

Volume 138/Number 1 January 2025

The Postal Record

The monthly journal of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

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**NALC wins
40+ year fight
for retirees**

CONGRESS REPEALS WEP & GPO

—PAGES 6-11



**FORCE A VOTE
ON SOCIAL
SECURITY
FAIRNESS**

REPEAL
& GPO
NOW.

PASS
SOCIAL
SECURITY
FAIRNESS.

REPEAL
WEP &
NOW

REPEAL
WEP & G
NOW

Looking for the latest NALC news? Give it a listen wherever you stream your favorite podcasts!

NALC's podcast "You Are the Current Resident" is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and wherever you listen to podcasts.

During each episode, NALC President Brian Renfro and guests discuss vital topics affecting the letter carrier craft and the union. The show's format also includes interviews with other NALC leaders to talk in depth about issues affecting letter carriers and the union.



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Finally, Social Security fairness for our retirees



Brian L. Renfroe

This month's issue celebrates a major historic legislative victory for NALC. After more than 40 years, Congress finally repealed the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). In the early morning of Dec. 21, with almost no time to spare in one of the last scheduled legislative days of the year, the Senate passed the Social Security Fairness Act, sending the bill to President Joe Biden for his signature.

In a divided Congress, where it often seems that very little legislation becomes law, this bill's passage is a major accomplishment and a testament to the steadfast grassroots efforts of letter carriers across the country.

The law will finally restore full Social Security benefits for every single Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retiree. The history of the WEP and GPO and more information on how it negatively affected retired letter carriers is available on page 9. In short, the WEP and GPO unfairly penalized CSRS retirees who also spent part of their careers in private-sector jobs, as many letter carriers and other public servants do. It was a gross injustice that went on for far too long, but today, we can finally celebrate this victory that will make a substantial difference for so many letter carriers and their beneficiaries.

On the surface, this issue seems straightforward. I think almost everyone would agree that reducing—or, quite frankly, stealing—from hardworking retirees' Social Security benefits is wrong. So why did it take so long for this bill to become law? And what made the 118th Congress the right, even if unlikely, setting to get this bill to the president's desk?

Despite consistent bipartisan support from Congress for more than 20 years, no one could manage to get it passed. Costs, pay-fors (requirements to offset the cost of legislation), and Social Security solvency were repeated arguments we heard when we pushed to get the bill forward. But letter carriers never let up. Each Congress, a bill was introduced to repeal the WEP and GPO, and every time our advocates made calls, wrote letters, sent

emails and met with their members of Congress to get their support.

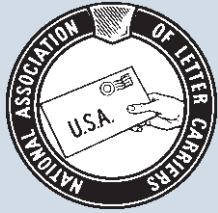
In the 118th Congress, we saw all that advocacy work pay off. After the bill was introduced in January 2023, NALC participated in several events on Capitol grounds to gain support for the bill. While speaking at these events, I could tell that they were not just fluff and noise to get attention. Real momentum was being created and these events helped get the bill through Congress.

The discharge petition, which was necessary to get the bill through the House, reached its signature threshold hours after a press event we participated in outside the Capitol in September. At a labor-led event last month, co-sponsored by NALC, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) announced that the bill would go to the Senate floor. Our close work with the bill's leads and House and Senate leadership, alongside the unwavering commitment and advocacy of our members, was essential to getting this bill across the finish line.

“I am so pleased that all our CSRS retirees will finally rightfully receive the full Social Security benefits that they earned and have always deserved.”

Retired letter carriers are special to me. I grew up with many retirees back during their working days. I lost one of them, my father, Ken, in September. He was a retired letter carrier affected by WEP and GPO. We talked about how unfair it was and the difficulties we've faced getting this law repealed. He told me, “Keep at it, and it will happen because it's right and it's fair.” As usual, he was correct. This win is another reminder of what we can achieve when we keep fighting, no matter how long it takes.

While the fight was long, it was certainly worth it. I am so pleased that all our CSRS retirees will finally rightfully receive the full Social Security benefits that they earned and have always deserved. We celebrate this achievement because of the immediate impact it has on thousands of NALC members who served their customers and our union for decades. Together, we keep fighting as they always have.



National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO

Since 1889, representing city letter carriers employed by the United States Postal Service.

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Two tales from the postal beat



Philip
Dine

My call to the president of a Wisconsin branch was meant to be brief. Having spent a couple of years in France, I was intrigued by the juxtaposition of *Fond du Lac* Branch 125 President *Aaron Le Duc* and wanted to check the spelling.

That done, I asked as usual for the carrier to let me know if the media ever sought his comment on a postal matter or if a local member did something noteworthy on the route that we should tell news outlets about.

He paused, before stating: “I literally didn’t expect that day to happen, nor do I want any accolades or any light shined on it.”

His reticence was unsurprising—he is, after all, a letter carrier, so helping folks is part of the job, humility part of the deal—but from my reportorial perspective, I wanted the story.

In late October, Aaron was delivering a route when, approaching a stop sign, he heard what he thought was a child talking. He checked through his passenger window—and noticed a hand waving from a porch and a woman yelling for help.

He rushed over and found a collapsed deck that had created a ramp-like effect that sent the woman plummeting.

“All I could see was her hand waving, but I couldn’t see her. It was just her voice,” Aaron said. “Obviously, I had to get down to where she was.”

After ascending with the elderly resident, who lived alone, had injured her foot, and was concerned about the possible ambulance cost, he waited inside 45 minutes with her for a hospital-bound taxi, while comforting her worried dog.

Six years ago, Aaron performed a similar feat after hearing an elderly woman yell for help. He spotted her on the garage floor, where she’d fallen, breaking her leg or hip, and stayed with her until first responders arrived. She survived the fall, but unfortunately soon succumbed to pneumonia.

When he’s not aiding injured customers, this three-year branch president and 18-year carrier serves as branch food drive coordinator and as Northeast District representative for the Wisconsin State Association of Letter Carriers.

Sixteen years ago, Chuck Hester became a letter carrier in Fort Payne, AL. That same year, he acquired his dog Rusty, a red wiener (aka dachshund).

The juxtaposition of those two events recently turned Chuck into a first-time author who, as I write this, is prepar-

ing for his initial book signing at a local pastry shop.

Chuck teaches Sunday school lessons for adults and tells stories about Rusty to illuminate biblical parables; so many that a student suggested he write them down.

“At first I was a little hesitant,” Chuck recounted, “because I’ve never written anything. But finally I decided I would try it, and it pretty much just fell out of my pencil. I showed the stories to some friends and family members, and they suggested I try to send it to a publisher.”

That seemed a stretch to this Fort Payne Branch 3359 member who had briefly attended community college, but he researched publishers, talked to a writer in a nearby Alabama town, contacted a South Carolina publishing house, and sent his manuscript.

To his surprise, “they read it, and they liked it, and they wanted to publish it.”

He was “ecstatic” but “also a little nervous, because I’ve never done this sort of thing before. But I prayed about it a lot, and I knew that God had led me to this point, so I had to go forward.”

Which brings us to the book’s genesis. Way back, Chuck had a job working weekends, so he couldn’t accompany his wife and kids to church. One child asked in 2001, “Why doesn’t Daddy ever go to church?” By then he had Sundays free and began going. After 9/11, he pondered issues of “mortality” and “eternal state,” became a born-again Christian, and soon began teaching Sunday school.

His book, *What Rusty Taught Me About God*, was published in late October, the same time Aaron saved the resident. The book’s first few stories deal with rough periods such as losing his father at age 12 and being diagnosed with Parkinson’s at 49. The rest are lighter, with some humor.

Is Chuck, who on his route in 2010 saved the life of a teenager who’d severed his foot leaping from tracks as a train approached, astonished at writing a book that’s drawing attention?

“Yes and no,” Chuck says. “From what I’ve learned about God, he doesn’t call on people who are equipped to do jobs, he equips people he calls on to do jobs.”

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Contract ratification ballots mailed

Beginning on Dec. 9, eligible active letter carrier members of NALC were mailed a ballot to vote on the proposed 2023-2026 National Agreement between NALC and USPS. Included in the mailing were a letter from NALC President Brian L. Renfroe; a booklet containing all the contractual language changes in the tentative National Agreement; a summary of the tentative National Agreement provisions; a ballot and secrecy envelope; a return envelope; and instructions for casting a vote on the contract. The mailing, which took several days to complete, began with eligible members on the West Coast and finished with those on the East Coast.

The deadline for ballots to be returned is Jan. 13. Members should return their ballot as soon as possible after reviewing the tentative agreement and ratification material. The Ballot Committee will observe the receipt and tabulation of the ballots and upon completion of counting will certify the results of the election. Such results will be timely furnished to the national president and the membership in accordance with the *NALC Constitution*.

The *NALC Constitution* provides that “membership acceptance or rejection of a proposed National Agreement shall be by majority of valid ballots returned by

the voters.” If the agreement is accepted, it will go into effect immediately. If the agreement is rejected, then, under the Postal Reorganization Act, the parties may continue bargaining or, ultimately, refer the dispute to an interest arbitration board. Under the law, decisions of that arbitration board would be final and binding upon the parties.

Tentative agreement materials and virtual rap session online

The complete tentative National Agreement, the booklet containing the changes, and the summary of the changes, as well as the projected pay tables showing the new salaries and pay rates if the agreement is ratified, are also available on the NALC website at nalc.org/contract.

President Renfroe’s virtual rap session was posted to the website as well. The nearly three-hour video is a detailed, topic-by-topic overview of the tentative agreement and more.

Pay raises

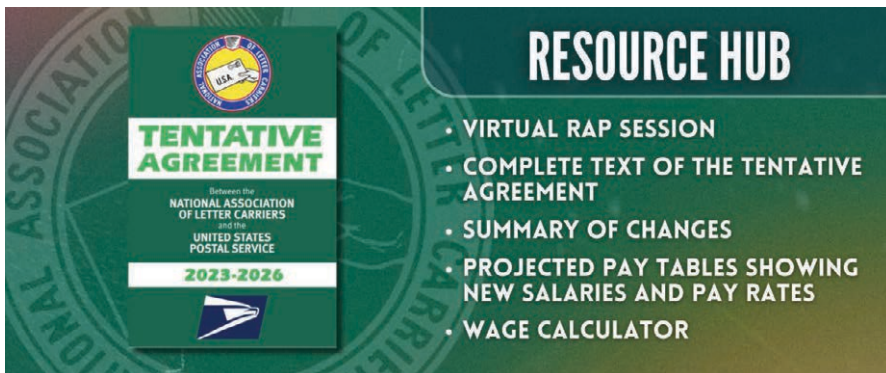
The summary of the tentative National Agreement provisions contains wage charts that show each letter carrier what their projected earnings will be upon ratification, as well as by the end of the contract. This projection includes all

wage increases negotiated in Article 9 of the tentative National Agreement, including cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), general wage increases and the continuation of regular step increases.

The projected pay tables also outline the elimination of Steps AA, A and B at the beginning of the scale, as well as adding an additional \$1,000 to top Step P upon implementation of the National Agreement. Upon implementation, when CCAs convert to career status they would begin at Step C, rather than Step AA or A, increasing the starting career salary by almost \$9,000 per year over the life of the contract and reducing the time to top step of the pay scale by almost two years—the first time a reduction in time to top step has happened since the 1970s.

The projected pay tables show the total increase in salaries over the course of the contract for carriers at each step in both dollar and percentage terms. This projection includes the general increases, projected COLAs, and the minimum step increases a letter carrier would receive over the term of the agreement. It assumes that a letter carrier was in the step listed in the first column on the left at the beginning of the agreement and will receive three step increases, the minimum possible over the 42-month agreement. Some may receive more step increases depending on how long they had been in their step at the beginning of the contract, May 20, 2023.

For example, a letter carrier in Step A at the beginning of the contract on May 20, 2023, would progress at a minimum to Step D of the pay scale and receive all the wage increases, including general wage increases, step increases and COLAs applied to that step, by the end of the contract. In this example, the Step A letter carrier who began the contract at \$46,038 per year base salary would end



RESOURCE HUB

- VIRTUAL RAP SESSION
- COMPLETE TEXT OF THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT
- SUMMARY OF CHANGES
- PROJECTED PAY TABLES SHOWING NEW SALARIES AND PAY RATES
- WAGE CALCULATOR

The graphic also features a booklet cover titled "TENTATIVE AGREEMENT" between the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service for 2023-2026.

Estimated Table 2 back pay

| Step | Back pay |
|------|----------|
| CCA | \$ 1,492 |
| AA | \$ 2,359 |
| A | \$ 2,436 |
| B | \$ 2,542 |
| C | \$ 2,647 |
| D | \$ 2,752 |
| E | \$ 2,858 |
| F | \$ 2,963 |
| G | \$ 3,069 |
| H | \$ 3,174 |
| I | \$ 3,279 |
| J | \$ 3,385 |
| K | \$ 3,490 |
| L | \$ 3,596 |
| M | \$ 3,701 |
| N | \$ 3,805 |
| O | \$ 3,850 |
| P | \$ 3,856 |

The table assumes 40 hours a week starting in each step (with no accrued waiting time) on May 20, 2023, through March 8, 2025 (estimate of date of implementation of new pay rates). Letter carriers who worked overtime or received premium pay will receive additional back pay.

up 42 months later at \$57,504 per year—an \$11,466 per year projected raise, or a 24.91 percent projected increase.

For another example, a letter carrier in Step K at the beginning of our contract on May 20, 2023, would progress at a minimum to Step N of the pay scale and receive all the wage increases, including general wage increases, step increases and COLAs applied to that step, by the end of the contract. In this example, the Step K letter carrier who began the contract at \$66,622 per year base salary would end up 42 months later at \$80,175 per year—a \$13,553 per year projected raise, or a 20.34 percent projected increase.

The table below provides this information for each step of the pay scale.

Back pay

Three COLAs (totaling \$2,309 annually at Step P) and two of the general wage increases of 1.3 percent each mentioned above are to be paid retroactively. Back pay will be paid for every

paid hour of work, including overtime and leave back to May 20, 2023. There is no reduction in back pay of any kind.

Back pay estimates, based on only 40 hours per week, are provided below. Letter carriers who were at the indicated step on the effective date of the agreement (May 20, 2023) would receive the following estimated amount of back pay (see table at right).

These estimates are based on 40 hours per week during the back pay period. Any overtime worked beyond 40 hours per week would increase the amount of back pay.

If the tentative agreement is ratified, letter carriers will receive the entirety of their adjusted back pay in a single lump sum within a few months of ratification.

Who gets mailed a ballot?

The tentative National Agreement was reached on Oct. 17. As such, NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine provided the Ballot Committee with a list of NALC regular members—excluding

retirees, OWCP departees and non-letter carrier regular members—as of 90 days prior to that date, per Article 16 of the *NALC Constitution*. The 185,894 active letter carriers on this list are eligible to vote in the contract ratification election and will receive the ballot mailing.

