



# MEMO To the Branch 2184 Leadership Council, Oct. 12, 2021

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This month's Leadership Council Memo will begin as always with an update on Branch 2184 administrative matters. Our regular monthly membership meeting on Wednesday, November 3 beginning at 7:30 p.m. will be conducted by teleconference in the same manner as previous meetings. The steward meeting on November 16 and the executive board meeting on November 29 will also be conducted by teleconference. Branch President Walt McGregory will provide updated information on future meetings and other Branch 2184 events as circumstances warrant.

With the expiration of the Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL) on September 30, **it has become even more critical that any letter carrier who has a positive Covid diagnosis immediately initiate an OWCP claim in response to their diagnosis.** If the claim is initiated and submitted within 30 days of the positive diagnosis, and medical documentation supporting this is provided within 10 days of claim submission, a letter carrier will be eligible for up to 45 calendar days of Continuation of Pay (COP) for any work loss that is incurred as a result of the positive Covid diagnosis, in addition to other coverage and benefits under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA).

Acceptance of OWCP claims in response to Covid diagnoses is a rather straightforward matter, as long as the diagnosis occurred within 21 days of a letter carrier's work day. **It is not necessary to prove that exposure came while performing job duties.** Stewards, please advise members with positive Covid diagnoses to contact the Branch 2184 office, who will put them in touch with our NALC National Business Agent's office for assistance.

On Friday, September 30 the NALC and the Postal Service agreed to extend several Covid-related Memorandums of Understanding through December 31, 2021. This agreement is M-01966 in the NALC Materials Reference System (MRS). The extended MOUs as well as well an extension of a USPS directive on the liberal use of sick leave and changes of schedule can be found on the NALC website. Also extended are agreements that explain the Temporary additional paid leave for CCAs (M-01965), a sign-up process for those that did not place their names on an Overtime Desired List during the recently ended sign-up period (M-01963), and a temporary extension of time limits for appeals to Step B and to arbitration (M-01964).

The annual Open Season for Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) is quickly approaching. This will begin on Monday, November 8 and continue through Monday, December 13. During that time both active and retired letter carriers can enroll, change plans, or make changes in coverage within a plan. As always, ALL members should be encouraged to strongly consider the NALC's own excellent Health Benefit Plan for their coverage.

Of note, those nearing retirement are sometimes reluctant to make changes in their FEHB plan because of misinformation about FEHB eligibility after retirement. However, as long as a letter carrier has been enrolled in ANY FEHB

plan or plans for five consecutive years at the time of retirement, they are eligible to carry forth their FEHB coverage into retirement. **As such, they can change plans or coverages during any Open Season in the years immediately prior to retiring without jeopardizing their eligibility for coverage after retirement.** What they cannot and should not do is cancel their FEHB coverage entirely when within five years of retirement.

We are now in the “holiday dense” portion of the postal year, as eight of the ten official postal holidays occur between early September (Labor Day) and mid-February (Presidents Day). With this in mind, all of our stewards and contract enforcers should be sure that 1) they fully understand the holiday scheduling provisions of Article 11 of the Contract as well as Item #13 of our Branch 2184 Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU). With every holiday, there are multiple issues caused by misunderstanding and misapplication of the holiday scheduling process and requirements. **Stewards that are unsure about any aspect of holiday scheduling should seek guidance from Branch officers or others with extensive contractual knowledge and experience.**

A continuing problem with holiday scheduling in some Branch 2184-represented offices involves work on the day of a holiday itself. Management continues to improperly schedule CCAs to do this work without first utilizing and applying our negotiated “pecking order” in our LMOU for work on a holiday. **Remember that the requirements for scheduling work on a holiday itself are NO different than with a holiday schedule that typically occurs on the day before a holiday.** Our negotiated order of scheduling always applies.

As long as eight or more hours of work is expected to be performed by letter carriers on the day of a holiday itself, prior to scheduling CCAs to work management **MUST** 1) schedule PTFs to work, 2) seek volunteers from fulltime carriers those whose holiday it is, and 3) seek volunteers from those whose nonscheduled day it is. **Only after PTFs are scheduled and management has sought volunteers from the entire fulltime regular workforce should CCAs be scheduled to work on a holiday itself.**

Stewards should also be preparing for the start of the 2022 annual leave selection process in all Branch 2184 offices, which will begin on **Wednesday, December 1**. Again, we must turn to our Branch 2184 Local Memorandum of Understanding, wherein there is the entire locally negotiated procedures and rules for annual leave submissions and approval, **found in Items #4 through #12**. Additionally, stewards should be sure that they are fully knowledgeable of the annual leave provisions in Article 10, sections 1 through 4 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, as well as in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), subchapter 510 and especially section 512.

Always remember that the formulation of the annual leave board in each station is **NOT** ever a unilateral, management only process. **Our local union representatives MUST fully participate.** This includes but is not limited to ensuring that the negotiated percentages allowed off for the choice and non-choice vacation periods are correctly calculated in accordance with our LMOU. **Please read over the separate memo concerning the forthcoming 2022 leave year. Any steward with questions or concerns should immediately seek guidance from the union office.**