283; Anita Guzik, Los Angeles, CA Br. 24; Stephen Hanna, York, PA Br. 509; and Phillip Wilkes, Chicago, IL Br. 11.



Director of the JPU
Yuitsu Yoneda

Return to resolutions

The convention then turned to consideration of General Resolution 17, which had been tabled on Monday afternoon. It concerned the adoption of "The NALC Song" by Kansas City, MO Br. 30 member Sellie Truitt as the official NALC song. A recording of the song was played and after a brief debate, the delegates voted to uphold the Executive Council's disapproval of the resolution.

The next order of business was legislative resolutions. On Monday, delegates voted to adopt *en bloc* those resolutions the Executive Council had approved prior to the convention. Among those resolutions were:

Resolution 3, to extend the amount of leave given letter carriers returning to work following military service.

Resolution 5, to oppose efforts to phase out or replace Social Security.

Resolution 6, to increase organ donor administrative leave to from seven days to 30 days.

Executive Vice President Jim Williams took the podium to present the resolutions. Following a brief but vigorous debate, the convention disapproved two, one calling for equal benefits for same-sex relationships and the other urging NALC to officially oppose the Central American Free Trade Agreement and similar trade deals. (CAFTA was approved by Congress in July 2005.)

President Young advised delegates that the day's business had been dispatched so efficiently that it would be appropriate to close the session early and with unanimous consent, following brief announcements, the convention adjourned at 2:02 p.m. until 10 a.m. Wednesday.



NALC AUXILIARY Tuesday, August 15

Day two of the convention began with a moving memorial service, prepared and organized by Vice President Joan Spero and the other national officers, remembering those Auxiliary members who passed away since 2004. The service was enhanced by the singing of Stephanie Bostic, a member of NALC Miami, FL Br. 1071, whose strong, beautiful voice brought a standing ovation.

Next came an inspiring message and prayer from Chaplain Peggy Winston, a thought for the day from Bonnie Christy, and the reciting of the Collect by the delegates. Minutes from Monday's session were read, corrected and approved, as were the revised amendments from the previous day and the last remaining amendment.

The first of the financial reports was given by Treasurer Susan McNees. Charitable donations from Monday included: We Care-We Share (COLCPE), \$670; Make-a-Wish Foundation, \$50; American Cancer Society, \$91; NALCA tax fund, \$270; American Heart Association, \$56; St. Jude's, \$35; Doherty scholarship fund, \$155; and MDA, \$633.

The Credentials Committee reported a final total of 205 delegates representing 99 auxiliaries from 27 states. The total vote count, including proxies and officers, was 406.

The Resolutions Committee presented six resolutions: thank-yous to the national officers for a job well done, to Jerry Fitzsimmons for a wonderful presentation, to those working the Country Store, and a special thank-you to retiring President Lynne Jester. All were unanimously approved. The other two resolutions—for the NALCA to be more involved for the betterment of letter carriers' jobs, and a directive to convention delegates to each bring in a new or inactive member by the next convention—were approved.

Next, Kate Stayman-London, the NALC's Regional Field Coordinator for the Central Region, talked about the upcoming mid-term elections and how the Auxiliary can take an active role in electing candidates who will work for the good of letter carriers and their families.

The Mileage and Per Diem Committee gave its report, and a motion to accept the report was approved. A motion was also made to pay airfares for national officers attending the 2008 convention in Boston, and it also passed.

Two lap quilts, made by Susan English from Auxiliary 91 San Diego, were given away by raffle.

An organizer's seminar, conducted by Vice President Spero, gave delegates ideas on how to recruit members.

The Awards Committee presented silver trays to members from states with new auxiliaries. A tray also was awarded to Gulfport, MI Auxiliary 401 for signing up the most new members with 66.

President Jester paid special recognition to members from New Orleans who are still living under hardship following Hurricane Katrina.

Wednesday's session will begin with a breakfast featuring special entertainment.

—Ann Borowski, Milwaukee Auxiliary Branch 144