If you are eligible to vote on the proposed agreement and have not received a ballot in your mailbox by Dec. 19, call NALC Headquarters starting Dec. 20 at 202-393-0614 (9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern time) to request a replacement ballot. A replacement ballot will be mailed after your eligibility is verified. **PR**

| Step at Beginning of Contract | Salary May 20, 2023 | Minimum Step at End of Contract | Salary November 7, 2026 | \$ Increase | % Increase |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| AA | \$ 46,038 | D | \$ 57,504 | \$ 11,466 | 24.91% |
| A | \$ 46,038 | D | \$ 57,504 | \$ 11,466 | 24.91% |
| B | \$ 48,094 | E | \$ 59,773 | \$ 11,679 | 24.28% |
| C | \$ 50,153 | F | \$ 62,037 | \$ 11,884 | 23.70% |
| D | \$ 52,211 | G | \$ 64,306 | \$ 12,095 | 23.17% |
| E | \$ 54,271 | H | \$ 66,576 | \$ 12,305 | 22.67% |
| F | \$ 56,327 | I | \$ 68,843 | \$ 12,516 | 22.22% |
| G | \$ 58,387 | J | \$ 71,108 | \$ 12,721 | 21.79% |
| H | \$ 60,448 | K | \$ 73,374 | \$ 12,926 | 21.38% |
| I | \$ 62,505 | L | \$ 75,641 | \$ 13,136 | 21.02% |
| J | \$ 64,562 | M | \$ 77,912 | \$ 13,350 | 20.68% |
| K | \$ 66,622 | N | \$ 80,175 | \$ 13,553 | 20.34% |
| L | \$ 68,679 | O | \$ 82,441 | \$ 13,762 | 20.04% |
| M | \$ 70,740 | P | \$ 83,954 | \$ 13,214 | 18.68% |
| N | \$ 72,796 | P | \$ 83,954 | \$ 11,158 | 15.33% |
| O | \$ 74,854 | P | \$ 83,954 | \$ 9,100 | 12.16% |
| P | \$ 75,299 | P | \$ 83,954 | \$ 8,655 | 11.49% |



News from Washington

Congress repeals WEP and GPO; 119th Congress takes shape

On Dec. 21, in a 76-20 vote, the Senate passed the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82). Senate passage came after the House overwhelmingly passed the bill on Nov. 12. As this issue was going to press, the bill was being sent to President Joe Biden's desk, where it was expected he would sign it into law.

"This is a massive victory for letter carriers and our fellow public servants," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "For the first time in decades, affected

CSRS retired letter carriers won't have their Social Security benefits unfairly reduced. They, alongside thousands of other public service annuitants, will finally receive justice by receiving the full benefits that they earned.

"I want to congratulate and thank every NALC member who lobbied their members of Congress to get this bill through the House and Senate. Our union has worked for years to repeal the WEP and GPO. Thanks to the unwavering dedication and advocacy of our members, this repeal is finally being signed into law."

The Social Security Fairness Act will repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). These are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduced, or sometimes eliminated, Social Security benefits of certain Civil Service Retirement System federal annuitants, including letter carriers. For letter carriers' long history with WEP and GPO, see page 9.

Looking ahead to the 119th Congress

The 119th Congress was set to convene on Jan. 3, after this issue went to print, with Republicans set to control both chambers. With President-elect Donald Trump scheduled to be sworn in on Jan. 20, Republicans will have a trifecta in Washington for the first time since 2018, controlling the House, Senate and White House.

In the House, the Republican majority will be slim, 217-215, with three vacancies. Former Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) resigned, and Reps. Mike Waltz (R-FL) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY) are expected to resign on Jan. 20 for positions in the administration. This tight margin leaves almost zero room for error and disagreement in a Republican Party that has struggled to move legislation

forward even while it controlled the House in the last two years.

Republicans will have a little more breathing room in the Senate with a 53-47 majority. Sen. JD Vance (R-OH) will depart to serve as vice president and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) also is expected to depart to serve in the administration. The Republican governors from both states are expected to appoint Republican replacements to fill these vacancies.

The House will have 63 freshman members: 30 Republicans and 33 Democrats.

Twelve new senators are set to be sworn in—six from each party. The newly elected Republicans are Jim Banks (IN), John Banks (UT), Jim Justice (WV), Dave McCormick (PA), Bernie Moreno (OH) and Tim Sheehy (MT). The six newly elected Democratic senators are Angela Alsobrooks (MD), Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE), Rueben Gallego (AZ), Andy Kim (NJ), Adam Schiff (CA) and Elissa Slotkin (MI).

The House and Senate have also held leadership elections. While many top leaders from the 118th Congress were reelected, the Senate will notably have a new majority leader. With former Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) stepping aside from leadership, Republicans elected Sen. John Thune (R-SD) as the new majority leader. The full list of House and Senate leaders can be found on page 8.

As this magazine was going to print, committee assignments were still being finalized. Chairman James Comer (R-KY) will again lead the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. On the Democratic side, Ranking Member Jamie Raskin (D-MD) will be leaving this leadership role to serve as ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee. The caucus elected Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) to replace him as ranking member of the oversight committee.





2025 Congressional Calendar

January

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Both chambers in session
 Senate in session
 House in session
 Federal holiday

News from Washington (continued)

In the Senate, current Ranking Member Rand Paul (R-KY) is expected to lead the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI) is expected to continue as the top Democrat on the committee and serve as ranking member.

“While a new Congress and administration are sure to present certain chal-

lenges, NALC will continue doing what we do best—working on both sides of the aisle to achieve meaningful results for letter carriers,” President Renfroe said. “I encourage all letter carriers to use the resources in our Legislative Action Center. Know who your members of Congress are, reach out to them about NALC’s issues, and set

up district meetings with them when Congress is in recess.

“Letter carriers’ district-level work is our strongest legislative tool. I urge you to get involved and join us in the fight.”

Check the “Government Affairs” section of nalc.org for the latest updates and visit NALC’s Legislative Action Center at nalc.org/action. **PR**

119th Congress Leadership

House of Representatives

Republicans (majority)

- Speaker: Mike Johnson (LA)*
- Majority Leader: Steve Scalise (LA)
- Majority Whip: Tom Emmer (MN)
- NRCC Chair: Richard Hudson (NC)
- Conference Chair: Lisa McClain (MI)
- Conference Vice Chair: Blake Moore (UT)
- Republican Policy Chair: Kevin Hern (OK)
- Conference Secretary: Erin Houchin (IN)
- Republican Study Chair: August Pfluger (TX)
- Freshman Class President: Brandon Gill (TX)
- Freshman Steering Rep.: Brian Jack (GA)

**The vote for Speaker of the House, in which all representatives are eligible to vote, is scheduled for Jan. 3, after this magazine went to print.*

Democrats (minority)

- Leader: Hakeem Jeffries (NY)
- Minority Whip: Katherine Clark (MA)
- Caucus Chair: Pete Aguilar (CA)
- Vice Chair: Ted Lieu (CA)
- Assistant Minority Leader: Joe Neguse (CO)
- DPCC Chair: Debbie Dingel (MI)
- DPCC Co-Chairs: Maxwell Frost (FL), Lauren Underwood (IL), Lori Trahan (MA)
- Battleground Leadership Representative: Susie Lee (NV)
- Caucus Leadership Representative: Robert Garcia (CA)
- Freshman Class Representative: Luz Rivas (CA)
- Freshman Class President: Yassamin Ansari (AZ)
- Freshman Steering Representative: Johnny Olszewski (MD)

Senate

Republicans (majority)

- Majority Leader: John Thune (SD)
- Assistant Majority Leader: John Barrasso (WY)
- Republican Conference Chair: Tom Cotton (AR)
- Republican Policy Committee Chair: Shelly Moore Capito (WV)
- Republican Conference Vice Chair: James Lankford (OK)
- National Republican Senatorial Committee Chair: Tim Scott (SC)

Democrats (minority)

- Minority Leader: Chuck Schumer (NY)
- Minority Whip: Dick Durbin (IL)
- Steering and Policy Chair: Amy Klobuchar (MN)
- Strategic Communications Committee Chair: Cory Booker (NJ)
- Vice Chair of Conference: Elizabeth Warren (MA)
- Vice Chair of Conference: Mark Warner (VA)
- Chair of Outreach: Bernie Sanders (VT)
- Conference Secretary: Tammy Baldwin (WI)
- Vice Chair of Outreach: Catherine Cortez Masto (NV)
- Deputy Conference Secretary: Brian Schatz (HI)
- Deputy Conference Secretary: Chris Murphy (CT)

Letter carriers' long history with WEP, GPO

The road to Social Security fairness has been a long one. A version of the bill has been introduced in every Congress since the 107th Congress in 2001. Despite steady and strong bipartisan support over the years, it took more than 40 years to finally repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO). Each Congress, the bill would be introduced, gain more and more co-sponsors, and eventually die in committee. Many important pieces fell into place to make the 118th Congress the venue to finally pass this legislation.

With the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act (SSFA), it's important to understand how WEP and GPO came to be and how they came to cause such harm to letter carriers and other federal workers.

When Social Security was created in 1935, federal employees covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) were excluded from the Social Security program and exempt from Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) taxes that funded it due to their government employment and coverage under CSRS. That changed in 1987 when the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) was created and new federal employees began to pay the FICA tax so that when they retired, they'd receive a government pension, Social Security benefits, and the returns on their savings in the Thrift Savings Plan.

However, not all CSRS retirees spent the entirety of their careers in government employment. Some worked at private-sector jobs, where they paid taxes into Social Security. When they retired, they received their government pension and Social Security benefits. Other CSRS annuitants also benefited



In 1983, then-NALC President Vincent R. Sombrotto (second from r) testified before a congressional subcommittee that CSRS retirees shouldn't be penalized unfairly through WEP and GPO.

from spousal and survivor benefits earned by their spouses under Social Security. But critics claimed that federal retirees were “double-dipping,” arguing that they were getting a “windfall” by receiving both their government pension and their earned Social Security benefits. This unfair characterization ignored the fact that private-sector workers received both private pension benefits and Social Security.

Nevertheless, the double-dipping claim led Congress to adopt the GPO provision in 1977 and the WEP in 1983 to slash the Social Security benefits of federal CSRS retirees and of state and local government retirees in similar situations.

WEP

In 1983 Congress passed the WEP as part of an effort to shore up the financing of Social Security. It reduced the formula for the Social Security benefits for these affected workers.

The WEP affected the determination of a new retiree's monthly Social Security benefit (the Primary Insurance Amount)—which involved a three-part calculation applied to a worker's Average Indexed Monthly Earnings (AIME) from Social Security-covered employment. A worker's top 35 years of earnings were indexed to wage inflation to express earnings from years ago in today's dollars and then converted into a monthly average—or AIME. The first \$1,115 of a worker's AIME was multiplied by 90 percent, an AIME between \$1,115 and \$6,721 was multiplied by 32 percent, and then any AIME more than \$6,721 was multiplied by 15 percent. That formula ensured that lower-income workers got a higher relative benefit.

That's how the calculation works for private-sector workers and now under the revised law. But previously for CSRS retirees, the first bracket of the calculation was different. The Social

Long history with WEP, GPO (continued)

Security Administration multiplied the first \$1,115 of their AIME (from private-sector jobs) by 40 percent instead of 90 percent—reducing the benefit by \$558 per month (\$6,696 annually).

The impact of the WEP could be reduced if CSRS workers had at least 21 years of substantial earnings from Social Security-covered employment (in private-sector jobs before and after their CSRS employment—or through second jobs during their federal service). The 40 percent multiplier would be increased to 45 percent for a worker with 21 years of substantial Social Security earnings—and by 5 percent for each additional year of such earnings—until it reached the normal 90 percent multiplier for those with 30 years of such earnings.

In all, nearly 2 million Americans have been adversely and unfairly affected by the WEP provision since it was enacted.

GPO

The Government Pension Offset (GPO), adopted in 1977, was especially draconian: It provided that 100 percent of the non-covered government pension (CSRS) be subtracted from the Social Security spousal or widow(er)'s benefit.

Normally, survivors and spouses of Social Security beneficiaries qualify for spousal and survivor benefits based on the earnings and benefits of their spouses—unless they qualify for greater benefits based on their own Social Security earnings history. For CSRS letter carriers with little or no private-sector work experience, such spousal and survivor benefits from Social Security could be significant—since their own Social Security benefits would be minimal.

The GPO was amended in 1983 to two-thirds. So, since 1983, GPO reduced



President Renfro speaks about the effect WEP and GPO have had on letter carrier retirees during a rally near the Capitol with other public-employee labor union leaders..

Social Security spousal and survivor benefits by \$2 for every \$3 paid in CSRS annuity benefits to affected retirees.

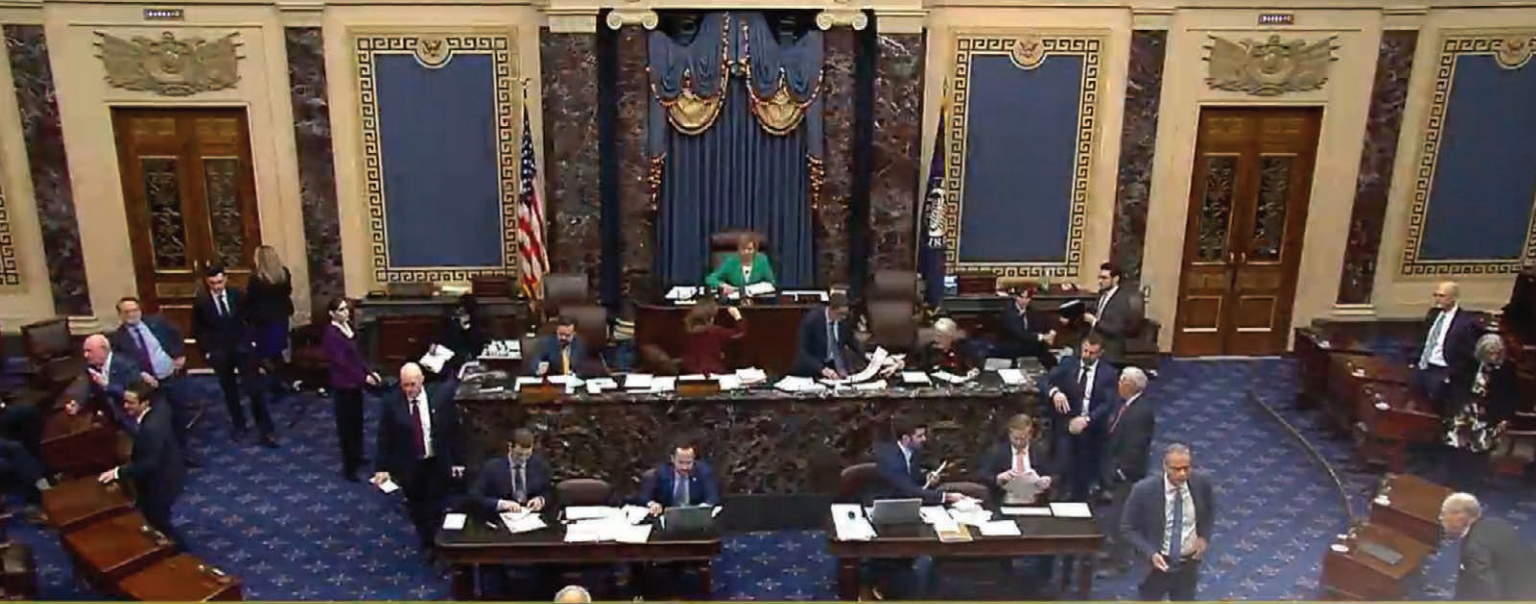
For example, if a CSRS retiree's spouse received \$2,000 in Social Security retirement benefits, the 50 percent spousal benefit would normally have been \$1,000 per month. But if the annuitant received \$3,000 in CSRS benefits, the spousal benefit would be totally eliminated. In fact, since 1983, for most CSRS retirees, that is precisely what happened: The GPO unfairly eliminated their spousal benefits—and much of their Social Security survivor benefits as well.

The road to the SSFA

Since they were enacted, NALC has lobbied Congress to repeal WEP and

GPO. In 2000, then-President Vincent R. Sombrotto testified before Congress that “there are no issues that generate more passion among my members than those associated with the reduced Social Security benefits, either through the Government Pension Offset or the Windfall Elimination Provision.”

