

# Maui wildfires destroy carriers' homes

The tragic wildfire that struck Lahaina on the island of Maui in Hawaii on Aug. 8 killed hundreds of people—with dozens more still unaccounted for—and destroyed much of the historic town. No postal employees were among the dead, USPS reported, but seven lost their homes, including three letter carriers. Several carriers narrowly escaped the flames. The Downtown Post Office in Lahaina was destroyed.



The Lahaina fire

Branch 5306 President Josh Doher said the carriers of Lahaina are recovering with the help of the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation and their fellow NALC members around the country. "The outreach has been absolutely incredible," he said. "It's been an eye-opening experience to realize what a vast network of caring people we are part of."

Every year, nature brings reminders of how letter carriers help each other as well as their customers in the wake of natural disasters like the Lahaina fire. The NALC Disaster Relief Foundation (DRF) stands ready to help. DRF officers and directors quickly identify carriers who are affected by disasters and give them aid as soon as possible. The aid might include supplies such as water, food, clothing and postal uniform items. Working closely with local branch leaders, DRF helps members whose homes are uninhabitable find temporary housing and transportation, as well as apply for DRF grants.

NALC created the DRF in 2018 to ease the process of getting help to members affected by disasters. Numerous branches had asked NALC to establish a mechanism that would facilitate getting donations, grants and other assistance to carriers.

As the year's end approaches, letter carriers might consider donating to DRF, NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said.

"The foundation is ready to provide rapid help for our affected brothers and sisters," Renfroe said. "But it can't do its job without our support."

The foundation provides aid in the form of supplies or grants, and it maintains a trained volunteer network to respond quickly to disasters. Grants are provided for property damage sustained to a primary residence, automobile or personal property from causes such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes or severe storms, and are provided only to NALC members.

Donations can be sent to: NALC Disaster Relief Foundation, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144; or made by credit card at [nalc.org/nrdffundate](http://nalc.org/nrdffundate). The foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization; contributions to the DRF may be tax-deductible. It is recommended that you consult your tax advisor.

Donations go directly to individual carriers or to branches needing assistance—no administrative costs are deducted.

Donations given before Nov. 5 will be recognized in the December issue of *The Postal Record*.

Members do not have to wait for emergency relief or insurance claims to be settled to apply. Applications must be received within 120 days from the date of the natural disaster, unless the applicant can provide sufficient reasons for a delay. The application for a relief grant is on the foundation's website, [nalc.org/disaster](http://nalc.org/disaster).

"Let's all donate to the Disaster Relief Foundation now so that it can be ready when disaster strikes," President Renfroe said.

## Statement of NALC President Brian L. Renfroe on negotiations

As I travel and meet with our members, the question inevitably comes up: "How is collective bargaining going?" Collective bargaining is going well. During negotiations, there always is eagerness and anticipation among our members. It's natural. I felt it as a rank-and-file member, a branch and state leader, a Headquarters staffer, an officer serving as chief spokesperson in two rounds of negotiations, and now as president. A lot of work has been done on countless issues, and I continue to engage constantly with our counterparts at the Postal Service.

Our goal as we entered contract negotiations was to secure an agreement that recognizes the immense changes since our last contract and that rewards carriers now and in the future. I am grateful for our members who make their voices heard. I hear your concerns and can promise you all that we are committed to doing our best for you and will present a contract to our members for ratification only if it meets our goals and appropriately rewards letter carriers.

I sometimes hear members tell other members to be patient with collective bargaining. I don't tell members that because I am not patient with it. That said, it is a simple fact that historically, the process takes time. We have the largest bargaining unit in the country under a single collective-bargaining agreement. There is a lot at stake for the future both of NALC members and the Postal Service.

While I remain confident in our chances of reaching a negotiated agreement with USPS, we are prepared to go forward in the interest arbitration process if that is what it takes to achieve an agreement that meets our needs. As of the time of writing this message in mid-September, we have several key issues where we have yet to reach agreement. We have made progress on those issues in recent weeks. Even as we move forward with scheduling interest arbitration proceedings, we will continue to negotiate with our counterparts as long as there is opportunity to reach an agreement. Regardless of which way we ultimately reach a new contract, I am confident it will be one that rewards our members and makes significant progress in key areas.

## 'Enough is enough'

"We've had 17 assaults or armed robberies [in Cincinnati] since January of 2022, so it's right about one a month," Cincinnati Branch 43 President Ted Thompson said at a local NALC rally on Aug. 30 held to highlight the surge in criminal attacks on letter carriers that is occurring not just in Cincinnati, but nationwide. "The emotion that comes about is outrage."

While that number is solely for the Cincinnati area, communities throughout the country have seen a similar marked increase in thefts and assaults in the same time period.

Letter carriers at the rally expressed their anger and their determination to see an end to the assaults and robberies by chanting, "Enough is enough!" They said they have been left to defend themselves and demanded that the Postal Service do more to protect them and that prosecutors aggressively prosecute these crimes—both to hold criminals accountable and to deter future attacks.

