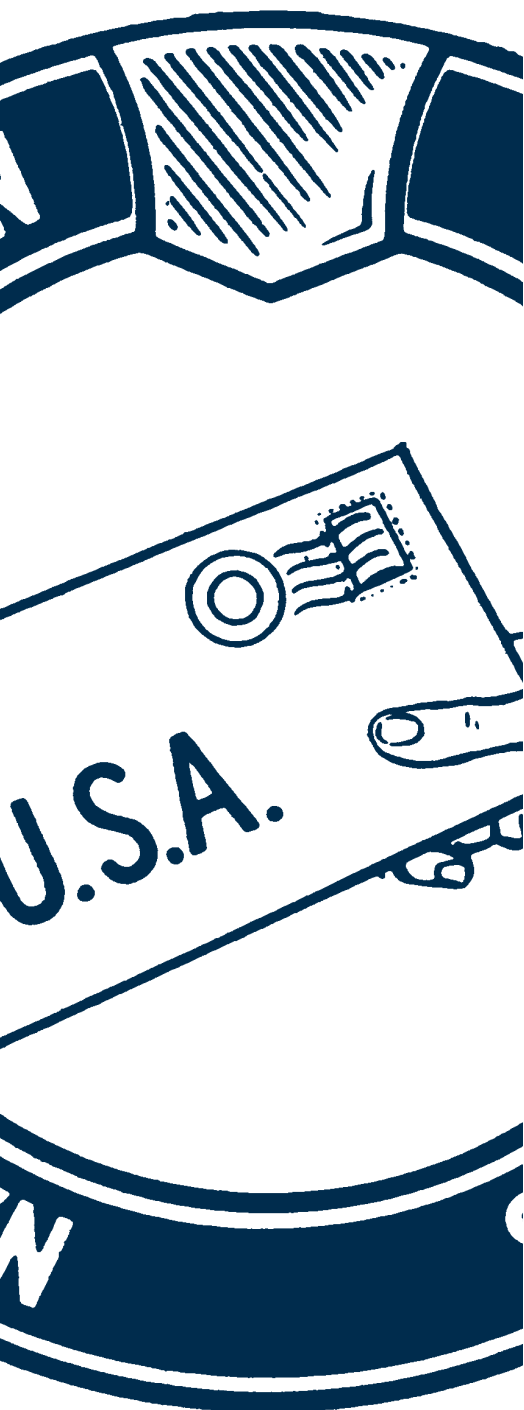


We all must explain the benefits of NALC to new letter carriers



The NALC's strength is its members. With the power of hundreds of thousands of letter carriers working together, the union has achieved great improvements in the workplace and in the lives of letter carriers. As thousands of new letter carriers join our ranks, the union is becoming even stronger.

Since the new National Agreement took effect this January, the Postal Service has hired nearly 30,000 letter carriers. The vast majority of these newly hired letter carriers have chosen to join NALC, and many are jumping in immediately and getting involved with the work of representing letter carriers and fighting for our future.

"These recently hired letter carriers are our union's new generation," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Every single one of them has the opportunity to have a long career as a letter carrier. To ensure that happens, we have to fight to protect the future of the Postal Service and our jobs. No one has a larger stake in this struggle than the letter carriers

carriers who choose to join and get involved is the No. 1 reason for NALC's success throughout its history.

Most letter carriers join the NALC at the very beginning of their careers, usually during orientation. An experienced NALC member holds an orientation session for new letter carriers to welcome them and educate them about the union and how it works for them. During this NALC orientation, new letter carriers are given the opportunity to join NALC if they wish, and most choose to do so on the spot because they can easily see how the union works for them.

Some of the letter carriers who conduct orientations shared what they experience when they welcome newly hired letter carriers.

Karen Lewis, president of Topeka, KS Branch 10, is able to connect quickly with new letter carriers. "I've found that when I do orientation, I can build a rapport with the carriers," she said. "I explain how the union can help with specific items." By the time she brings up joining the union, most carriers already

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Newly hired letter carriers do not automatically become members of the NALC. Joining the NALC is voluntary, yet more than 90 percent of letter carriers choose to join their union. This high percentage of letter

understand the benefits and sign up immediately.