In Congress after Congress, NALC members would tirelessly lobby their members of Congress and large numbers of co-sponsors would sign onto bills calling for the repeal of WEP and GPO. But in Congress after Congress, the bills would not make it out of committee, be put on an anonymous hold (one member of Congress could put a hold on the bill without anyone knowing who had done it), or would not receive floor time.



YEA 76 NAY 20

H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act



NALC was engaged in the fight from the start, but in the last few Congresses, the union prioritized partnering with lawmakers and other unions that represent affected retirees to finally move this bill forward.

Retiring Reps. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Garret Graves (R-LA) led the bipartisan House bill together in the 118th Congress. They were passionate and outspoken advocates from the moment the bill was introduced. They formed a coalition that NALC was actively involved with. It included other unions and organizations that came together to strategize the most effective way to move the bill forward.

In September 2023, NALC participated in a rally on Capitol grounds to gain co-sponsors and support for the bill. NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth spoke at the event, which featured other labor leaders, legislators and advocates.

As co-sponsors increased—ultimately reaching 330 supporters—and momentum continued to build on the House side, it became evident that the committee of jurisdiction, the House Committee on Ways and Means, was unlikely to consider the bill. Together, the bill's co-leads decided to file a discharge petition. This is a procedural

During the early morning of Saturday, Dec. 21, the Senate voted 76-20 to approve the Social Security Fairness Act and send the bill to President Joe Biden's desk for signing.

measure that, if adopted, allows the bill to bypass the committee of jurisdiction and go straight to the floor for a vote.

This complicated and usually unsuccessful maneuver was met with great support. The petition needed a majority (218) of House members' signatures for the bill to go to the House floor. A little more than a week after the petition was filed, 218 members signed on. The threshold meeting signature came on the same day as another rally on Capitol Hill that NALC participated in. NALC President Brian L. Renfroe spoke at this event, calling on all House members to sign the petition and support the bill's passage. The event brought attention to the issue and helped push the discharge petition to the finish line.

A few weeks later, the bill made history, passing in the House with a 327-75 vote.

With the House victory in the rear-view mirror, all eyes were on the Senate, where the companion bill had 62 co-sponsors, which indicated enough support for passage.

In the middle of a lame-duck session where government funding, among other priorities, needed to be con-

sidered, it was unclear if the Senate would make time to consider the bill.

Once again, NALC stood up and made its voice heard by participating in a labor-led event on Capitol grounds to call on the Senate to act. Before President Renfroe spoke to the crowd, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) took the stage and committed, to loud applause, to bring the bill to the floor.

One week later, the Senate passed the bill, sending it to President Biden to sign into law.

All this work, coupled with NALC members' years of activism calling, writing and meeting with their members of Congress to educate them on this issue, was the reason this bill will become law. The advocacy, involvement and commitment of letter carriers and other federal annuitants who were affected by WEP and GPO were key for why this bill ultimately succeeded.

"These provisions have always been grossly unfair," President Renfroe said. "CSRS retirees earned their full Social Security benefits and now, thanks to the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act, they will finally receive them." **PR**

The basics of workers' compensation

The work that letter carriers do is dangerous. Driving and delivery duties can result in accidents that cause traumatic injuries such as muscle and tendon sprains, broken bones, torn ligaments and worse. Repetitive tasks performed over extended periods of time can cause occupational injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendinitis, “tennis elbow” and similar overuse syndromes.

Fortunately, a law exists that protects postal employees who suffer on-the-job injuries by providing certain benefits to them. The law applies to all postal employees, career and non-career, including city carrier assistants (CCAs). However, the law comes with an associated bureaucracy and complex system of regulations that can be frustratingly difficult to navigate, particularly when the injury is hard to diagnose, has long-term

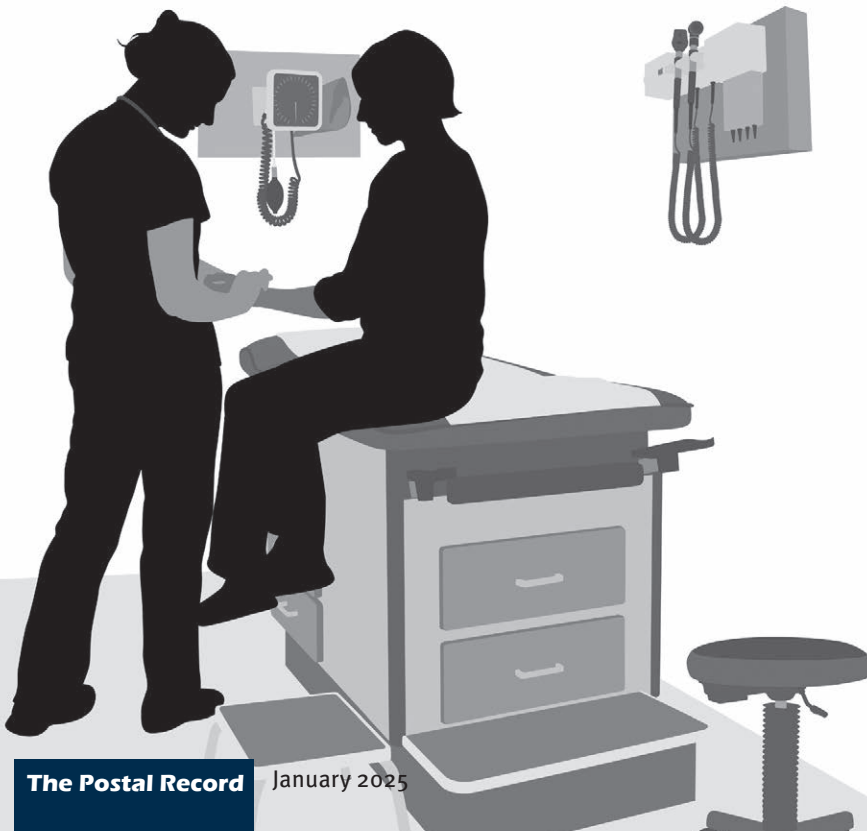
effects, or causes significant disability from work. This difficulty can be reduced by a basic understanding of the law and by help from NALC. NALC helps members file on-the-job injury claims, deal with the complexities that often arise, and appeal adverse decisions when necessary. That assistance is one of the benefits of membership in the NALC.

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), enacted in 1916, protects carriers and provides benefits such as full payment of medical expenses, travel expenses to medical appointments, partial payment of lost wages, and compensation for permanent impairments to certain body parts and functions. It authorizes the Department of Labor (DOL) to establish regulations and administer the law. DOL created a sub-department—the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP)—to

administer the program and decide all issues regarding on-the-job injury claims. OWCP has sole authority to decide all questions regarding the claimed injury. OWCP decides whether an injury is work-related, whether wage-loss compensation is payable, whether surgery is authorized, and all related issues.

The Postal Service *has no authority* to decide whether an injury is job-related, what benefits are payable, or any other adjudication-related issue. Instead, the role of the Postal Service is largely limited to completing and forwarding injury claim forms to OWCP and, ultimately, paying for the benefits that OWCP awards. It's important to understand that Postal Service errors and delays in forwarding claim forms to OWCP can result in serious problems, including claim denials and non-payment of compensation. Since OWCP bills the Postal Service for all of the money OWCP spends paying medical bills, wage-loss compensation, etc., the Postal Service has a distinct interest in minimizing the number of claims that are accepted by OWCP as work-related, and in minimizing the payments that are made when claims are accepted. This interest sometimes results in a lack of training for supervisors about OWCP requirements, low prioritization of processing OWCP claim forms, and similar manifestations.

To alleviate some processing delays, NALC recommends that injured carriers always use the Employees' Compensation Operations & Management Portal (ECOMP) when filing on-the-job injury claims. ECOMP is a free web-based application hosted by OWCP that provides federal agencies with an electronic system for recording workplace injuries and illnesses, and processing claims under the FECA. Using ECOMP to submit OWCP claims and related documents will provide



the injured worker with an electronic receipt and peace of mind that they have done their part.

Consider the following scenario for an example of how Postal Service delays or errors can result in serious problems for an injured worker.

When an injury is accepted by OWCP as work-related and the employee is disabled from work, the employee may be entitled to wage-loss compensation (which is paid by OWCP at two-thirds or three-quarters of salary).

OWCP regulations require that the injured worker claim wage-loss compensation by submitting OWCP Form CA-7. The regulations then require the Postal Service to certify the correct pay rate and forward the CA-7 to OWCP within five working days of receipt from the employee.

If the Postal Service loses or misplaces the CA-7 and the employee does nothing, OWCP will not pay wage-loss compensation because it will not be aware that the employee is claiming wage-loss compensation. If the Postal Service delays forwarding the CA-7 to OWCP, payment to the employee also will be delayed because OWCP cannot process wage-loss compensation until it receives a CA-7. The use of the ECOMP web portal is one way to circumvent this issue.

Because OWCP has complex regulations and sole authority to decide all on-the-job injury claim issues, and USPS errors can cause problems, it is vital that NALC members who suffer an on-the-job injury have a basic understanding of OWCP rules, and they should seek assistance from the NALC to monitor the progress of the claim.

One vital OWCP principle to remember is that claimants have the burden of proof. That means the injured carrier has the burden of proving all elements of a claim: that a diagnosed condition exists, that work factors caused the condition, that the identified work factors actually took place, and so on.

To prove that a diagnosed condition exists, OWCP requires that a claimant provide a written report from an authorized physician or practitioner that states a diagnosis. OWCP also requires that the claimant provide a written opinion from a physician/practitioner that specifically identifies the work factors the practitioner believes caused the diagnosed injury and provides a detailed explanation of why they hold that opinion.

OWCP differentiates between traumatic and occupational injuries, based on the duration of the causing factors. When an injury is caused by work factors that occur at one point in time (for instance, a fall down stairs) or during the course of one workday or shift, it is a traumatic injury, and a CA-1 is used to report it. When an injury is caused by work factors that occur over a course of time, more than one workday or shift (for instance, carpal tunnel syndrome and other repetitive-use syndromes), it is an occupational injury (or illness) and a CA-2 is used to report it.

To meet the burden of proof that work factors caused the reported injury, OWCP requirements generally differ depending on whether the injury was traumatic or occupational. In traumatic injuries (CA-1), evidence that work factors actually took place is often readily apparent. For instance, if a traumatic injury is caused in a vehicle accident, then police reports or Postal Service forms will show that the incident took place. If a traumatic injury is caused by a slip and fall, there often are direct witnesses. Even when there are no witnesses, traumatic injury claims in most cases do not present problems regarding the burden to prove that work factors actually existed.

On the other hand, occupational injuries (CA-2) always require a specific procedure to meet the burden of proof that work factors actually took place. In every claim of occupational injury, the injured worker must write a description

of the work duties they believe caused the injury. The written description must then be provided to the attending physician and to the worker's supervisor. The attending practitioner must read the description and then write a report stating that they have read the description and providing an opinion about whether those identified work factors caused the injury. The supervisor must advise OWCP whether the Postal Service agrees that the identified work factors actually took place.

The description of work factors written by the injured employee is a critical element in every occupational injury (CA-2) claim. The written description should be factual and concise. It should avoid the use of postal terms that non-postal personnel may be unfamiliar with. Estimations of weights, repetitions, durations, etc., should never be exaggerated. The written description of work factors in occupational injury claims will constitute one of the foundations of the claim, and it is important that it be done correctly. It is generally a good idea to seek assistance from your branch OWCP specialist or national business agent's office in writing the description of work factors required in every occupational injury claim.

A second important OWCP principle is that adverse decisions by OWCP can be challenged only through OWCP's own internal appeals procedures. When OWCP denies a claim, it is required to provide a formal written decision explaining the reason for the denial and providing notice of appeal rights. OWCP has three avenues of appeal when it denies a claim. Only one appeal route can be pursued at a time. The time limits, as well as the rules regarding evidence and related matters, differ for each of the appeal routes. The choice of which appeal route to pursue will depend on the specific facts of the case, and the reasons that OWCP gave when it denied the claim. Suc-

cessfully navigating the OWCP appeal procedures can be challenging. NALC members who receive formal denials of OWCP claims should also seek assistance from their branch OWCP specialist or national business agent's office.

While it is important to understand that *OWCP decisions* may be challenged only through the OWCP internal appeals procedures, it is just as important to understand that *Postal Service errors* relating to on-the-job injury claims may be challenged through the NALC-USPS grievance procedure. The FECA places the burden of proof on the injured worker, but it also places a number of requirements on the employing agencies, including the Postal Service. For instance, when an employee submits a hard copy CA-1 or CA-2 to a supervisor, the FECA requires that the supervisor sign the receipt portion of the form and provide it to the employee. If the injured employee submits their claim electronically, the electronic confirmation becomes their receipt. FECA then requires the employer within 10 working days to complete the agency portion, provide a complete copy of all pages of the form to the employee, and submit the completed form to OWCP. Regardless of the method of claim submission the employee chooses, Postal Service management must meet this 10-day requirement.

After you file a CA-1 or CA-2 form in ECOMP, it will be forwarded to your supervisor for the supervisor portion of the form to be completed. Once the supervisor has completed the claim form, a hard copy must be given to the injured worker to sign. Again, this must be done within 10 working days. The Postal Service must allow an injured worker access to a postal computer to file a claim. However, you do not have to

use a postal computer; you also can file a claim from your personal computer, tablet or cell phone. Electronic claim submission should be utilized whenever possible. The "Injured on the Job" section of the NALC website has instructions and links to accessing ECOMP.

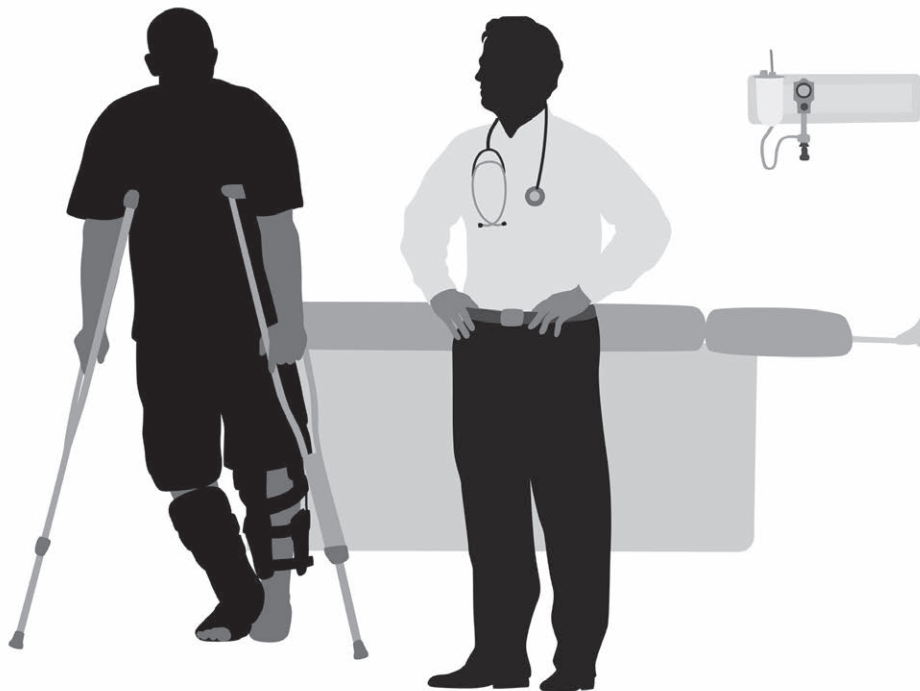
These and other employer requirements are in place to protect injured workers. Postal Service failures to comply with them can result in denied and delayed OWCP claims. Therefore, it is important to let your local union representative know whenever you have an on-the-job injury so that Postal Service compliance with its obligations can be monitored and challenged through the grievance procedure when necessary. NALC members do not need lawyers or organizations to assist them with their claims. OWCP benefits belong to the injured worker, not to a lawyer or organization. If your OWCP claim becomes complex, your NBA may refer you to one of NALC's regional workers' compensation assistants (RWCAs). RWCAs are fellow letter carriers who have expertise relating to the FECA and the claims process. They are available to assist members free of charge.