"This increase in violence should come with increased protection," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe told those gathered at the rally. "Lately, it feels like we only have each other."

"Since 2020, only 14 percent of crimes against letter carriers have been prosecuted federally," he said. "Forty-two percent. Let that sink in. It's appalling and out of control. This should not be, and we should not let it be."

"Something has to change. We've got solutions technology-wise to make the ways we access mail safer. We also want to increase those prosecution rates," he said.

The Cincinnati rally followed a similar one held in Chicago on Aug. 8.

"We have over 90 reported incidents where letter carriers have been robbed and/or assaulted," Branch 11 President Elise Foster told the assembled group. "This is too many."

"Today it is open season on the letter carriers, and it is uncalled for. It is unnecessary and action needs to be taken immediately," Illinois State Association President Luis Rivas said.

The rallies are one part of NALC's effort to get out a multifaceted message—to residents to alert authorities if they see anything worrisome and to preserve evidence, such as doorbell or other surveillance videos, for use by investigators; to their representatives to be aware of the need for solutions; to the Postal Service to better protect letter carriers on their routes; and to federal prosecutors to take these cases and apply the more harsh federal penalties that local prosecutors do not have available.

Legislators also are lending their voices to call for solutions, with members of Congress speaking at both the Chicago and Cincinnati rallies. NALC is working with lawmakers who are drafting bills aimed to provide potential solutions for the epidemic, though none has been unveiled yet.

"Nearly every day, I hear about another horrific assault against one of our members," President Renfroe said. "Every time, I am heartbroken for our brothers and sisters who are victims and for their loved ones. But even more than that, I am angry."

Even though letter carriers are federal employees and crimes against letter carriers performing their duties are federal crimes, recent attacks have frequently been prosecuted by local authorities, watering down sentences to as little as six months. That's a far cry from the sentences handed down to a trio of thieves who robbed a carrier in South Carolina on March 17, 2022. Two received five-year sentences and the other got a seven-year sentence from a federal judge on Aug. 23.

It takes a joint investigation among the Postal Inspection Service, the attorney general and a local police force to hand over the case to federal prosecutors. That, combined with the low number of such cases being prosecuted in the first place, leaves much to be desired in terms of deterring potential lawbreakers who aim to attack letter carriers.

"When these crimes are not prosecuted, it sends a message to criminals that they can get away with robbing a letter carrier," President Renfroe said.

"I am furious that our members continue to be targeted and harmed with no end in sight," he said. "I have said many times that there is no single solution to this disturbing problem, but more can be and must be done, and it must be done immediately."

"Every employer has a duty and obligation to protect its employees on the job. The Postal Inspection Service is not protecting us, and the U.S. Department of Justice is not doing its job prosecuting these crimes. Word is clearly out among criminals on the streets, leaving letter carriers unfairly forced to defend themselves. These conditions that once seemed unimaginable are the norm now. It is sickening, and it is wrong," he added.

In addition to federal prosecution, President Renfroe has called on the USPS Inspection Service to increase its efforts at preventing these violent attacks before they occur.

"Postal inspectors and postal police officers work diligently to investigate and prevent instances of violence against our employees," he said, "and yet, current methods of prevention clearly are not working. The situation is worsening."

He called on the Inspection Service's leaders to do more: "Times have drastically changed, and methods for protecting our members while we do our job must reflect the current circumstances."

Renfroe called on local branches to hold rallies like the ones in Chicago and Cincinnati, and more rallies were being planned as this issue of the magazine was being prepared. "Events like these make a difference and bring awareness to this growing problem. I encourage all NALC branches, especially in areas that are experiencing an uptick in crime, to mobilize and plan similar events. When we all come out with a unified message, we are heard," President Renfroe said.

Branch leaders are encouraged to contact their national business agents' offices for information and material to help organize a rally or to contact the media to amplify our message to their communities.

"We will not stand by and wait," Renfroe said. "We demand respect and protection. We cannot allow the Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Justice to continue to fail our members. We demand that they fulfill their responsibilities and stop these crimes."

"Enough is enough!"

## NALC calls for repeal of WEP and GPO

On Sept. 13, NALC participated in a rally on Capitol grounds in Washington, DC, to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). The event, organized by the National WEP/GPO Repeal Task Force, focused on raising awareness and gaining support in Congress for the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82/S. 597), legislation that would repeal the WEP and GPO.

Millions of federal employees, including letter carriers, are affected by the WEP and GPO, which are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce or sometimes eliminate the Social Security benefits of federal annuitants.

NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth spoke at the rally alongside other labor leaders, including American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, American Postal Workers Union Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard, International Association of Fire Fighters President Ed Kelly and American Federation of Government Employees National President Everett Kelly.

Local NALC members, NALC Headquarters staff, and people affected by the WEP and GPO from various industries attended the event.

