

# Federation is benefit of membership

**N**ALC members enjoy many benefits, especially the security of having fellow letter carriers looking out for them. But joining the NALC is about more than getting benefits and sticking with your fellow letter carriers—it's about a movement to protect all workers and the middle-class way of life. That's a goal many Americans share, but being an active union member makes it easy to get involved, because union members look to fellow workers outside their own union for support.

Simply put, union members work together to ensure that workers get fair wages and benefits. They also advocate for laws that protect their rights and help more people reach the middle class. NALC members work to protect their jobs, pay and benefits by speaking out to Congress and the media, among others. But many of us work beyond our own union by joining with workers at other unions and with other partners to advocate for all workers and strengthen our economy.

"When you join NALC, you join a global union movement, too," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "What a great opportunity to become active in big-picture issues, such as economic equality, job creation, the minimum wage, worker safety and health—issues that matter to all workers, not just at the Postal Service. Or to stand up for other unions in their struggles—marching in solidarity with your local teachers who want pay cuts restored, for instance."

It's that sense of solidarity—speaking up for all workers, not just letter carriers—that built the labor movement, and it played a part in NALC's gains over the years as well. Members of other unions, postal and

otherwise, have stood by us when we struggled for collective-bargaining rights, better pay and benefits or Postal Service reforms. We can do the same for other workers.

One great way to get involved is through the AFL-CIO.

As the umbrella organization for most American unions, including the NALC, the AFL-CIO allows workers to magnify their voices by unifying their efforts. With the AFL-CIO uniting us, letter carriers have more than our fellow carriers behind us—we have steelworkers, teachers, nurses, miners, police officers, firefighters and millions of other workers on our side, and they can depend on us.

Many local union chapters, including NALC branches, work with AFL-CIO state federations and local labor councils to bring activists together. These groups are coalitions of union workers in a state or metropolitan area. They're the heart of the movement, partnering with state and community organizations and conducting local, state and national campaigns to improve life for working families.

When you see workers from different unions raising money for a local charity, or marching in a Labor Day parade, or protesting efforts by a state legislature to take away collective-bargaining rights, or walking door-to-door to support a local pro-worker candidate for office, chances are an AFL-CIO state fed or local labor council brought them together.

Local members of the affiliated unions, including letter carriers, run the local AFL-CIO chapters and labor councils. For example, Denver, CO Branch 47 member Cindy Kirby is president of the Colorado AFL-CIO. Kirby organizes traditional activities



such as protests or marches when the need arises, but her focus is on getting workers, especially young ones, involved in the movement and educated about labor history through events like charity fundraisers, volunteer work and social activities.

“That’s my favorite way to introduce new union members to the labor movement,” she said, “as a family—a community that takes care of each other.” Working through the AFL-CIO gives letter carriers in Colorado an easy opportunity to expand community work beyond NALC. For instance, the building trades unions volunteer to work at Habitat for Humanity construction sites. On the other hand, NALC members in Colorado can enlist other unions to support NALC’s charity events, such as bowlathons for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

The same sense of solidarity occurs when one group of workers needs help in a labor dispute—or with efforts to oppose cuts in mail service or closing post offices. “We do lots of rallies,” Kirby said. “We go in solidarity for other folks who face challenges on the job and need everyone to pitch in.” Many events like these are as much about learning labor history as they are about activism. For instance, Kirby said, the Colorado AFL-CIO’s recent march to celebrate César Chávez, the iconic farmworkers leader, focused on explaining his legacy to the young union members who participated.

“It’s easy to forget that so many of the benefits American workers take for granted today—most workers, not just union members—were won by union members all working together,” Rolando said. “Overtime pay, health

and retirement benefits, workplace safety rules—the list goes on and on. Employers didn’t provide those out of the goodness of their hearts. Union activists won them, and union activists are still standing up for all American workers and middle-class families today.

“You don’t have to sit by and watch other people confront the pressing issues facing working people and families today,” Rolando said. “As a union member, you can do something to help.”

Here are some ways letter carriers can participate in labor efforts:

- Attend your branch meetings. You can find out about the latest issues and news, ask questions, and learn from other members.
- Join NALC’s e-Activist Network. You will get e-mail messages or texts alerting you to fast-moving developments on Capitol Hill and USPS and to how you can help. Go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) for more information.
- Donate to COLCPE. The Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE) supports pro-labor candidates for office. Go to [nalc.org/depart/legpol](http://nalc.org/depart/legpol) for more information.
- Participate in a local AFL-CIO event. Ask a branch officer or branch AFL-CIO liaison or go to [aflcio.org/Get-Involved/Find-a-State-or-Local-AFL-CIO](http://aflcio.org/Get-Involved/Find-a-State-or-Local-AFL-CIO) to find your local AFL-CIO group.



**Above:** AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka addressed the NALC California state convention in April.

**Top:** NALC President Fredric Rolando with the California congressional district liaisons at that same convention.

## Union Plus benefits

Since NALC is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, NALC members enjoy extra benefits through the Union Plus program.

Using the strength of unions and purchasing power of more than 13 million union members, Union Plus negotiates competitive prices for a host of products and services for working families, including scholarships, travel discounts, auto insurance, financial services, legal service, everyday savings, hardship assistance and much more.

NALC members are automatically eligible for Union Plus. For more information and a complete list of benefits available to NALC members, go to [unionplus.org](http://unionplus.org). **PR**