She also stresses their easy access to branch leaders, from the stewards on the workroom floor right to the top. "I tell them I'm the branch president," Lewis said, "and you can come straight to me any time you have a question."

Veteran letter carriers play an important role in acting as mentors to new letter carriers, Lewis said. Even new carriers who do not choose to join NALC immediately usually do so after seeing union members in action on the workroom floor. “They show them what the union does every day,” she said.

Fostering the desire to become part of the NALC family is an important part of approaching new members for Boston Branch 34 Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Flaherty.

“It’s more than just a union,” he tells new carriers. “It’s a family. It’s a community.”

At his orientation presentation, Flaherty captures the attention of new hires by showing the documentary film about the Great Postal Strike of 1970 first shown at the 2010 NALC convention in Anaheim, CA.

“I explain that I feel that all letter carriers owe everything to these brave men and women,” he said. Telling the story of the 1970 strike is meant to do more than explain the benefits the strike won—it should inspire new letter carriers to want to be part of the union that, against the odds, won that historic fight and paved the way for the future.

Sometimes new letter carriers may be reluctant to join because they worry management will disapprove, Flaherty said. “I tell them management expects you to join the union,” he said. “It won’t be held against you.”

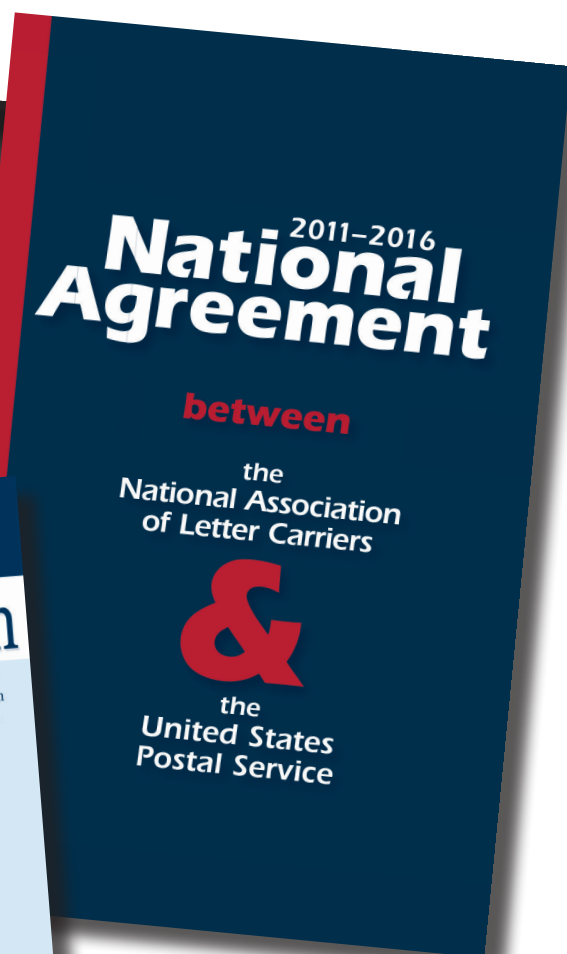
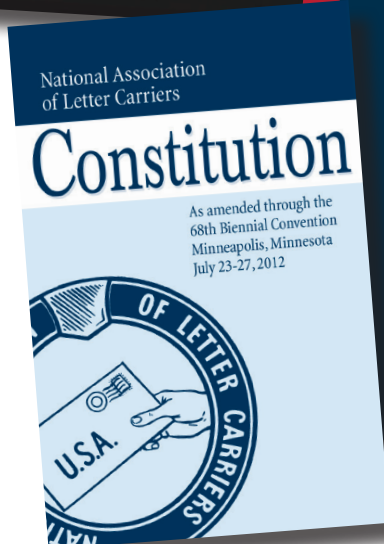
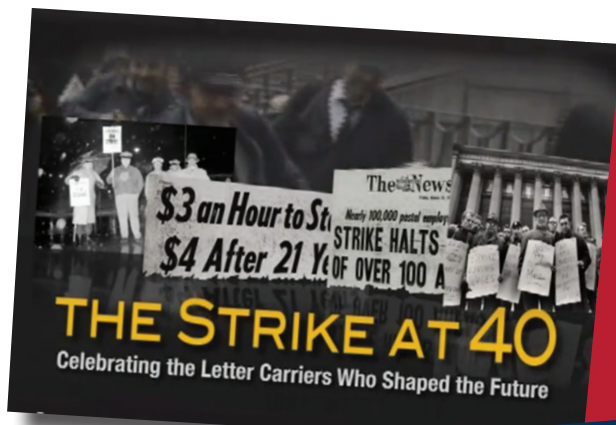
Kevin Card sometimes confronts the same question in his orientation sessions. Card, who is secretary-treasurer for Portland, OR Branch 82 and president of the Oregon State