In the 118th Congress, H.R. 82 once again has broad bipartisan support, with 292 co-sponsors in the House. Under House rules, when a bill reaches 290 co-sponsors it can go to the House floor for a vote after 30 days if the committee of jurisdiction does not act. The House Committee on Ways and Means, led by Chairman Jason Smith (R-MO), is the committee of jurisdiction for the bill. Even though the bill has exceeded 290 co-sponsors, it is unlikely that House leaders will bypass the committee process and call for a floor vote.

NALC is committed to moving this bill forward and increasing support to finally repeal the WEP and GPO. Please visit [nalc.org/action](http://nalc.org/action) to check whether your representative is a co-sponsor of the bill and, if not, ask them to support H.R. 82.



Above: NALC President Brian L. Renfroe at the Cincinnati rally  
Below: Letter carriers at the Chicago rally



## Taub and Day await Senate action on PRC nominations

On Sept. 7, President Biden announced his intent to renominate Robert Taub to the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). The following week, on Sept. 11, the president announced his intent to nominate Thomas Day to serve as a commissioner.

The PRC currently has five commissioners, who are nominated by the president for six-year terms and confirmed by the Senate. Taub is a two-time appointee to the commission following unanimous confirmations by the Senate in 2011 and 2016. His current term expired on Oct. 22, 2022, and he is serving in a hold-over year until Oct. 22, 2023. Mark Acton, the current vice chairman of the commission who has served on the PRC since 2006, also is serving in a hold-over year that expires on Oct. 22. If confirmed, Day would replace Acton on the PRC.

The PRC is an independent agency that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. Its responsibilities include preventing anti-competitive practices, promoting accountability, adjudicating complaints, setting postal rates and helping oversee delivery service standards. PRC nominees must be advanced by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) and then approved by the full Senate.

On Sept. 12, the committee voted 12-0 to advance Taub's nomination. He now awaits consideration in the full Senate. At press time, HSGAC had not yet considered Day's nomination.

Day retired from the Postal Service in 2019 after serving in multiple senior roles, including vice president of engineering, senior vice president of government affairs, senior vice president of Intelligent Mail and chief sustainability officer. Following his retirement from the Postal Service, Day worked at the International Post Corporation in Brussels. He is an Army veteran and a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

NALC will keep letter carriers updated as Taub and Day move through the nomination process.

## National rap session to be held Nov. 17-19 in New Orleans

The 2023 NALC national conference, or "rap session," is set for Nov. 17-19 at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside. The meeting will begin with registration and a reception on the afternoon of Friday, Nov. 17, with workshops on Saturday, Nov. 18, and the rap session on Sunday, Nov. 19. The rap session is scheduled to end at 11 a.m. on Sunday.

The national conference is held in years between the NALC's biennial conventions. Article 3, Section 4 (b) of the *NALC Constitution* states: "The National President shall, once each year except in the year of the National Convention, call a national conference. This conference shall be voluntarily attended by only State and Branch Presidents or their designees, with their expenses to be borne by the State Association or Branch represented."

The hotel rate is \$249 single/double. For reservations, go to [book.passkey.com/e/50547129](http://book.passkey.com/e/50547129) or contact the hotel's reservation department at 800-445-8667 until Oct. 26. After this date, reservations will be accepted by the hotel based on availability and hotel rate. For more information, go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org).



## October MDA Branch Challenge

October marks the final NALC/MDA Branch Challenge of 2023. Join more than 200 NALC branches, state associations and regions that have already raised more than \$620,000 this year. Raise funds this month to support MDA's mission and continue the momentum other branches have started.

**How your branch can get involved:**

- Step 1: Branch presidents or MDA coordinators can find their branch page at [mda.donordrive.com/event/NALC2023](http://mda.donordrive.com/event/NALC2023). Need help finding or customizing your page? Connect with NALC at 312-392-1100 or [nalc@mdausa.org](mailto:nalc@mdausa.org).
- Step 2: Fundraise. Encourage members to fundraise or donate by:
  - Starting a Facebook fundraiser on Oct. 1.
  - Hosting an event or sending in your donation from an event that has just completed.

**Branch Challenge details:**

- Contest dates: Oct. 1-31, 2023.
- Each week in October: Top 10 NALC fundraising branches will receive email recognition.
- At the end of October: Those branches that raise \$500 or more with an online fundraising campaign will receive special prizes.

**Offline gifts:**

- All checks and offline gifts received in October will count toward the Branch Challenge. Be sure to download the NALC Donation Allocation Card and mail donations to: MDA, Attn: NALC October Challenge, P.O. Box 7410354, Chicago, IL 60674-0354.



NALC members call for support for the Social Security Fairness Act.



### Heat-related injury?

If you suffered a heat-related injury this year and have not filled out a heat injury report, please download the form at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/body/Heat-Injury-Initial-Report-Form.pdf](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/body/Heat-Injury-Initial-Report-Form.pdf), fill it out and send it to the NALC director of safety and health at NALC Headquarters.

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