"The work that letter carriers do is physically demanding and objectively dangerous. Sometimes they suffer on-the-job injuries," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "When they do, the FECA is intended to protect them from many of the adverse financial consequences. In too many cases, however, the intent of the FECA is difficult to

understand because the letter carrier is not familiar with the rules for reporting and proving the claimed injury, or because the Postal Service fails to comply with its obligations regarding the injury. NALC members can avoid that unhappy situation by being familiar with OWCP's rules and by relying on their branch or national business agent for assistance."

Steps to take:

1. Report the injury to your supervisor as soon as you can.
2. Tell your local NALC representative about the injury right away.
3. File injury claims electronically via ECOMP or complete Form CA-1 or CA-2 and submit it to your supervisor.
4. If you submit a hard-copy CA-1 or CA-2, ask the supervisor to sign the receipt portion of the CA-1 or CA-2 and give it to you.
5. Ask the supervisor to give you a completed copy of the CA-1 or CA-2 after the Postal Service completes its part of the form.
6. Go to your doctor for treatment.
7. Request assistance from your local branch or your national business agent's office.
8. Make and keep your own copies of all claim-related documents that you provide to OWCP and/or to USPS.
9. When submitting hard-copy documents to OWCP, always put the OWCP claim number at the top right-hand corner of each page.
10. If OWCP requests information, scrupulously comply with it, including the time limit (usually 30 days). **PR**



Service dogs helping carriers at work

It seems that more and more American workers are bringing service dogs to their jobs to assist them with disabilities. Some might not even be capable of working without them. While there is no count of the number of service dogs in the workplace, professional trainers say the demand for service dog training has grown dramatically in recent years.

Service dogs aren't a new phenomenon—people with disabilities have relied on dogs since ancient times. Even a fresco in the ancient Roman city of Herculaneum from the first century shows a dog leading a blind man. Today, service dogs are trained to assist people in amazing ways.

Dogs act in many ways; some may bring objects to people or guide them around obstacles. The classic “seeing-eye” guide dog is familiar, but dogs also might act as ears for people with hearing impairments, alerting them to alarms, doorbells or a crying baby. A service dog can be trained to detect dangerous changes in a diabetic person's blood sugar, or detect an epileptic seizure or the presence of a dangerous allergen in food. Psychiatric service dogs are trained to detect, and possibly intervene in, behaviors like panic attacks or self-harm, especially in people with post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local government and private employers to provide accommodations in the workplace for people with disabilities, which might include a service dog. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a law that predates the ADA, protects federal employees with disabilities. But what about when the workplace is a letter carrier's route?

The age-old stereotype of dogs as the enemies of mailmen makes it surprising to see a letter carrier with a canine assis-

tant. *The Postal Record* has brought you the story of a carrier with a service dog before (see the November 2022 issue), but there are additional carriers with service dogs out there helping them navigate their jobs while dealing with disabilities.

Louis Canceicao has been injured in accidents three times since 2019, when a scooter hit him while he was crossing the street in a crosswalk. The San Francisco, CA Branch 214 carrier was pushed into an equipment cart at his station in 2021 and fell inside a ProMaster van the following year.

“I ended up with migraine headaches, which still plague me. I used to get a migraine every day.”

His migraines can strike at any time, causing symptoms like tunnel vision, nausea and dizziness that require him to nap to recover—unless he takes medication right before the onset of the migraine. That's where his service dog, Chispi, comes in.

Since July of 2023, Canceicao has carried Chispi, a Chihuahua, in a special satchel along with his mail satchel.

“Obviously, the Post Office would rather me continue working than sleep for 30 minutes every so often,” he said, and Chispi makes that possible. Chispi is trained to use her uncanny canine senses to detect when Canceicao is about to experience a migraine, even before he feels it, so that he can take his medication.

“She'll start whining a little, and then she'll start scratching, and then I'll take the prevention medicine.” Chispi's warnings allow him to continue on his route.

Amazingly, the dog detects an impending migraine through her keen sense of smell. It took intensive training to teach her how to do this. Canceicao trained Chispi with the help of a nonprofit agency that trains service dogs. While some service dogs are trained by



Louis Canceicao carries Chispi with him in a satchel to help him become aware of the onset of migraines.

Service dogs (continued)

professional trainers, many dog owners train the dog by themselves or with a little assistance from a trainer.

“They trained for obedience first,” he said. Chispi learned not to bark for no reason, to be calm around people and to ignore other dogs. She also learned how to behave while on the job. “With the service dog uniform on, she is quiet and calm. With the uniform off, she is a crazy dog.”

The training to detect migraines starts with ear swabs. “You rub it under your tongue and you let the dog smell, and you continue doing this,” he said. That taught Chispi to recognize Canceicoa’s normal odor. “And then, when you do get a migraine, then you do the same thing.”

When Chispi reacted to the odor associated with a migraine, she got a reward. “You give them a ‘good girl,

good boy,’ and you treat them, like tossing a ball.”

“If she senses or sees a prelude to a migraine, she will try to get my reaction or attention,” he said. “She will make a weird crying noise that I am going to come into a migraine or under stress. She will stare at me, and she will headbutt me to get my attention. Until I react to her, she will continue to try to get my attention.”

Chispi is so good at her job that, out on Canceicoa’s route, she once detected an impending migraine in a young girl, one of a group of school-children at a playground who were petting Chispi.

“Chispi started crying. She started turning in her pouch and screaming. And she doesn’t do that. You don’t hear her bark at any dogs or anything like that,” Canceicoa said. “One of the children at that playground started crying and grabbing her head.” The child’s surprised teacher confirmed that the little girl sometimes suffered from migraines.

It’s no surprise that Chispi, a tiny, cute dog with her head popping out of a satchel, is popular, especially among children. Unlike some service dogs on duty, Chispi isn’t distracted from her mission by people giving her pets or attention.

“Customers love her,” he said. “They bring her little treats. They take pictures of us.”

But not everyone liked Chispi.

When Canceicoa transferred to a new station in 2023, a supervisor angrily demanded that he not bring her with him to the station. He already had a letter from a U.S. Department of Labor doctor affirming that his need for a service dog was legitimate, but the supervisor still didn’t budge.

With the help of his branch president, **Karen Eshabarr**, and branch

Athena helps Sammy Swanson deal with bouts of anxiety.



member **Carol Maggio**, Canceicoa filed grievances and complaints. His case ended up going before the Reasonable Accommodation Committee (RAC) for his postal district.

Every postal area and district has an RAC. Members include postal managers and medical professionals who review accommodations issues and settle disputes over them. In February 2023, the RAC noted that Canceicoa had demonstrated his need for a service dog, that Chispi was properly trained to help him, and that she didn't cause problems in the station or on his route. It ruled that he could continue to take Chispi with him on the job.

Though he doesn't take his service dog out to deliver the mail, North Little Rock, AR Branch 3745 President **Sammy Swanson** relies on one to do his job. Swanson handles grievances and other union business full time with the help of Athena, his Alaskan Klee Kai.

"I got her in 2021, and she helps me out a bunch," Swanson said. "I got her as a pet to start out with. Then we went from there. My therapist recommended getting a service dog or getting her trained as a service dog to help me with anxiety."

The Alaskan Klee Kai resembles a Malamute or Husky, but is much smaller. Athena weighs just 7 pounds. Swanson took her to a trainer near his home to prepare her for her new role as a service dog, detecting his anxiety when it builds up. "She's trained just to lay down on my lap if I need her there," he said.

"A lot of people think she's a Chihuahua and a Husky mixed, because she's the size of a Chihuahua, but she looks exactly like a Husky," he said. "She's pretty much like an anxiety blanket. She's just there. If I need to pet her, that helps calm me down, too."



"She has been with me to multiple union events such as the state convention, branch meetings and MDA fundraisers," Swanson said. "Everyone, union wise, has been very welcoming of Athena and always asks about her on the occasions she isn't with me. I've been told that just seeing her around brightens up peoples' days.

"People often comment on how well behaved she is and jokingly ask if I know anyone that could train their kids to behave," he added.

Though Athena doesn't go out on a route, Swanson sometimes brings her to postal facilities. And, as with Canceicoa and Chispi, Swanson got some push-back after assuming having a service dog wasn't an issue, and is working on getting clearance for her through the accommodation process.

"I'm in the middle of going through something right now because for a while, they didn't say anything about it," he said. "And then we have a clerk who doesn't like dogs or something. Now I'm having to get my therapist to write some paperwork and turn that in to do the reasonable accommodations. I didn't know I needed to do anything like that because I had been bringing her in, and nobody had any problem with it."

By helping letter carriers with disabilities work, service dogs are turning the old dog-versus-mailman rivalry on its head. It's likely we will see more carriers with dogs like Chispi and Athena by their sides. **PR**

Canceicoa had to take his case to the Reasonable Accommodation Committee for his postal district to be able to bring Chispi to the station and on his route.

Veterans Group

For more information, go to nalc.org/veterans.



Veterans' legislative update

Nearly a quarter of letter carriers have served in our nation's military. NALC is proud to represent these service members and closely monitors policies related to veterans. Congress has oversight of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and can introduce and pass legislation that affects veterans and their benefits.

House passes comprehensive veterans care services bill

On Nov. 18, in a 389-9 vote, the House passed the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (Dole Act/H.R. 8371). The Dole Act is a sweeping omnibus bill that includes more than 10 bills introduced by lawmakers in the 118th Congress.

The package aims to improve the care veterans receive with extensive changes to the VA, including:

- Requiring the VA to develop a plan to expand same-day scheduling for appointments
- Requiring VA physicians, podiatrists, optometrists and den-

tists to receive an annual pay evaluation

- Requiring the VA to submit annual reports to Congress and the Government Accountability Office on its staffing targets
- Requiring VA to develop a strategic plan to implement "value-based care" focused on quality provider performance and patient experience
- Increasing funding for VA programs that help veterans experiencing homelessness
- Expanding access to home and community-based services at every VA medical center
- Providing community mental health grants to help alleviate certain veterans' caregivers

While the bipartisan bill overwhelmingly passed in the House during the lame-duck session, it is unclear if the Senate plans to consider the legislation in the time remaining in the 118th Congress.

Looking ahead to the 119th Congress

At press time, there were just days

left in the lame-duck session of the 118th Congress. While much is expected to change when the 119th Congress convenes, there will still be a strong voice for veterans in Washington.

The next Congress will include 98 veterans—79 representatives and 19 senators. This includes nine female veterans, the most to serve together in any Congress.

In a Republican-controlled Senate, current Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS) is expected to chair the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Current Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) lost his reelection bid, and it is unclear who will serve as the Democratic ranking member.

In the House, the leadership of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is expected to be the same, with Chairman Mike Bost (R-IL) and Ranking Member Mark Takano (D-CA) continuing to serve in the top positions.

Stay tuned to the "Government Affairs" section of nalc.org for any future updates on NALC veteran issues.

Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at nalc.org/veterans.



You continue to serve your country—
THANK YOU!

NALC Veterans Group

Complete this form and mail it to:
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,
100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

NALC BRANCH NUMBER: _____ BRANCH OF SERVICE: _____

I BELONG TO THE FOLLOWING VETERAN GROUP(S):

AMERICAN LEGION DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

OTHER: _____

Free
to join

Last chance to give through CFC

The open enrollment period for the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) ends this month, on Jan. 14, so if you've been waiting, now's the time to make your contribution. CFC is the world's largest and most successful annual workplace charity campaign, raising tens of millions of dollars a year. Since its inception in 1961, the CFC has raised nearly \$8.7 billion for charities and people in need. Federal and postal employees participate in the CFC by choosing from a list of charities to support through automatic deductions from their paychecks.

"Letter carriers are the most generous people I know, giving of themselves to help those in the communities we serve," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "And there's no easier way to help than by pledging to give a little each pay period to the charities you support."

All active letter carriers can participate in the CFC through payroll deduction. Participants may use payroll deduction, credit or debit cards, or bank accounts to make recurring dona-

tions. They also can make a one-time donation using any of these methods except payroll deduction. Participants can even volunteer for the charity and count the value of the hours as money raised.

The easiest ways to sign up are through the CFC Donor Pledging System at cfcgiving.opm.gov or through the CFC Giving smartphone app, available on the App Store and Google Play. Retired letter carriers may donate through a deduction from the annuity, by making a one-time or recurring donation using a credit or debit card, or through an automatic deduction from their bank account using the CFC Donor Pledging System.

Letter carriers can choose from among 2,000-plus nonprofit charitable organizations to support through CFC. By looking at the list and choosing a charity's CFC number, you can donate directly to one or more charities. You can search for charities at cfcgiving.opm.gov/offerings.

NALC is directly involved in two charities eligible for support through the CFC: The Muscular Dystrophy

Association (MDA) and United Way Worldwide.

MDA, which has been NALC's official charity since 1952, is the world's leading nonprofit health organization sponsoring research into the causes of, and effective treatments for, neuromuscular diseases. MDA research grants support research projects worldwide, as well as camps and activities for children who have any of these diseases. MDA's CFC number is 10561.

United Way Worldwide is the leadership and support organization for the network of nearly 1,800 community-based United Way organizations in 40 countries and territories. United Way focuses on creating community-based and community-led solutions that provide the foundation for a good quality of life. The CFC number for the United Way Worldwide is 11188.

"This is your last opportunity to make a difference through CFC," Renfroe said. "Make your pledge by Jan. 14."

For more information, go to nalc.org/cfc. **PR**

Additions to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation donors

The donors on the list below made donations to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation after the December issue of *The Postal Record* went to press.

Thomas Garrison, Br. 204, Colorado Springs, CO
Gerald Binnington Jr., Br. 20, CT Mgd.
Charles Kent, Br. 86, Hartford, CT
Robert Fasje, Br. 1071, South FL
Bill Thomas, Br. 2225, Decatur, GA
Norman Davidson, Br. 92, ME Mgd.
Edward Conrad, Br. 12, Worcester, MA
Robert Bullock, Br. 709, Reno, NV
James Everett, Br. 540, Camden, NJ Mgd.
Nelson Santana, Br. 36, New York, NY
Chester Young, Br. 283, Houston, TX
Tai Quach, Br. 3520, Northern VA
Lawrence Morchinek, Br. 2, Milwaukee, WI

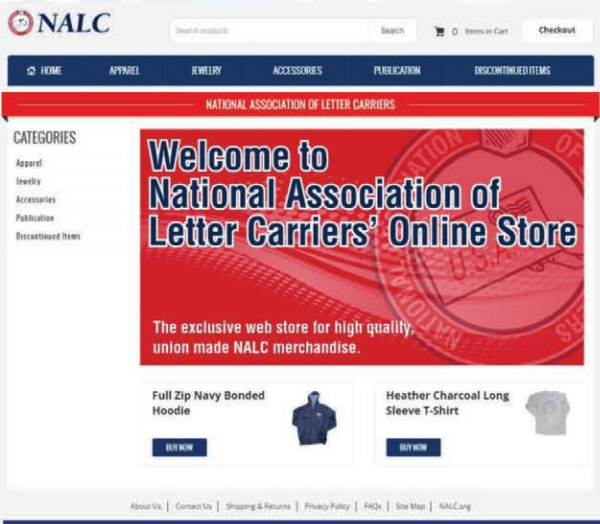
Branches, state associations, regions and others

Branch 434, Ann Arbor, MI
Branch 654, Mount Clemens, MI
Branch 950, Abilene, TX
Branch 1128, Fayetteville, NC
Branch 3750, Ontario, OR
Branch 5050, Ballwin, MO
Saint Paul Lutheran Church Inc.

