



National Association  
of Letter Carriers

William H. Young, President  
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# NALC Bulletin

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## Record-setting Conference!

# Young Tells Las Vegas Session NALC Must Help Bolster USPS And Rebuild Union Movement

## Local Leaders Dissect 2006-2011 National Agreement



Nearly 2,000 NALC members pack the ballroom at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas to hear NALC President William H. Young and other national officers explain details about implementing the new 2006-2011 National Agreement and discuss the future of the U.S. Postal Service and the union. (Photos by Sean McCormally)

Nearly 2,000 branch leaders gathered in Las Vegas November 17-18 for the NALC's largest-ever training conference, an intensive series of workshops and a wide-open general session on the 2006-2011 National Agreement, with a special emphasis on how it fits with NALC's vision for the future of the union and the Postal Service.



President Young addresses the throng of participants about the new contract with USPS. Shown are (l-r) Executive Vice President Fred Rolando, Young, Vice President Gary Mullins, and Director of Safety and Health Brian Hellman.

NALC President William H. Young congratulated the participants for making the meeting "the biggest training conference in the history of the NALC."

"We certainly have much to be grateful for," Young said, noting that Thanksgiving Day was near. "The new contract immediately springs to mind, but we should be thankful for every brother and sister letter carrier in this country. Thanks to all of them, this union is succeeding at a time when many others are struggling."

The struggles of America's working families were a recurring theme in Young's remarks during the three-hour general session on November 18.

## Job Security

Looking out over a huge ballroom at the Paris Hotel packed to near-capacity, Young asked: "How do we achieve long-term job security for the men and women we represent?"

Young said two things were needed. First, to find ways to strengthen the United States Postal Service in the age of the Internet. Second, to do our part to help rebuild the American middle class by helping rebuild the union movement and by instigating political change.

"The Road Ahead" was the theme of the conference, which included four workshops on contract-related topics, including building a strategic partnership with the USPS, implementation of the Flat Sequencing System (FSS), the use of Transitional Employees (TEs), the implementation of "Shared Services," and NALC's strategy for protecting and improving health benefits.

Each class was repeated three times to maximize the opportunities for participants to see the presentations by NALC's resident national officers and ask questions. More than 1,800 signed up for each round of workshops—the equivalent of more than 5,000 individual sessions.

## FSS Implementation

There were many questions about the use of TEs during FSS implementation and as part of the elimination of casuals.

Young said the NALC is working with the USPS on honing interpretations of the TE provisions of the 2006-2011 agreement — not unusual when new concepts are added to a contract. A question-and-answer style document of agreed-upon interpretations on TEs will be completed soon and incorporated into the Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM), he said.

"It makes more sense to me that we get the Postal Service to agree and put that in writing rather than shoot from the hip," Young explained.

The NALC leader laid the groundwork for the discussion with a review of the union's successes over the past year, including the 2006 election victories, the campaign to stop the spread of Contract Delivery Service, and the agreement on a new five-year contract. He then turned to the future and to "the great challenges facing this union."

"Strengthening the Postal Service will not be enough," he warned. "A shrinking middle class is a direct threat to every letter carrier. No matter how well the Postal Service is doing, if wages and benefits are falling in the economy, the demand for concessions will come."

## Political Activity

On the political front, Young noted the NALC's prominent role in 2006 and said, "The entire labor movement deserves a lot of credit for winning back the Congress, but we can proudly say that no other union did more than the NALC."

Expanding use of the e-Activist Network, growth in funds for the Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education (COLCPE), and the burgeoning Carrier Corps of political volunteers are clear signals NALC will



In left photo, Secretary-Treasurer Jane E. Broendel, at podium, conducts one of the numerous workshops along with Director of City Delivery Dale Hart, left, and Contract Administration Unit staff member Mark Sims. Center photo shows President Young giving final report accompanied by National Resident Officers. At right, participants from around the nation line up to ask questions during informative session.

# NALC Health Benefit Plan is #1 In Consumers' Checkbook Poll

## 'Open Season' Continues to December 10

News about the NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2008 just keeps getting better and better.

The Washington Post reported on November 13 that, according to a guide to federal health plans compiled by the nonprofit Washington Consumers' Checkbook, the NALC Health Benefit Plan "won a top quality rating from 51 percent of its surveyed members" — the highest rating of all the "fee for service plans" in the FEHB program.

