NALC election installs new “reform” officials to oversee USPS contract arbitration and historic cuts

Tom Hall
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James Henry of the Concerned Letter Carriers (CLC) slate won control of the top offices of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) in the October 23 election, as the US Postal Service prepares sweeping attacks on postal jobs, routes and working conditions. Henry will replace Brian Renfroe in December and take responsibility for imposing a new national contract without a vote through binding arbitration which NALC officials have already begun. The previous contract, which had a start date retroactive to 2023, expired May 22 of this year.

Henry received 23,077 votes, against 18,009 for Nicole Rhine, 12,327 for Michael Caref and 6,746 for Lew Drass. Corey Walton, host of the *From A to Arbitration* podcast, won the executive vice presidency. Only 61,120 of 285,881 eligible members returned ballots, a turnout of 21.4 percent. Henry therefore won the presidency with the votes of barely 8 percent of the eligible membership.

The election followed a rebellion against the previous agreement last year. In January 2025, carriers rejected a tentative contract by 63,680 votes to 26,304. But in March, arbitrator Dennis Nolan imposed essentially the same agreement, retaining the two-tier wage structure and meager general wage increases. Now the apparatus is preparing to deny workers even the right to vote on the contract before it is imposed through arbitration.

The Concerned Letter Carriers slate claimed to support higher pay, full cost-of-living adjustments, a single wage scale and an all-career workforce. But Renfroe gave a far more accurate description of the policies of the new administration in a recent column in the union’s *Postal Record* magazine. Reviewing bargaining and arbitration preparations, he explained, continued throughout the election; his goal was for the incoming officers to “seamlessly pick up where we left off.”

Workers are confronting the prospect of some of the deepest cuts in USPS history, which will likely begin early next year, according to the timetable set by Postmaster General David Steiner. At the August 7 Board of Governors meeting, he threatened to examine the closure of thousands of “unprofitable” post offices, reductions in service and higher prices unless Congress agreed to his legislative proposals.

The Postal Service’s Office of Inspector General supplied a detailed menu in July. Its white paper, “Options for Addressing the U.S. Postal Service’s Financial Gap,” examined a 10 percent reduction in employment through hiring freezes, early retirement, reductions in force or layoffs. It estimated up to $5.6 billion in annual savings. The OIG calculated that ending automatic conversion of lower-paid pre-career employees to career status after fiscal 2024 could have cut fiscal 2025 payroll costs by $2.5 billion.

Other options targeted craft protections, compensation bargaining, workers’ compensation and delivery itself. The report calculated that converting door delivery to curbside or cluster boxes could save at least $825 million annually and enable USPS to eliminate additional routes and carrier positions. It also explored five-day delivery and broader restrictions on the universal-service obligation.

The OIG presented these measures as proposals from various “stakeholders,” rather than formal recommendations or a public list of USPS bargaining demands. But its report identified USPS management and the postal unions as the decision-makers for changes to career conversion and workforce size. It acknowledged that existing contracts restrict layoffs and limit the share of pre-career employees. The report thus identified precisely which contractual barriers a new agreement could remove.

Management has already reduced work hours while expanding its sorting and delivery network overhaul. An August statement by the USPS Workers Rank-and-File Committee reported proposals discussed at NALC’s collective-bargaining conference to weaken layoff protections, restrict grievance remedies, loosen subcontracting restrictions and give management greater control over routes and hours. Postal workers face the prospect of fewer employees carrying heavier workloads even as the agency curtails delivery services.

James Henry is a career bureaucract who already occupied one of NALC’s highest offices. He became an arbitration advocate in 1995, joined the national dispute-resolution system in 1998 and won appointment as a regional administrative

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assistant in 2011.

Former union president Fredric Rolando appointed Henry national vice president with in May 2022, and the convention elected him by acclamation later that year. He served throughout Renfroe's presidency and heads the union's Contract Administration Unit, which oversees the grievance arbitration system, national contract-interpretation disputes and support for 15 regional offices.

As president, Henry is expected to make a salary of around $350,000 a year like his predecessor. This is a 30 percent pay bump from the $270,504 he made as vice president, according to the union's 2026 financial filing with the US Labor Department.

Christopher Jackson, was re-elected to the director of city delivery post (salary $262,350), first took that office through a Rolando appointment in 2017. He previously served as a national business agent and a joint route-inspection team leader. Jackson's responsibilities directly intersect with the route evaluations, consolidation and work-hour reductions now at the center of USPS restructuring.

Allan Rios won election as Region 1 national business agent scarcely six months after Renfroe appointed him to that very position in April. Rolando had previously appointed him a regional administrative assistant in 2015. Walton built a following by criticizing contract violations and Renfroe on his podcast, but his election now places him in a top national office with a salary of around $280,000 as the next contract approaches arbitration. These careers trace the rise of CLC through the existing apparatus, not through organizations that postal workers control independently.

Henry publicly opposed the 2025 tentative agreement and urged carriers to vote no. That break helped him cultivate a reform reputation amid mass hostility toward the national officials. But he was in charge of the Contract Administration Unit, and both Henry and Jackson sat on the NALC Executive Council when it decided in February 2025 to pursue arbitration after the membership rejected the agreement. The council reported a unanimous decision to reject the revised terms then available rather than submit another agreement for ratification; the public record does not establish each officer's individual vote.

At the August convention, delegates also voted 2,583 to 694 against resolutions urging a campaign to restore postal workers' right to strike. NALC officials thus maintain the legal restraints on collective action while preparing to hand the contract to an arbitrator, under conditions in which management has publicly mapped out major attacks on employment and service.

The election of this "reform" slate is part of the bureaucracy's preparation for new, historic betrayals. The pattern recalls the rise of Sean O'Brien in the Teamsters and Shawn Fain in the United Auto Workers. In April 2026, O'Brien's Teamsters negotiated terms for UPS to offer buyouts to as many as 7,500 drivers, after opposing management's unilateral program. He has since become a signficiant Trump supporter. In the auto industry, thousands of workers lost jobs following Fain's celebrated "stand-up strike."

The pseudo-left Build a Fighting NALC (BFN) caucus has provided political cover for this operation. Its 2024 platform welcomed Henry's CLC campaign as a "very positive" development and promoted the UAW and Teamsters as models. During the previous arbitration fight, BFN appealed to Renfroe to pursue its wage proposals through the same machinery, declaring its commitment to work with him for a settlement. After Henry's victory, BFN's October 30 statement hailed the election as a "momentous milestone" and announced that members had demanded change.

BFN's perspective sends carriers back to the officials and procedures that overrode their last contract vote. Its celebration of a new administration conceals the continuity that Renfroe himself spelled out, while USPS prepares to slash labor costs and services.

Postal workers have begun building a different response. Rank-and-file committees in southern Pennsylvania, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Springfield, Massachusetts, have called for independent organization across crafts and workplaces. Their statements reject contracts imposed without workers' approval and seek common action with workers at UPS, FedEx, Amazon and other industries.

The 1970 postal wildcat strike demonstrated what workers can accomplish when they defy the strike ban and take action independently of national officials. Today's letter carriers must demand full disclosure of management's proposals, oppose any imposed contract and organize to defend every job, route and delivery service. They must build rank-and-file committees capable of uniting the postal workforce in a common struggle against USPS management, the union bureaucracy and the corporate and political interests behind the cuts.



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