Please note:

There will be no Branch Items, State Summaries or Retiree Reports in the February *Postal Record*. That edition will be the special annual tribute issue honoring contributors to LCPF during 2024.

NALCSTORE.ORG



Placing an order online is very simple!

- Register by clicking on **Login/Register** on the top right corner. Fill in the necessary fields.
- Once you're registered, you can start adding items to your basket.
- When you're finished, click **Checkout** on the top right. Proceed by filling in the necessary fields. All orders ship via USPS.
- The store accepts Visa, MasterCard and American Express.
- Once you've completed your order, you will receive an order confirmation email.

Carriers and the mail make news online

Mail-centered stories frequently appear on social media and online news sites. The following are a few that have come to NALC's attention recently. If you find a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to postalrecord@nalc.org.

Carrier invited to Thanksgiving after good deed

Jaylen Lockhart, an Aurora, IL, rural carrier, saw Guy Miller, an elderly man on his route, take a tumble. Miller's head was bleeding after he hit his head on the ground. So, Lockhart asked Miller for an address and rushed to his home, which was only about a block away. Miller's wife drove her car and picked him up.

Lockhart was given an award by the city, but that wasn't all the thanks he was given. Miller asked Lockhart if he had any plans for Thanksgiving and he said, "Not really," so Miller invited Lockhart and his family to have Thanksgiving with his family. Since the incident, which occurred in mid-November, the two have become friends.

Lockhart said that the Miller family was an amazing one and he was "glad to sit here at this table and be a part of it," according to a local TV station.

The story became national news, appearing on shows such as ABC's "Good Morning America," along with numerous local news outlets.

Remembering a once-prominent mail-focused industry

According to *Smithsonian* magazine, music became a big industry in the beginning of the 20th century, so people started thinking of creative ways that consumers could become a bigger part of the music industry. "Song-sharking"

was a notable solution to get people involved in the music-making process.

Companies placed ads in newspapers and magazines promising to turn consumers' original lyrics or poems into songs. The ads would list an address for lyrics to be mailed to and would promise to help write a song out of them.

Initially, companies would simply mail the lyrics with sheet music back to the sender as a novelty item, but further on into the 20th century, companies used entire teams of musicians to make the lyrics into a full-production song.

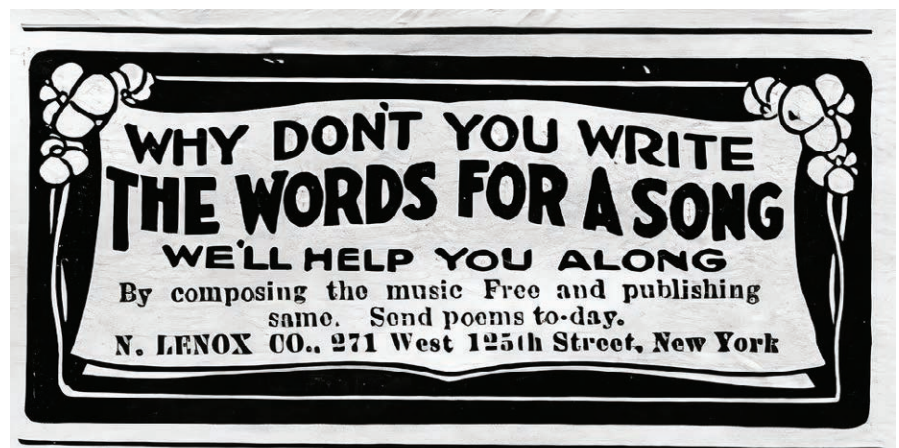
While some enjoyed receiving the completed song for personal use, many companies promised fame and fortune. They enticed lyricists and poets with dreams of record deals and big paydays. Unfortunately for them, these songs almost never had a life outside of the mail and the return address. That's why they were derogatorily called "sharks."

Despite the songs' lack of commercial success, the lost art gained somewhat of a cult following in the 1990s, when song-poems started appearing on anthology CDs, allowing the recordings to have new life decades after their creations. **PR**



Rural carrier Jaylen Lockhart (l) and Guy Miller share Thanksgiving.

A song-sharking ad from 1921



What every letter carrier needs to know to plan for **RETIREMENT**



Most workers spend their entire career preparing to stop working. A comfortable and leisurely retirement is their goal. But that comes with anxiety about whether they will have enough resources and where the funds will come from.

A survey of both active and retired workers released last July by the American Savings Education Council (ASEC) found that many U.S. workers are confused about the realities of retirement. More than half of American workers reported they lack confidence in their ability to retire when they want to and sustain a comfortable life. Workers aged 45 to 54 feel the least prepared to retire. Only 39 percent of respondents of any age said they have a plan in place to retire when they want to.

“This survey suggests that a key source of this rampant uncertainty is a poor understanding of what retirement actually looks like—when it will start, how much retirees need, and where that money comes from,” the ASEC said.

Fortunately, letter carriers have many resources for understanding how to plan and how to put their plans into action. To assist them, this article will walk through ways letter carriers should be preparing at any stage of their career.

Let’s begin at the beginning with city carrier assistants (CCAs).

City carrier assistants

CCAs are not eligible to participate in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) until they convert to career status. However, NALC offers

CCAs an opportunity to begin saving for retirement prior to being converted to career. The CCA Retirement Savings Plan is offered only to NALC members by the U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association (MBA).

The NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan is a retirement income plan designed to supplement CCAs’ pensions by having them make small payments to the plan early on so that they can receive a lifetime of monthly payments after they retire.

CCAs choose the amount they want to contribute, which can be as little as \$15 per pay period (the minimum amount allowed), and how they want to contribute. MBA can deduct payments automatically from postal paychecks, it can bill CCAs monthly or annually, or CCAs can make a lump-sum deposit at any time.

The savings plan earns competitive interest rates. CCAs also can choose whether to invest their money in a Roth individual retirement account (IRA) or in a traditional IRA. With Roth IRAs, they pay the taxes on the funds before investing and any interest earned can be withdrawn in retirement, tax free. With a traditional IRA, the investments are taken out pre-tax, but any interest is taxed when withdrawn in retirement. (Always check that the Internal Revenue Service rules are met.)

“The power of early savings can be phenomenal,” NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth said, recalling that early in his career he had money taken from his paychecks to purchase savings bonds. “It can be relatively painless, and over the course of a career, it can really add up.”

CCAs who participate in the plan may transfer their traditional IRA

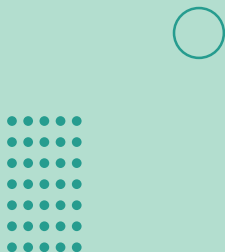


The advertisement features a photograph of a smiling man and woman in postal uniforms. Below the photo, the text reads: "NALC CCA RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLAN ADMINISTERED BY THE MBA". To the right of the photo, it says "PREPARE FOR YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE". At the bottom, a small text box states: "Designed exclusively for CCAs to start saving for retirement before they become career employees".



What every letter carrier needs to know to plan for

RETIREMENT



funds to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) once they become career letter carriers. NALC and MBA have agreed to waive the normal surrender charges for taking money out of an investment before its maturity.

For CCAs interested in the savings plan, visit nalc.org/mba.

Newly converted CCAs or newly hired part-time flexibles

Once CCAs are converted to career status or when someone is hired directly as a PTF career employee, they will be automatically enrolled in the FERS.

FERS has three components:

- FERS Basic Benefit
- Social Security
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

The FERS Basic Benefit is a defined-benefit pension plan, meaning that the Postal Service and participating letter carriers each contribute a certain amount each pay period (the USPS contributes 13.2 percent of basic pay and the carriers contribute 4.4 percent from their paychecks), and upon retirement the carriers receive a guaranteed benefit amount each month based on their end-of-career salary and years of service. (See page 26 for benefit level.)

Social Security is our nation's social insurance program that also pays fixed monthly benefits based on your earnings histories (including non-postal employment covered by Social Security). It provides a basic social safety net for America's elderly, minor orphans and disabled workers. The

benefits are funded by matching Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) taxes by the Postal Service and FERS employees—6.2 percent of pay each pay period.

The TSP is different. Letter carriers have complete control over how much they contribute and the funds in which that money is invested. The decisions they make over time will directly affect the future value of their TSP accounts.

The Postal Service automatically contributes 1 percent of carriers' base pay to TSP accounts, and will match carriers' contributions up to 5 percent of base pay. Even if carriers contribute nothing, they still will receive the 1 percent.

While participation in the TSP is voluntary, when CCAs are converted to career status, they are automatically enrolled in the TSP with 5 percent of their base pay deducted from their paychecks matched by USPS and deposited in their TSP accounts (see more on the Thrift Savings Plan below).

Toth has one simple piece of advice for new career carriers, whether they're converted CCAs or newly hired PTFs: "Maximize your TSP contributions. There are carriers who, early in their careers, maximized their TSP contributions and invested aggressively, and who have impressive TSP balances of multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars. Whatever you can afford to do, do it."

To increase, decrease or cancel TSP contributions, letter carriers can log onto liteblue.usps.gov with their employee ID and password. To change allocations to TSP investments, carriers can log onto tsp.gov once they receive a TSP account number and password.

Also, CCAs who participated in the NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan



CSRS or FERS



can transfer their savings to the Thrift Savings Plan once they become career letter carriers. NALC and MBA have agreed to waive the surrender charge in this instance.

Active carriers

There are two retirement plans for city letter carriers. FERS, the most common for active carriers, was created by Congress in 1986 and became effective on Jan. 1, 1987 (and retroactive for most carriers hired since 1984). Prior to that, letter carriers were covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). There are fewer than 1,300 active city letter carriers in the CSRS, and that number is declining quickly. But it's important to note which system a carrier is in when figuring out retirement preparations.

For most people, when it comes to retirement, there are two important questions: "When can I retire? And how much will I receive?"

As to when a carrier can retire, the answer is determined by the carrier's age and years of creditable service. An employee must satisfy one of three age and service combinations:

| CSRS | |
|--|----------|
| Age | Service |
| 55 | 30 years |
| 60 | 20 years |
| 62 | 5 years |
| FERS | |
| Age | Service |
| Minimum Retirement Age (MRA)—see below | 30 years |
| 60 | 20 years |
| 62 | 5 years |
| MRA (with reduced benefits) | 10 years |

The minimum retirement age for FERS is determined as follows:

| If you were born | Your MRA is |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Before 1948 | 55 years |
| In 1948 | 55 years, 2 months |
| In 1949 | 55 years, 4 months |
| In 1950 | 55 years, 6 months |
| In 1951 | 55 years, 8 months |
| In 1952 | 55 years, 10 months |
| In 1953 to 1964 | 56 years |
| In 1965 | 56 years, 2 months |
| In 1966 | 56 years, 4 months |
| In 1967 | 56 years, 6 months |
| In 1968 | 56 years, 8 months |
| In 1969 | 56 years, 10 months |
| In 1970 and after | 57 years |

Of course, creditable service doesn't include just postal employment. For purposes of eligibility, a carrier may be able to add years of military and non-career federal service. Other factors, such as leave without pay (LWOP), also can affect creditable service.

As to how much a retiree will receive, the answer is determined by the carrier's years of service and the high-3 average of their annual salary.

As mentioned above, carriers also may be able to add years of military and, in some cases, non-career federal service, as well as unused sick leave, to determine how much they will receive as a retiree. Again, factors such as LWOP can affect creditable service. This creditable service is calculated in years and months (with any days that don't add up to a full month dropped). Part-time service may result in proration.

A carrier's high-3 average is determined by taking the three highest consecutive years of basic pay added together and divided by three. Basic pay does not include overtime. It can be found on PS Form 50.



What every letter carrier needs to know to plan for

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The general formula is as follows:

CSRS

1.5% x first 5 years
+ 1.75% x second 5 years
+ 2% x service over 10 years*
*the maximum is 80 percent, which can be exceeded with sick leave credit

FERS

1%* x years
*or 1.1 percent if age 62 or older with 20 or more years

For FERS carriers who retire before age 62 and have 30 years of service at MRA, or 20 years of service at age 60, there is a special annuity supplement that is intended to substitute for Social Security until the carrier reaches 62. Conversely, there are reductions if a FERS carrier retires on an MRA + 10 retirement, or if the carrier opts for a survivor annuity or an insurable interest annuity.

For FERS carriers, the planning doesn't stop there. While CSRS employees do not receive Social Security as part of their postal annuity, FERS employees do. You can create an online account at ssa.gov to receive personalized estimates of future benefits based on your real earnings, to see your latest statement and to review your earnings history.

In addition, contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan can make a tremendous difference in the amount of money carriers will have when they retire.

Thrift Savings Plan

The Thrift Savings Plan is the defined contribution portion of FERS.

The TSP provides professionally managed, low-cost investment options; tax advantages for today and in retirement; and some matching contributions from the Postal Service.

USPS automatically deducts 5 percent of pay from any career carrier hired (as of October 2020) and deposits it in the FERS employee's TSP account, regardless of whether the employee makes any contribution. The Postal Service then provides either a full or partial match for employee contributions up to 5 percent of pay.

All FERS employees receive an automatic 1 percent contribution from USPS. Contributions are matched dollar-for-dollar for the next 3 percent of pay, and 50 cents on the dollar for the following 2 percent of pay. "That means USPS will give carriers as much as 5 percent more than their basic pay if they're willing to save the same amount," Toth said.

Toth's advice for letter carriers who have been career carriers for several years and still have years to go before retirement is the same as for those who have just been converted: "Continue maximizing your TSP contributions. For carriers who invest in the traditional TSP, putting money into TSP lowers your taxable income. This means the actual reduction in take-home pay will be significantly less than the amount contributed. For example, if you put \$100 in, it may lower your taxes enough that it costs you only \$75 out of pocket because you've sheltered it from federal and state taxes."

The plan offers several funds in which to invest. Five are individual funds (one dealing with government bonds and the other four tracking specific market indices), while the others are "Lifecycle Funds" designed



Should I keep my savings in the TSP after I retire?

You've reached the retirement "promised land" and now you're getting a lot of advice, solicited or otherwise, about what to do with your Thrift Savings Plan account. Most people plan to spend their savings over many years, perhaps decades. You will remain an investor long after you retire—and how you invest your TSP savings still matters. The first question you will face is: Should I take my money out of the TSP and invest it elsewhere?

Perhaps you have seen an advertisement urging you to roll over your TSP funds into a high-rated investment fund with a strong reputation. Perhaps your brother-in-law is an investment wizard who says he can provide superior returns and more-attractive investment options. Maybe you want more flexibility on the way you withdraw and manage your TSP funds. It's a big decision.

The most important thing to remember is to take your time and do your due diligence. When you retire, you don't have to roll over your TSP funds into another kind of retirement account (an IRA, a former or a new employer's 401(k) plan, etc.), much less a taxable investment account. In fact, depending on your circumstances, the best option might be to keep your funds in the TSP. Here's why:

First, even once you stop contributing to your TSP accounts, the earnings on your investments will accrue tax-free until they are withdrawn (unless you have Roth TSP investments).

Second, virtually no other investment option can match the low cost of investing with the TSP, which currently charges an average total expense ratio of .0558 percent on invested as-

sets. That's 56 cents for each \$1,000 invested.