"This is excellent news," said NALC President William H. Young. "We have known for years the tremendous merits of enrolling in the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Now an independent and respected survey confirms that fact."

During this Open Season, NALC Health Benefit Plan Director Timothy O'Malley is traveling throughout the nation promoting the Plan at fairs and branch meetings.

Two questions have been coming up regarding membership in the Plan that he would like to clarify:

1. **The "Five-Year Rule"** — NALC members are hearing that you must be enrolled in the same Plan for the last five (5) years prior to retirement. Actually, the rule is that, "If you continuously maintain your FEHB enrollment, or are covered by the FEHB enrollment as a family member, or a combination of both, for the five (5) years of service immediately preceding your retirement, and you retire on an immediate annuity, you can continue to participate in the FEHB after retirement." In other words, you don't have to be in the same FEHB plan for five years. You have to be in a FEHB plan for five years before retiring. This is in the "2008 Guide to Benefits For Career United States Postal Service Employees", on page 6. It is also found on page 78 of the NALC Plan brochure RI 71-009.
2. **Pre-Existing Conditions** — Several branch members have been advised that the NALC Health Benefit Plan does not accept people with pre-existing conditions. **This is definitely not true.** The NALC Health Benefit Plan does not deny Plan membership to anyone based on a pre-existing condition. See page 77 of the 2008 Plan brochure (RI 71-009). It states, "We will not refuse to cover the treatment of a condition you had before you enrolled in this Plan solely because you had the condition before you enrolled." If you have questions regarding joining the Plan or for more general information, please contact a customer service representative at 1-888-636-NALC.

You can join the Plan during Open Season which ends December 10.



## NALC Health Benefit Plan Video Available 24/7 on Union Website

A special video for letter carriers to view as they consider their options during "Open Season" on their health coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits program is available on the NALC website.

Just click on [http://nalc.org/depart/hbp/Open\\_Season/index.html](http://nalc.org/depart/hbp/Open_Season/index.html) and you can view the 10-minute video on your personal computer.

The video includes a brief introduction by NALC President William H. Young, comments by other NALC members, and a rundown of benefits that you will receive when enrolling in the NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2008.



## Second COLA Jumps to \$104

The projected accumulation for the second regular cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) under the 2006-2011 National Agreement stood at \$104 following release November 15 of the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for October.

The second COLA will be based on inflation between July 2007 and January 2008 and will be payable in the second full pay period following release of the January 2008 index.

The \$104 annual accumulation equals 5 cents per hour or \$4.00 per pay period.

The accumulation toward the 2009 retiree COLA stood at 0.4 percent following release of the October CPI-W. The 2009 retiree COLA will be based on the increase in the average CPI-W between the third quarter of 2007 and the third quarter of 2008.

As previously announced, the COLA in 2008 for retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) will be 2.3 percent and the COLA for retirees under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) will receive a 2.0 percent increase.

The accumulation toward the 2008 COLA for Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) participants stands at 3.6 percent based on the latest figures. The 2008 FECA COLA will be based on the increase in the CPI-W between December 2006 and December 2007.

be even more active and prominent in 2008. Winning substantial worker-friendly majorities in both the House and Senate will be priorities, but capturing the White House is critically important. Young pointed out that President Bush — "the most anti-union president in history" — not only blocked the Employee Free Choice Act that would make it easier to form unions, he also saddled the Postal Service with privatization-advocate James Miller as chairman of the Board of Governors.

By contrast, Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY), who has been endorsed by NALC, is an avowed supporter of the Employee Free Choice Act and has promised to consult with postal unions to assure that appointees to the Board of Governors are friends of workers who want to preserve the USPS.

Similarly, Young cited the major contract concessions yielded by the United Auto Workers union and how they were connected to the nation's health care crisis. "Your health care premiums are 20 percent higher to pay for the cost of caring for millions of uninsured individuals," he said. "With a universal system, you could see lower premiums or better benefits."

To bolster the Postal Service, Young cited NALC-backed legislative reforms to save USPS billions of dollars on retiree health liabilities, military pension benefits, and Medicare Part D subsidies. Likewise, the renewed commitment to Customer Connect and active NALC support for nationwide "Vote by Mail" look ahead to USPS' future.