Association, assures that new hires understand that the union works in cooperation with management daily.

“It’s a professional relationship,” he tells the new letter carriers. “We don’t yell and scream at each other.”

When he meets with the new carriers, Card takes the time to talk about himself and ask each new letter carrier questions. “I tell them my personal history so they know me,” he said. “I ask every person, ‘How did you find out about this job? Where did you work before?’ I try to build a relationship with everybody.”

Card and his branch are going out of their way to be sure that, as soon as they join, new letter carriers feel welcome and get support from the union. The branch surveys them about their needs and opinions. It set



Some of the resources members use to explain the importance of the union to non-members include “The Strike at 40” video, the *NALC Constitution* and the *National Agreement*.

up a uniform locker where new letter carriers can get donated uniform items to dress professionally from Day 1 to impress their customers, fellow carriers and managers before

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they receive their uniform allowance.

“People love being able to come in and grab a shirt,” he said.

Card also stresses to new city carrier assistant (CCA) members that they will be full voting members of the union like any other. “I want them to know they’re not second-class citizens. You can come to our meetings and stand up and tell us what you think.”

He also reminds them that NALC does not charge an initiation fee, unlike some unions that may charge hundreds of dollars for new members to join.

Card likes to tell stories about stewards sticking up for letter carriers to illustrate what the union does for them every day. “A little light goes on: ‘So this is what they do!’”

Los Angeles Branch 24 member Darryl Johnson uses past experiences to teach new letter carriers about the union during his orientation presentations as well.

Before he makes his presentation to new letter carriers, he arrives early and talks to them. He invariably finds a few with family members or friends who work for the Postal Service, or who have talked with their own letter carrier at length, and they usually have stories about how the union stepped

up to help. During his presentation, he likes to start interactive discussions by calling on these letter carriers to share their stories with the whole group.

“Sometimes the letter carriers in the audience can be better teachers than you are,” he said.

Johnson always tells the story of NALC President Emeritus Vincent Sombrotto’s role in the 1970 strike, when he courageously led letter carriers to put down their satchels and take up picket signs even though he held no official union office.

“It shows how important the rank-and-file members are to the NALC,” Johnson said.

Of course, NALC members get more than just representation on the workroom floor. They also receive assistance with workers’ compensation issues. The process of dealing with the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (OWCP) can be complicated and overwhelming, especially after suffering an on-the-job injury. NALC provides quality OWCP assistance and representation for NALC members.

A \$5,000 accidental death benefit, access to scholarships, the e-Activist Network, Union Plus benefits, and a free subscription to *The Postal Record* are some of the other benefits reserved exclusively for NALC members. But most longtime members will say that the greatest benefit of all is standing with your brother and sister letter carriers to protect our jobs and the service we provide to the American people.

“The successes we’ve had in the past can be attributed to the dedication, passion and hard work of NALC members,” President Rolando said. “At the local, regional and national levels, we welcome our new members with open arms. We are excited to see many of them getting involved in their union right away. They are our future.” **PR**