Third, even if you can find a tax-preferred investment fund with investment managers who can consistently out-perform the markets over time—which is rare indeed—your actual results will depend on the fees you are charged by such managers. Fees of 1 or 2 percent are not uncommon. Over 35 years, a 1 percent charge on investments would reduce the value of your assets by as much as 25 percent. That's the power of compound interest.

Can that new hot fund or your brother-in-law really beat the overall market by 25 percent over time?

In the past, for some annuitants, the decision to move their funds out of the TSP was less about better investment options and more about greater flexibility in how they could withdraw their funds. Fortunately, by the time you read this article, the TSP will have implemented expanded options providing additional flexibility. The new options include: the ability to make more than one partial withdrawal after retirement, more options for in-service withdrawals, the right to decide whether the withdrawal comes from your traditional or Roth balance (or a mix of both), the right to stop and start installment payments at any time, and more online tools to facilitate your changes.

If you do decide to move your funds out of the TSP, be careful. Know the tax implications of any change before you do anything. Make sure the funds are safe and run by reputable investment managers. And fully understand: Once you take your money out of the TSP, you can't return to the TSP later if the alternative doesn't pan out. **PR**



What every letter carrier needs to know to plan for

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to professionally change the allocation mix of investments among the individual funds during various stages of the carrier's federal service.

G Fund: Government Securities fund.

This is the safest fund and is made up of government securities not available to the general public and backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government.

F Fund: Fixed Income Index fund. It tracks the Barclays Capital Aggregate Bond Index.

C Fund: Common Stock Index fund. It replicates the total return version of the Standard & Poor's 500 index.

S Fund: Small Capitalization Stock Index fund. It tracks the Dow Jones U.S. Completion Total Stock Market index.



I Fund: International Stock Index fund. It replicates the net version of the MSCI EAFE index.

Lifecycle Funds: Lifecycle Funds automatically reallocate assets from more risky stock funds (the C, I and S Funds) into less risky income funds (the F and G Funds) as a carrier approaches retirement age, as an employee might lack the time, interest and/or expertise to determine suitable investments at various life stages. They are:

L2070: Retirement date of 2068 or later

L2065: Retirement date between 2063 and 2067

L2060: Retirement date between 2058 and 2062

L2055: Retirement date between 2053 and 2057

L2050: Retirement date between 2048 and 2052

L2045: Retirement date between 2043 and 2047

L2040: Retirement date between 2038 and 2042

L2035: Retirement date between 2033 and 2037

L2030: Retirement date between 2028 and 2032

L2025: Retirement date between 2025 and 2027

L Income: Already withdrawing or plan to do so in the near future

Employees may choose from any or all of the individual or Lifecycle funds in which to invest and may change their allocation for future pay periods at any time. If no selection is made, the default is 100 percent allocation into

the age-appropriate Lifecycle Fund.

Employees also may choose whether contributions are “pre-tax” (any income invested in the TSP is deducted from carriers’ taxable income) or “post-tax” (meaning carriers don’t pay any taxes when they withdraw the money in retirement).

While there is an annual limit of \$23,500 in contributions for 2025, participants aged 50 or older, under FERS and CSRS, also may make “catch-up” contributions, up to an additional \$7,500. The catch-up contribution amounts change year to year and must be elected each year.

CSRS employees do not get matching funds, but can invest in the TSP.

The most important question for every carrier is, “Am I saving enough?” Consider what you will need to live on for the rest of your life. Then calculate what your annuity will be, what your Social Security benefit will be and make sure you’re investing enough in the TSP to cover the remainder.

Planning to retire

As you get closer to retirement age, there are several things to consider. “Think about your Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance life insurance and Postal Service Health Benefits health insurance,” Toth said. “Generally, you have to be in those plans continuously for the five years immediately prior to retirement to be eligible to continue them in retirement.”

He also recommends that any carriers who are eligible to make deposit for military or civilian federal creditable service make the arrangements if it makes sense for them. “The rules can be complex, but generally, people want to know what it is going to cost and what it is going to get them,” he

said. “For example, if it costs \$2,000, but the annual increase in pension is \$750, most carriers would consider that a good deal, because the \$750 will be paid every year for life and will be increased by cost-of-living adjustments.”

The Postal Service is required to help letter carriers plan for their retirement. This comes in a couple of forms. Carriers can request an individualized annuity estimate based on a projected retirement date; receive individual pre-retirement counseling by phone (during work time); and upon applying for retirement, receive a packet of information (usually called the “blue book”) of forms and guidance.

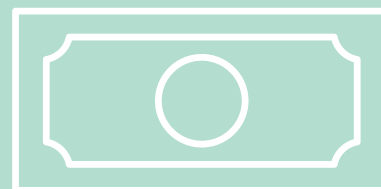
This material and assistance can be obtained by contacting USPS Human Resources Shared Services at 877-477-3273, Option 5 (carriers should have their employee ID and PIN), or by going online to eRetire at LiteBlue.

Additionally, NALC can provide answers to many questions. The Retirement Department has lots of informative material at nalc.org. The Retirement Department also can be reached by calling 800-424-5186 (toll free) Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern time), or by calling the NALC Headquarters switchboard at 202-393-4695 Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern time).

“The answer to the question, ‘When should I start preparing to retire?’ is right now,” NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. “Every letter carrier, from a newly hired CCA to the most-experienced veteran, should take a moment to make sure they have considered the options. This is the rest of your life, and you owe it to yourself and your family to make sure you’ve made the right decisions.” **PR**



MILITARY BUY BACK



Leadership Academy graduates level up, urged to pay it forward by serving members



Leadership Academy attendees work on a group project.

President Brian L. Renfroe, the other NALC national officers and Headquarters letter carrier and professional staff members teach classes on a variety of topics.

NALC Vice President James Henry presided over the graduation ceremony of the 30 members of NALC Leadership Academy Class 29. The ceremony was held on Dec. 13 at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, MD, just south of Baltimore.

The commencement event capped several months of intensive training on the skills necessary for union members to become effective leaders. Under the tutelage of their mentors—established NALC leaders such as branch presidents—the students combined three separate weeks of classroom learning at the Maritime Conference Center with take-home assignments and special projects.

During their classes, students took part in often lively discussions on such subjects as the National Agreement and the union’s legislative agenda. They also learned more about the Dispute Resolution Process, strategic planning, branch financial responsibilities, safety and health, retirement issues, route protection, workers’ compensation, effective negotiation techniques and the use of social media for branch communications.

Each week of the Academy also includes an emphasis on fine-tuning effective written and oral communication skills. Back in their branches, graduates will make use of those skills in such forums as membership meetings, awards ceremonies and dinners.

“The example that is being set here by you coming through the Leadership Academy and the amount of hours and dedication and friendships and the camaraderie that you have developed, that’s something that will stick with you for the rest of your life and for the rest of your career,” Henry told them.

President Brian L. Renfroe, the other NALC national officers, and Headquarters letter carrier and professional staff members are tapped to teach classes on a wide variety of topics. The attendees also were guided by daily class instructors: former National Business Agents (NBAs) Troy Clark and Chris Wittenburg; Region 1 NBA Keisha Lewis; Region 5 Regional Administrative Assistant Larrissa Parde; and Assistant to the President Ed Morgan.

Henry praised the 30 attendees, two from each NALC region, for their work, noting that it doesn’t matter where you come from, as long as you’re willing to





put in the effort. “I grew up in Los Angeles, specifically down in Compton,” he said. “I have not had the opportunities to really partake of a lot of higher education, but I’ve been blessed to be able to do all right in regard to representation. The fact of the matter is that anything that is worth having is worth working for.”

He urged them not to rest on their laurels, but that it’s what they do from here that will define them.

“The best ability is dependability. I don’t care how well you speak. I don’t care how smart you are. I don’t care how well you write. If it cannot be relied upon, it means nothing,” he said. “When you leave out of here today, be able to be depended upon. Let your membership know that if they come to you, that they can depend on you. That if you don’t have the answer, you will seek the answer from someone that

does have the answer. Make sure that your sense of duty is always prevalent in any and everything that you do, because these carriers on the workroom floor, they depend on us. It is something that should not be taken lightly.

“You have to have a service heart. You’ve got to want to do this job.”

After the commencement, the graduates were assigned to work at their respective NBA offices for a week to learn in a different environment.

Henry told the graduates that after they finish leveling up their training, to make sure they “pay it forward” back at their branches. “Each one of us has an obligation to take what we have and help those who are yet to come and those who we are working with,” he said. “Be an inspiration and a light for those who are with us and following behind us.” **PR**

Leadership Academy Class 29

Andres Gaytan receives his certificate from Vice President James Henry.



NALC Leadership Academy Class 29 graduates

Andres Gaytan
Central California Coast Br. 52

Emiliea Reeves
Honolulu, HI Br. 860

Scott Anderson
Seattle, WA Br. 79

Randall Wirtz
Snohomish Co., WA Br. 791

Brina Archie-Sams
Chicago, IL Br. 11

Aaron Purnell
S. Suburban Mgd., IL Br. 4016

Carrie Ann Johnson
Sun City, AZ Br. 6156

Alexis Padilla
Tucson, AZ Br. 704

Jennifer Anderson
Waterloo, IA Br. 512

Brett Meissinger
Colby, KS Br. 4635

Ronald Slone
Saginaw, MI Br. 74

Daryl Tindale
Mid-Michigan Br. 256

Robb Petersburg
Minneapolis, MN Br. 9

Nick Sachs
St. Paul, MN Br. 28

Diana Hughes
Decatur, AL Br. 1314

Lawanna Thomas
Baton Rouge, LA Br. 129

Scott Stanley
Spacecoast Florida Br. 2689

Heather Walker
Roanoke Rapids, NC Br. 3331

Zacharias Finley
Midland, TX Br. 3792

Shannon Lively-Calabretta
Albuquerque, NM Br. 504

Micheal Miskell
Buffalo-Western NY Br. 3

Jenna Morin
Lancaster, OH Br. 340

Robert Farrell
Erie, PA Br. 284

Charles Pasquino
Wheeling, WV Br. 66

Michael Ridgely
Silver Spring, MD Br. 2611

John Bahl
Newport, RI Br. 57

Aaron Hastings
Connecticut Mgd. Br. 20

Sean Killeen
Long Island Mgd., NY Br. 6000

Armando Pedreira
New Jersey Mgd. Br. 38

Jeffrey Polo
Elizabeth, NJ Br. 67

Stay engaged



**Paul
Barner**

As NALC moves forward, the future for the city letter carrier craft certainly looks bright and filled with optimism. There is much work to be done and most certainly challenges to face. Unarguably, there are and will continue to be issues that must be addressed moving forward to improve the working lives of our members. But as our history has shown, with solidarity, no task is insurmountable. We should all pause for a moment, however brief, to reflect on past accomplishments and draw strength from recent triumphs knowing full well that this year will bring new challenges. With this article, I will

touch on legislation, collective bargaining, organizing and labor relations.

On the legislative front, the House of Representatives passed the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) on Nov. 12, legislation that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. Efforts to eliminate these unjust provisions of the Social Security law that reduce or sometimes eliminate earned benefits of Civil Service Retirement System retirees, including letter carriers, have been ongoing for decades.

Despite this victory in the House, the work never stops, as the issues are ever evolving. At the time of the writing of this article, NALC members are being asked to contact their respective senators to urge them to bring the bill to the floor of the Senate before the end of the year. NALC members must remain vigilant and engaged legislatively in the ongoing effort to keep Congress informed on issues that affect the city letter carrier craft, the Postal Service, and working families in general. We must remain mindful that as one door closes, others open, while the work of the union, much like that of city letter carriers, is never done.

In October, NALC and the USPS reached tentative agreement on a new collective-bargaining agreement for city letter carriers. In accordance with Article 16 of the *NALC Constitution*, ratification shall be a mail referendum vote, and the ballot shall be mailed only to

eligible regular members of the NALC. Membership acceptance or rejection of the proposed National Agreement shall be by majority of valid ballots returned by the voters. As of the writing of this article, the Ballot Committee is engaged in the process of preparing the mailout of the ballots to eligible NALC members.

When it comes to the labor movement, NALC is unique in many respects. One example of this is that many unions, unlike NALC, do not retain members once they retire from the craft. Another example is that NALC represents a single group of employees: the city letter carrier craft, with only one employer—the U.S. Postal Service. In many respects, this uniquely positions NALC in its organizing efforts. This fact is evident by the remarkably high percentage of postal employees in the city letter carrier craft who voluntarily commit to membership in NALC. The adage of strength in numbers is not lost on NALC. One need look no further than the Great Postal Strike of 1970 to find the purest of examples. NALC has a robust organizing campaign, much of which was gained through the collective-bargaining process. NALC boasts being one of the largest single-craft unions in the United States. Every member should work to build on our house of solidarity and unionism by encouraging those in our ranks to join NALC.

NALC continually monitors the activities of the USPS in its enforcement role of the collective-bargaining agreement. In accordance with Article 15.4.A.9 of the NALC-USPS National Agreement, NALC is entitled to intervene and participate in any arbitration proceeding in which the union feels that its interests may be affected. Accordingly, NALC notified the USPS of its intention to intervene with other postal unions in an interpretive issue scheduled for arbitration in mid-December 2024. The dispute involves the termination of employees based on an “unfavorable” determination of the National Agency Check with Inquiries.

As always, NALC encourages the membership to remain engaged. NALC provides several methods by which information can be accessed. Members can find updates and information through *The Postal Record* (also in audio format), *NALC Bulletins*, the NALC website at nalc.org, and the NALC Member App, to name a few. Whatever your preferred source of information, the most important request is to stay connected.

Am I my brother's keeper?



James D. Henry

Am I my brother's keeper? This is a question one year older than dirt and two years younger than water. As far back as the earliest recorded history, we as people have struggled with the answer.

There are those of us who sincerely believe that anything that doesn't directly affect me is not my concern. Conversely, there are those of us who subscribe to the idea of "one for all, and all for one." Then, how can it be that two diametrically opposed philosophies coexist without a constant state of turmoil? Moreover, which of the two philosophies is right?

After all, both sides do believe in self-preservation. It's just a matter of the method by which one preserves themselves.

As letter carriers employed by the U.S. Postal Service, there probably isn't a workday that goes by that we are not faced with the decision of, do I or do I not get involved? Either through observation, notification or request, we all at some point in time make the decision to address contractual and moral violations or to simply ignore them. How often have we been asked, or know about someone who has been asked, to provide a statement for something that they witnessed or have direct knowledge of? Yet, they decline or refuse to provide any information or a statement. Ironically, the very ones who decline or refuse to assist their colleagues, more often than not expect assistance when they need help. Could that be you?

Sure, there are a host of reasons for someone not to feel an obligation to get involved or come to the aid of a colleague. Perhaps it's not an issue that you personally consider all that important. Perhaps you believe in the issue but are afraid to get involved because of managerial retribution. Perhaps you are not afraid of anything, believe in the issue, but feel the person in need of help is not worthy of your cooperation. The aforementioned may be good reasons, but hardly justifiable reasons not to aid in a valid issue or righteous cause. Never allow your emotions to supersede your intellect. For if you do, you will lose sight of the fact

that helping one another is the same as helping yourself.

The very essence of a union is to unify, i.e., join together, become one force. In order to achieve that end, its members must be willing and able to see each other as one. When one is hurt, the other bleeds. This sometimes necessitates validating your convictions by fighting for your rights and each other even if unsuccessful, fight still.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best, knows the triumph of achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

The NALC as an organization has epitomized being the "keepers of its brothers and sisters." Every negotiated contract, every political endorsement and every executive decision has been made with the fundamental principle of ensuring that there is a worthwhile job for not only letter carriers currently employed, but for those yet to be born. It's simple, because we are in the "arena" fighting and standing up for one another; we have known victory. In the rare instances where we have known defeat, we failed "while daring greatly." Without the defeats you learn little and cannot appreciate the victories.

