

So what is a labor union?



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A labor union can be defined as an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits and working conditions. The purpose of a labor union can also be explained as the mechanism for union members to come together to make workplace improvements. The foundation of a labor union is the workers who join together in membership for the betterment of all within the group. It is at that point of solidarity when workers can truly thrive and achieve their goals.

One of the most important activities the National Association of Letter Carriers engages in is the organizing of city letter carriers. As a member of NALC, you should have a sense of pride in knowing that you belong to one of the most organized open shop unions in the American labor movement in terms of membership. NALC boasts a long history of being a well-organized union with a sustained membership base in the low to mid-90th percentile. In simple terms, this translates to more than 90 percent of all city letter carriers voluntarily joining and maintaining membership in NALC.

There are numerous reasons for being a member of NALC, not the least of which involves joining with other city letter carriers in the common goal to protect and enforce the hard-won rights and benefits secured by those who came before. Most rights and benefits afforded to workers today are a direct result of victories won by labor. We must always keep a careful watch in order to maintain and enforce those rights and benefits that we have achieved, as NALC continues to build on strengthening wages, benefits and working conditions for America's city letter carriers. This effort, however, cannot be accomplished single-handedly, but rather requires activism and solidarity from the members of a unified organization.

Over the last several years, NALC has ramped up its organizing activities to a new level with the formalizing of the carrier academies that include a union orientation segment. At orientation, newly hired city letter carriers are met by NALC organizers who provide a wealth of information about the history of our union as well as present-day ef-

forts. Each organizer takes time during the presentation to explain the importance of joining NALC, answer any questions posed by the newly hired city letter carriers, and ultimately ask them to join our great union. Upon completion of each orientation session, the organizer provides status reports to the national business agent (NBA) office reflecting the organizing results for that particular session. The NBA office then enters this information into a NALC Headquarters database that compiles the organizing results from all NALC orientations around the country. The NBA then reports those results to each individual branch for follow-up discussions with the new city letter carrier employees as they enter their assigned installations.

Every newly signed member of NALC receives a welcome packet of information designed to further educate them on the importance of NALC membership and the history of NALC, including information about their rights and benefits as a city letter carrier. The packet contains numerous items, including a welcome letter from their NBA, an NALC T-shirt, an NALC lanyard, an *NALC Constitution*, and a copy of the National Agreement, to name a few.

The success rate of this process is proven, as these organizers are at the forefront of maintaining a well-organized NALC. I want to thank each of them for their dedication and hard work.

NALC also produces automated reports to assist branches in identifying non-members in their respective branch. These reports can be accessed at the branch level by the president or designee(s) and recording secretary through the Members Only portal on the NALC website.

Many branches do a phenomenal job recruiting new members, for which I applaud them. Those efforts do not go unnoticed.

While we should most definitely pride ourselves on the success NALC enjoys in organizing city letter carriers to strengthen our union, we must always remember that the work never ends. New employees will continue to be hired in our craft, providing opportunities to organize. In addition to new employees, we must continue our efforts to organize non-members already in the craft who, for whatever reason, either never joined the union or resigned their membership at some point in the past. It is equally important to ensure that those non-members understand the history of NALC as well as the benefits of membership.

Always keep in mind that the union is "U," and every member should work to build on our house of solidarity and unionism by encouraging those in our ranks to join NALC.