



AN NALC STEWARD'S GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION

It is often said that a Steward is the backbone of the Union. This is not just a saying; indeed it is an unimpeachable fact. There is no more important, challenging and difficult job in the NALC. If we as a Union do nothing else, we must always consistently and effectively enforce our Contract with the USPS. All Stewards bring their own approaches and abilities to this work. However, there are some aspects of a Steward's work that are both essential and no-negotiable. Simply put, any Steward that cannot or will not fully accept and incorporate the following five guidelines into his or her representative work has no business in their position to begin with.

1) THE DUTY OF FAIR REPRESENTATION.

This is not just a concept or a good idea - it is the LAW. A steward's personal opinions about any letter carrier coworker are always irrelevant. This includes non-members as well as members whose approach to the letter carrier job a steward might disagree with. In fact, the most effective way to win over a non-member is *to show them* what top flight Union representation is all about. A contract violation is a contract violation, no matter who is affected. Additionally, never bluff or provide misinformation to coworkers or to management. If you are asked a question and are unsure of the answer, don't guess! Your credibility as well as that of the Union is at stake. Merely state that you will get back to them and then do some homework – or contact the Union office.

2) CONSISTENT ENFORCEMENT OF OU LABOR CONTRACT

As steward's duties require that he or she consistently enforce ALL of our Collective Bargaining Agreement as interpreted by the JCAM – not just the portions that they personally agree with or that they think are most important. An adjunct to this requirement is a steward's obligation to avoid making any agreements or even engaging in any discussion that is contrary to Contract rules and provisions as negotiated by the National Parties. A steward that is pressured by management to do so should immediately contact the Union office. Individual letter carriers are sometimes unhappy because a particular Contract provision as interpreted and enforced by the Union does not personally benefit them. Don't argue with these individuals. Merely advise them to contact the Union office to discuss their concerns. An effective steward will seldom win a popularity contest, but it is much better to be respected for always showing integrity.

3) AVOIDING EVEN THE APPEARANCE OF SELF-SERVING BEHAVIOR

Nothing is more damaging to the Union than a steward that engages in self-serving actions of even those that *could appear* to others to be self-serving. Do not ever use your Union position for any kind of personal advantage. As a pertinent example, when negotiating a grievance settlement that involves monetary remedy for multiple letter carriers including the steward, don't pay yourself first! This does not mean that you should be a martyr for the cause. If you are among those whose Contractual rights have been violated, by all means include yourself in the remedy – but do so in an appropriate manner. Also, always make every effort to timely notify your letter carrier coworkers about information you become aware of that could benefit them, such as canceled vacation weeks.

4) WEARING THE “UNION LABEL” 24/7

As the NALC's Contract enforcement representative, a steward is looked upon to set an example in all that they say and do, both on and off the job. It is especially important that a steward perform all of his or her daily letter carrier duties in a consistently professional manner. Additionally, this means supporting the local Union, the NALC, and Organized Labor, not just with words but also with actions. A steward is expected to take a leadership role in local branch activities, and not just merely participate. Of significance, this support also extends to our employer, the United States Postal Service. Remember that the success of the Postal Service is always in the best interests of all letter carriers, even when this means actively opposing some of the misguided policies and behavior of Postal Service management.

5) THE REQUIREMENT FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

It is not possible to effectively represent letter carriers and enforce our Collective Bargaining Agreement without attending and participating in every possible educational and training opportunity. Our Labor Contract incorporates all or parts of more than fifty postal Service handbooks and manuals, as well as scores of Federal Laws. Failing to keep up with all of the latest memorandums, policies, and work rule changes will seriously impact a steward's ability to succeed. This begins with attending local steward meetings but it also includes attendance at local, regional, and National training seminars and conventions. Although a steward cannot be required to attend and participate in these activities, failing to do so will quickly and adversely hinder their effectiveness.

SERVING THE UNION AND AMERICA'S LETTER CARRIERS AS AN NALC STEWARD IS NOT JUST WHAT YOU DO. RATHER, IT IS WHO YOU ARE. YOUR SUCCESS WILL COME FROM ALWAYS REMEMBERING THAT.