If we expect to have a work environment that is aligned with the philosophy of "one for all and all for one" at our worksites, we as individuals must be in the "arena," or we'll know neither victory nor defeat. The profile of a courageous person is doing the right thing because it is right, even if it unpopular, and even under a difficult atmosphere or circumstance. It may be unpopular sometimes to provide a statement for people considered undesirable, or in an adversarial atmosphere between labor and management. I challenge all to be a courageous person, trustworthy and reliable. We are all we've got. We must be able to rely on each other. If we can't depend on one another, then on whom can we depend?

Therefore, I submit to you all my union brothers and sisters, "I am, you are, we are our brother's keeper."

Reporting to the DOL: Forms LM-2, LM-3 and LM-4



**Nicole
Rhine**

Unless your branch has no annual income or financial activity, you must file with the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) one of three types of financial reports, depending upon the total annual receipts of the branch. The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) requires unions to file the report within 90 days after the branch's (or state association's) fiscal year. Most branches' fiscal years end Dec. 31, so most should be filing by March 30 each year. Branch presidents and treasurers are responsible for ensuring that the

required reports are filed timely and accurately. The LMRDA does not provide for or permit an extension of time for filing for any reason.

The filing requirements are:

- **Form LM-2**—Lengthy report filed electronically by branches with \$250,000 or more in annual receipts.
- **Form LM-3**—Four-page report filed electronically by branches with total annual receipts of at least \$10,000 but less than \$250,000.
- **Form LM-4**—Two-page report filed electronically by branches with annual financial receipts of less than \$10,000.

The officers who are required to file annual financial reports are responsible for maintaining records that will provide, in sufficient detail, the information and data necessary to verify the accuracy and completeness of the report. The records must be kept for at least five years after the date the report is filed. Any record necessary to verify, explain or clarify the report must be retained, including but not limited to, vouchers, worksheets, receipts and applicable resolutions.

Willfully failing to file a report or to keep required records can lead to criminal penalties—specifically a fine of not more than \$100,000, imprisonment for not more than one year, or both. Knowingly making a false statement or representation of a material fact or knowingly failing to disclose a material fact in a report or other required document; and/or willfully making a

false entry in, or withholding, concealing or destroying documents required to be kept, may result in the same penalties listed above.

As a reminder, since 2005, the OLMS has required labor organizations to submit Form LM-2 electronically. OLMS also now requires all filers to file electronically. This rule was applicable to fiscal years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2017.

More information is available on the DOL website concerning electronic filing as well as information on registering with Electronic Forms System (EFS). Anyone who needs to prepare or sign an LM form in EFS will need a specific personal identification number (PIN) for their union. The DOL advises that each union (i.e., each branch or state association) should select one representative to register with EFS online and obtain a PIN for that union (branch or state association).

More information on filing the appropriate LM form for your branch or state association can be found at dol.gov/olms.

In addition to information on filing the LM report, the same link can be used to search for other important information including, but not limited to:

- **Conducting Audits in Small Unions**—A guide for trustees with a limited, focused review of financial records that was developed for use by trustees from small unions. The guide can be found at the above link by clicking on “Compliance Assistance” and then clicking “Union Resources” and then “Union Financial Integrity.”
- **Bonding requirements under the LMRDA**—All branches and state associations that have liquid assets and annual receipts of \$5,000 or more in value must be bonded.
- **Bonding computation worksheet**—Many NALC branches and some state associations either do not have a bond and should, or are under-bonded. This worksheet will assist the branch treasurer in ensuring that any branch officer who handles funds or who has access to funds is bonded for at least the minimum amount required by the Department of Labor. (Both the bonding requirements and the computation worksheet can be found by following the same links listed above for the guide, but under “Union Financial Integrity” and then “Publications.”)

Diversity equity inclusion



**Mack I.
Julion**

This month we celebrate the iconic life of a transformational leader, human rights advocate, true American hero and labor leader: the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Anyone who knows me knows what an inspiration his work and ministry has been in my life's journey. Although commonly recognized as a civil rights leader, his impact far exceeded just race relations. He set the stage for a seismic shift because he dared to dream of a better place for all of us.

Of the many powerful statements made in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, one line still speaks to the yearning of

those marginalized in this country, but especially to people of color. Dr. King spoke of a day when "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." That speech was given in 1963, and 61 years later we are not there yet.

Overall, we may be in a better place, but that is not saying a lot, considering that the speech was given when this nation was besieged by a mentality of segregation and Jim Crow laws. At that time many labor organizations, including the NALC, were not fully integrated by membership or leadership. There were divisions in our union, whether dual charters were formally in place or not. Many African Americans back then chose the National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees because the NALC was considered "not for us." The Alliance served unofficially as the representative body for many postal workers of color. I bring this up because I believe where we are today as a union is only better relative to where we were.

When I was elected president of Branch 11 in Chicago in 2010, I made a concerted effort to assemble representatives who were qualified and reflected the full face of the membership. Branch 11 was more than 80 percent African American and historically led by men. But it was important to me that our members see and feel they were an active part of their union. Our transformation began with the highest number of female elected officers at one time. They eventually would

move up, and today, we have women as full-time officers, including the branch president. We also had two officers of Hispanic descent and one with an open alternative lifestyle. None of this was done to "check a box." They were all an active part of the administration. I guess it was diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) before it became a thing.

To me, it was just a matter of common sense. I believe that the leadership of an organization should reflect the membership. And you can do that without compromising the representation on the workroom floor. The strength of our union is our unity and diversity. But when we don't support our diversity, we undermine our unity, which weakens our union.

Unfortunately, DEI has taken on a negative connotation in recent years. The phrase "DEI hire" references placing people in positions for which they are not qualified. On the contrary, it is the rectification of others being placed in positions for which they are not qualified other than having the privilege of association. DEI allows for the inclusion of those who have systemically not been given opportunities despite their qualifications.

Chicago is a strong union town, and we are very proud of that. It's the birthplace of the labor movement from the Haymarket riots to more "local ones" than any other city in the country. Yet if you ask folks who live in the inner city, many people of color will tell you that the unions "aren't for us." They have seen the way that many trade unions have consistently limited new job opportunities to those who are "privileged." Likewise, there is a feeling within our union from many members of color that the NALC generally isn't for us when it comes to leadership opportunities. That's unfortunate, because as the faces of our workforce and union continue to change, we need to embrace the diversity on the workroom floor.

We can do that on a local level with our branches and state associations by attracting and encouraging all to get involved. On the national level, we saw an introduction to DEI at the convention in Boston and a stated commitment to embrace our diversity. Hopefully what comes out of it is more than what was displayed at the convention workshop, because for many of our members of color it did not meet their expectations, and once again left them feeling like "this isn't for us." That's too bad, but obviously we still have a long way to go.

City Delivery updates



Christopher Jackson

In this month's article, I am going to address a significant proposed change to *Handbook M-41*, City Carrier Duties and Responsibilities by the Postal Service. I also will discuss a recent update to the Mobile Delivery Device Technical-Refresh (MDD-TR).

Proposed revision to *Handbook M-41*: In October, NALC received notification that the Postal Service had proposed revisions to Section 812.31 of *Handbook M-41*. In its notification, USPS states that the revisions are being made to reflect evolving safety policies as a result of the purchase of the Next Generation Delivery Vehicles (NGDVs).

The Postal Service explains that the NGDV has been engineered and designed with specific safety features that require all doors to be in the closed position when in operation, which is a violation of our handbooks and manuals.

The revisions proposed by the Postal Service to Section 812.31 are as follows:

When traveling to and from the route, when moving between park and relay points, and when entering or crossing intersecting roadways, all external vehicle doors must be closed. When operating a vehicle with sliding driver's cab doors on delivery routes and traveling in intervals of 500 feet (1/10 mile) or less at speeds not exceeding 15 MPH between delivery stops, the right-hand sliding cab door may not be left open under normal operation.

While in the notice the Postal Service refers to the purchase of the NGDV as its reason for proposing this revision, there is no mention at all of the NGDV in the handbook revision. As proposed, the revision would apply to all postal vehicles. This change would greatly diverge from the way letter carriers have been operating postal vehicles with sliding driver's side cabin doors, such as the Long Life Vehicle (LLV), for decades.

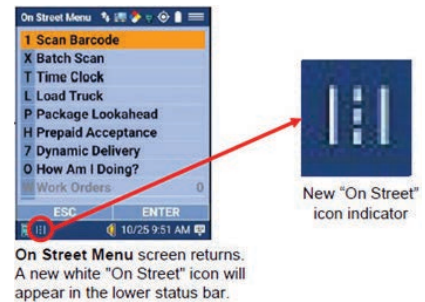
For many years, the current provisions of the *M-41* have permitted letter carriers to drive a postal vehicle safely between delivery stops with the sliding driver's side cabin door open if the distance did not exceed 500 feet or the vehicle's speed did not exceed 15 mph and observed the rules of the road. The longstanding practice of driving with the door open while secured in the driver's seat has been heavily relied on by carriers across the country to efficiently complete route assignments.

I believe that the revisions proposed by the Postal Service are unnecessary and unjustified. It is my view that the NGDV should have been designed to accommodate the letter carriers it was created to assist. Instead, the Postal Service intends to infringe on a right that letter carriers have enjoyed for decades, with no evidence to support its safety claim. I have reached out to the Postal Service to secure a meeting on this proposed change, which clearly affects the working conditions of letter carriers, in accordance with Article 19 of our National Agreement.

MDD software update 8.10: In November, the Postal Service detailed the latest update to the MDD-TR, release 8.10. Although the latest release did not contain many new features, there is one that was added in response to requests made by our members. The new feature, called the "On Street Mode Indicator," adds an icon in the bottom left corner of the device, which is intended to provide a visual reminder to carriers that they have completed a "Move to Street" clock ring in the timekeeping application. The MDD-TR will display the "On Street" icon after a carrier moves to a street operation and will remain visible until the carrier moves to an "In Office" operation.

In discussions that my staff and I have had with members this past year, we were informed that carriers often forget to make a move to the street and that many of them would like to have a way of being reminded on the scanner. During our monthly MDD-TR meeting, my staff and I discussed this with postal engineers; they were open to the idea, especially since there are functions on the MDD-TR that are available for use only when a carrier is in the office and not on the street, such as the "Edit Book" and "Change of Address" applications. The request made sense and was implemented. This indicator is just one example of how the carrier's voice can be heard.

I want to thank everyone for communicating your ideas and concerns to me and my staff. Please continue to do so. I will continue to update the membership on any impact these matters may have on city carriers. Be sure to read my article each month and visit nalc.org for updates.



Safety captains needed



**Manuel L.
Peralta Jr.**

This past summer in Boston, I participated in three workshops. In one, I addressed the Safety Captain Program and the Safety Ambassador Program. Several people believed that the Safety Ambassador Program had replaced the Safety Captain Program and that we lost on our challenge of that issue.

As background, the Safety Captain Program was in existence before I began my career in 1979, and it continued throughout the country until 2017.

In April of 2015, Corey Walton, a member of Branch 4, Nashville, TN, brought to my attention that in his station, the USPS was soliciting applicants from the letter carrier craft to

apply to be safety captains. Corey shared a copy of the solicitation, which identified several “safety captain responsibilities,” such as being an example of a safe and productive employee, participating in accident review boards and in safety meetings, attending safety captain meetings, and several additional items that caused him and me to be concerned.

In May of 2016, I was provided with a copy of a Step B decision that challenged management in San Francisco after they had unilaterally removed the NALC-designated safety captain from his duties and replaced him with two management-selected designees. The resolution of that grievance was that “A violation of the National Agreement was proven when management unilaterally removed the NALC designated Safety Captain.” A portion of the settlement required that the former safety captain be allowed to return to attending the meetings and that any action items were agreed to in his absence will be revisited when he attends.

Within a few more weeks, it was clear that what had appeared to be an isolated solicitation in Nashville was only the tip of the iceberg as stories were brought to my attention from Salt Lake City, UT; Albuquerque, NM; and many other cities. We discovered that management was clearly getting the NALC out of its hair by replacing NALC designees with management’s handpicked representatives.

In October of 2017, the USPS finally came out of the shadows and provided Article 19 notice to the NALC (USPS4249) indicating that it wanted to rebrand the Safety Captain Program and rename it the Safety Ambassador Program. I immediately put together a listing of my concerns, which were

gathered from many of the officers in our regional offices.

The first major concern I had was that management wanted to replace our safety captain selections with management’s selected safety ambassador. The position I took was that under Article 1 of the National Agreement, the NALC is the exclusive bargaining representative for city letter carriers and management had no business making any selection on who represents our interests.

The second major concern is that management wanted to change the rules about how information could be used. In the past, safety captains and “peer to peer observation” information could not be used to support discipline against an employee. For example, if the safety captain observed a carrier committing a safety infraction, that observation could not be used against the employee. The same had always applied to a joint observation by a safety team (supervisor/union representative). The purpose was to encourage the proper safe behavior, not to issue discipline.

Then-President Fredric Rolando agreed with my concerns and appealed the NALC’s challenge to national arbitration under Article 19. While we waited for our arbitration hearing, we asked our NALC activists to not participate in any of the safety ambassador-related meetings.

In the meantime, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) also had challenged the same Article 19 notice it had received. Its grievance was scheduled for arbitration in February 2022. When we received notice of the scheduled hearing, the NALC decided to “intervene” in the case. As soon as the USPS received notification of our intent to intervene on the APWU case, the USPS sent President Rolando a letter dated Jan. 31, 2022 (USPS4828), which in part indicates the following:

...the Postal Service has determined that the Safety Ambassador Program will be discontinued. All related materials will be removed from circulation effective immediately...

Then-Vice President Lew Drass wrote about the ending of the Safety Ambassador Program in his March 2022 column.

By the time you read this month’s column, it has been almost three years since management terminated the Safety Ambassador Program, yet we have not appointed NALC-designated safety captains in each delivery unit throughout the country. If you do not have an NALC safety captain, reach out to your branch president to have one appointed.

Safety is our business, and when management tries to take any of our safety responsibilities away, you know that they are up to something and that the result may cause harm to our members. When I say keep an eye on each other, I mean it.

Retirement seminars



**Dan
Toth**

The National Association of Letter Carriers Retirement Department has developed and maintains a retirement presentation for use in seminars. It is designed as a four-hour presentation, but it can be easily abridged for shorter periods. Each national business agent has selected one or more seminar presenters who are available to travel to a branch or group of branches in a given geographic area. Requests for retirement seminars should be made by branch presidents to their national business agent. The ideal venue is usually a Sunday or holi-

day when letter carriers and their spouses are most likely available.

Retirement is one of the most important economic decisions letter carriers make in their lives. It constitutes a major life transition and is generally irrevocable. The rules and regulations regarding eligibility and amount of retirement benefits are complex.

The retirement presentation includes many modules such as:

- Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)
- Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)
- Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB)/ Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB)
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)
- Social Security Administration (SSA)

The presentation also explores the best day to retire, annuity estimates, requesting and submitting the application, and retirement counseling from the Postal Service. It's beneficial for retiring employees to understand the process, especially when it comes to receiving interim payments and the time frame until their application is finalized, so that they can be financially prepared. The presentation goes on to provide some post-retirement information to help new retirees in their transition.

Depending on the presenter and the audience, some of these modules can be omitted. For example, the

CSRS module can be skipped on occasion. As CSRS employees make up approximately 1 percent of our workforce, there will be some presentations without a single CSRS participant.

Besides retirement seminars, there are many other resources available for retirement information that can be found online, in print and by telephone. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the government agency that administers FERS, CSRS and other benefits, has a robust internet presence with source information on these benefits. OPM also has a Quick Guide that provides an overview of the process and timeframes for each step (found at opm.gov then by going to the "Retirement" tab).

The NALC offers retirement information online at nalc.org, found under "Workplace Issues," then under "Retirement." Publications such as the *Questions and Answers on FERS* booklet can be found in print through your national business agent's office. The NALC Retirement Department provides a toll-free phone line for members to ask questions and get guidance, 800-424-5186 Monday, Wednesday or Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern time), or by calling NALC Headquarters at 202-393-4695 Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and requesting the Retirement Department.

In addition to providing retirement counseling, the Postal Service also makes retirement information available online through LiteBlue (liteblue.usps.gov). Other third-party organizations such as AARP, National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), Government Executive, and FEDweek provide retirement information online and in print. The sheer volume of available information, along with the vast complexity of the rules, can make it difficult to attain the goal of making fully informed decisions. Furthermore, some of the information available from other organizations is offered by business interests with the goal of selling financial products, often with an eye on your TSP balances. Be mindful of the source of information and whether they have a financial interest.

Even though there is an almost unlimited amount of information regarding retirement online and in print, many letter carriers will find it valuable to have information presented in a live setting where they can ask questions and confirm their understanding. It's also an opportunity to gain exposure to questions and concerns from other participants. These types of interactions might help you learn about things you wouldn't have otherwise considered.

MBA Retirement Savings Plans



**James W.
“Jim” Yates**

Each year in December the trustees meet to set the interest rates for all Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) Retirement Savings Plans (RSPs) for the upcoming calendar year. For 2025, the trustees have set the interest at 3.00 percent for all new accounts and those issued on Form 860 (2015 or newer). The rate in effect at the time of purchase will remain in effect for 12 months, then re-rate to the current year’s percentage. From that point on, the interest rate will change every January based on the trustees’ decision in the preceding December but will never go below the guaranteed minimum interest rate of 2 percent.

For the rates on older contracts, please see our website at nalc.org/mba, or call the office if you are not sure which contract you have.

For the first time in three years, the IRS has not raised the annual contribution limits for traditional and Roth IRAs. The maximum contribution amounts remain at the 2024 levels of \$7,000 for those under the age of 50, with an additional \$1,000 in “catch-up” contributions available to those who reach the age of 50 or above in 2025.

The MBA offers several RSPs for all city letter carriers who are members of the NALC, and their families. These plans are the MBA RSP, the MBA Family RSP, the City Carrier Assistant RSP and the MBA Immediate Annuity.

The MBA RSPs are retirement income plans designed to supplement your pension. You make small payments to your plan while you’re working so that you can receive a lifetime of monthly payments after you retire.

The MBA RSPs are offered as traditional IRAs, Roth IRAs or non-qualified annuities.

With a traditional IRA, the contributions you make each year may be deducted from your federal taxes. In addition, earnings accumulate tax-free until the time of withdrawal. Upon distribution at age 59½ or older, the earnings and principal (your contributions) are taxed as ordinary income. Owners of a traditional IRA must take Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) beginning at age 73.

Contributions to a Roth IRA are not tax-deductible, but earnings accumulate tax-free. At the time of withdrawal, earnings are free from taxes if the owner has held the IRA for a minimum of five years and is at least 59½ years old. Owners of Roth IRAs, or their surviving spouse, do not have to take RMDs from it during their lifetime.

As is the case with a Roth IRA, contributions to a non-qualified annuity are not tax-deductible. However, your earnings on that money are taxed when you withdraw it from the account, regardless of how long you have held the account. The principle has already been taxed and is not taxed again upon withdrawal. There is no contribution limit as there is with a traditional or Roth IRA. A non-qualified annuity also is not subject to RMDs.

Participation in an MBA RSP is easy. Once enrolled, you can simply make small contributions, as low as \$15 a pay period (\$25 a month, with an initial \$1,000 deposit for the Family RSP or a minimum premium payment of \$25,000 for the Immediate Annuity). The easiest way for active city carriers to pay is through payroll deduction. You can adjust how much you want to contribute, stop and start making payments, or pay in lump sums whenever you want. MBA will handle the automatic deductions or bill you monthly or annually.

When a participating CCA becomes a career employee, they may transfer their traditional IRA funds to the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) or continue the plan with the MBA to have an additional source of retirement income. The MBA will waive the surrender charge in this instance only. Due to IRS regulations, Roth funds from a personal IRA account cannot be transferred into the TSP.

If you need emergency cash, you can stay in an MBA RSP while withdrawing money any time after one year, subject to certain minimums and limitations. However, during the first six years you are in a plan, you will pay a surrender charge on the amount you withdraw in addition to any IRS penalties if applicable. You also can surrender your plan for its cash value at any time, subject to the same surrender charges.

For more information regarding any of the MBA products, please call the MBA office at 202-638-4318, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Eastern time. You also may visit our website at nalc.org/mba.

Shared partnerships



**Stephanie
Stewart**

Happy New Year. I would like to open this article by sending a warm welcome to all of our new and returning members. We are thrilled you have chosen us for your Postal Service Health Benefits.

If you have not had a chance, I encourage you to visit our website at nalchbp.org, where you will learn about exciting benefits, our cost-free wellness programs, and more importantly, discover how to put money back into your pocket by completing certain wellness incentives. In summary, there is something for everyone.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to cover even a small percentage of what the Plan offers to our members in this article, but I assure you that over the course of 2025, I will strive to make sure our members stay apprised and connected to the experience they deserve.

To kick off the year, let's talk about a few of our shared partnerships that will allow members to obtain the best value from their health care dollars.

If you are looking for a health care provider or facility, we encourage you to review the Cigna® HealthCare Open Access Plus (OAP) Network to obtain the Plan's network benefits. Whether you are traveling in the United States, have college kids on your policy who are out-of-state, or simply are looking for a primary care physician close to home, the OAP Network makes it easy to get care with a national network of providers.

You can either determine whether your current provider participates in this network, or search for a new provider, by calling 877-220-NALC or visiting the online provider directory, which is located on our website.

It also is important to note that you can receive care from an out-of-network benefit provider; however, since the Plan does not have a contract with the provider, there is a financial risk that could result in a higher patient cost share.

Other reasons to choose a doctor or facility within the OAP network are \$25 office visit copayments, 100 percent maternity benefits for hospitalization, delivery, anesthesia, and other services, and 100 percent benefit after a \$350 copayment for non-maternity-related hospital admissions.

For your prescription needs, the Plan continues to work closely with CVS Caremark®, which is our pharmaceuti-

cal benefit manager. CVS offers mail delivery services and has more than 66,000 local CVS Pharmacies, including those inside Target stores.

To receive the best benefit possible for our members, we do require maintenance or long-term medications to be filled through CVS Caremark. Examples of a maintenance or long-term prescription include medicines requiring daily use (example: high blood pressure, heart disease, thyroid, etc.).

Short-term medications (up to a 30-day fill, plus one refill), can be filled at any NALC CareSelect pharmacy, and this list includes other pharmacy options (non-CVS). However, if you need to purchase more than two fills of the same medication, this is considered a maintenance or long-term prescription. If you choose to fill maintenance medications at a non-CVS location, you will be responsible for the entire balance and will need to submit a paper claim to receive 55 percent reimbursement for any costs incurred.

Lastly, before closing this article, I want to speak a little about the Plan's partnership with nationally recognized leaders specializing in providing behavioral health care and substance use disorder services. Whatever you are facing, your emotional health matters and you deserve expert care.

If you are enrolled in the High Option Plan, you can find more than 4,100 in-network facilities and more than 415,000 clinicians through the OptumHealthSM Behavioral Solutions. Optum® specialists provide support, information and resources to help address issues affecting personal life and well-being.

Search for a provider, connect 24/7 with a licensed therapist through Talkspace, find assistance for a loved one through Solutions for Caregivers, or get family support through Bend Health for family and child behavioral coaching. These are just a few of the benefits available to our members through Optum Health.

Connect with an Optum provider today by calling 877-468-1016.

Enrolled in the Consumer Driven Health Benefit Plan? You are not alone or forgotten, Cigna Healthcare also offers quality and licensed behavioral health providers who provide convenient and confidential service as well as treatment when you need it. Find more than 42,000 in-network facilities and 615,000 clinicians by calling 855-511-1893.

Reminder: All members should have received a new or replacement NALC Health Benefit Plan identification card. Please make sure to use this card for all provider, pharmacy or hospital visits beginning on Jan. 1.

Route inspections, Part 5

Beginning with the July 2024 *Postal Record*, Contract Talk articles have discussed the route count, inspection and evaluation process found in Chapter 2 of *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services*.

This article will go back to the beginning of this series and discuss the difference between the number of days that routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday are counted as opposed to routes with full delivery on Saturday during the week of mail count and inspection.

Let's start with the applicable language that is contained in both the M-39 and Handbook M-41, City Delivery Carrier Duties and Responsibilities:

Section 221.11 of the *M-39 Handbook* states:

221.11 Schedule

The count of mail on all letter delivery routes, regular and auxiliary, must be for 6 consecutive delivery days on one-trip routes and for 5 consecutive delivery days, exclusive of Saturday, on two-trip routes or one-trip routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday. It is not mandatory that mail counts begin on Saturday and continue through Friday so long as they are made on consecutive delivery days.

Section 921.2 of the *M-41 Handbook* states in relevant part:

921.2 Schedule

921.21 The count of mail period on all letter delivery routes, both regular and auxiliary, shall be (a) for 6 consecutive delivery days on one-trip routes and (b) for 5 consecutive delivery days, exclusive of Saturday, on multi-trip routes or one-trip routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday.

921.22 It is not mandatory that mail counts begin on Monday and continue through Saturday but they must be made on consecutive delivery days.

As you can see, Saturday is supposed to be excluded from the count week on routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday. The language in Section 221.11 of the *M-39* and Section 921.2 of the *M-41* is crystal clear. Therefore, routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday are only inspected for five consecutive delivery days (Monday-Friday).

Management might try to convince you that if Saturday is excluded from routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday, then Monday must also be excluded. This is simply not true. That is something they made up and try to sell to many letter carriers and stewards. Do not fall for this trick!

Management might also try to convince you that Saturday is excluded from the week of route count and in-

spection for routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday, but is not excluded from the eight-week Carrier Time Card Analysis (1840-B). This is also not true. Do not fall for this trick either!

The reason for this rule is totally logical. For instance, if you have a route that has two hours of closed businesses on Saturday that you do not deliver to, that will make your street time 120 minutes short for the week. If Saturday was included in your street time credit, this would make your average street time 20 minutes shorter than what the route really takes to deliver when you spread the 120 minutes of time over six days. Therefore, even if your route was adjusted to 8:00 hours on paper, it would really be 8:20.

Arbitrator Miles, in his regular panel arbitration decision (C-33600, Oct. 1, 2018), specifically addressed this issue as follows:

With regard to the issue of whether delivery was abbreviated for particular routes on Saturdays, Section 221.11 states that:

The count of mail on all letter delivery routes, regular and auxiliary, must be for 6 consecutive delivery days on one-trip routes and for 5 consecutive delivery days, exclusive of Saturday, on two-trip routes or one-trip routes with abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday. It is not mandatory that mail counts begin on Saturday and continue through Friday so long as they are made on consecutive delivery dates.

Thus, if abbreviated delivery or no delivery on Saturdays, then the mail count must be for five days exclusive of Saturday. In this regard, the Postal Service witness, who was an operations program specialist, admitted that delivery was abbreviated on Saturdays for eight of the 13 routes at the West Station. She countered, by relying upon Section 241.33 of the *M-39 Handbook*, which provides that:

Bracket [] the time entries in columns A, B, C, D, and E for the days on which the route was served by a replacement carrier or carrier technician T-6 because these figures are to be excluded when entering the figures on the total line for columns A, B, C, D, and E.

However, this assertion does not follow logically because if a T-6 carried a route on Saturday, it is to be excluded in any event, and T-6s would carry routes on a Saturday every six weeks. Also, if a route is carried by a replacement carrier on a Saturday, it is to be excluded as well.

In any event, the Saturday street time would still be

(continued on page 46)

What the trifecta means for us



Chief of Staff
Kori Blalock Keller

As the 119th Congress convenes, Republicans will control the House, Senate and the White House under a second Donald J. Trump presidency.

Trifectas bring a variety of outcomes. Former President George W. Bush unsuccessfully attempted to privatize Social Security. The Obama administration delivered an historic economic stimulus package during the Great Recession and implemented the Affordable

Care Act, which continues to provide health insurance to millions of Americans who would otherwise go without. During the two years of the first Trump administration, he secured a trillion-dollar tax cut. President Biden ushered in pandemic relief and a massive infrastructure bill. Essentially, there is good and there is bad in trifectas.

In the next two years, we can expect to see ideas that will either come to fruition, be dead on arrival, or get shut down when voters head to the polls in the mid-term elections to determine whether the balance of power in Congress needs adjusting. Spoiler alert: In recent years, voters have quickly dismantled trifectas. The last time a trifecta lasted more than two years was under President George W. Bush, from 2003 to 2007.

Trump 2.0 and letter carriers

Several recent happenings have prompted the president-elect to reveal his incoming posture toward the Postal Service. Following \$9.5 billion in announced losses and two contentious congressional hearings largely designed to question the postmaster general's 10-year plan and service decisions, the president-elect once again signaled his interest in privatizing the Postal Service. He recently was quoted as having said, "There is talk about the Postal Service being taken private, you do know that—not the worst idea I've ever heard."

The past is often a powerful predictor. In his first term, Trump established a task force on the future of the Postal Service. In a December 2018 report, the task force submitted a proposal that was a bid to dismantle the agency.

During his first term, Trump called the Postal Service "a loser" and "a joke." He denigrated vote-by-mail as unreliable and vulnerable to widespread fraud, despite using it himself. Most concerning, his task force called for the elimination of our right to collectively bargain our wages and other terms of our employment.

The DOGE

As President-elect Trump announced members of his incoming cabinet, he also announced formation of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a temporary federal advisory committee led by billionaires Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. Their self-proclaimed task is eliminating \$2 trillion in spending, in part by "deleting" or trimming several agencies, including the Department of Education, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, NASA, Department of Defense, Public Broadcasting Service, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The announcement prompted the creation of DOGE caucuses in both the House and Senate. In the Senate, Sens. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Ted Budd (R-NC), Rick Scott (R-FL), John Cornyn (R-TX), Mike Lee (R-UT), Roger Marshall (R-KS) and James Lankford (R-OK) will lead efforts. In the House, Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-KY) named Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) to lead a new DOGE subcommittee.

Greene wasted little time going after the Postal Service, stating, "The United States Postal Service just reported a \$9.5 BILLIONS loss in FY24, adding to its approximately \$100 BILLIONS in losses since 2007. This is what happens when government-run entities are bloated, mismanaged, and unaccountable. It's time to demand real reform and stop wasting taxpayer dollars! Government efficiency is coming to Washington!!"

While letter carriers know that the Postal Service does not use taxpayer money for its operations and that congressional decisions about finances have created turmoil for the agency, educating members of Congress who are ignorant about this fact has, and will continue to be, a major challenge, which means that we have our work cut out for us, as always.

Ultimately, the DOGE will construct its recommendations for the federal workforce and the Postal Service, and what the president-elect chooses to implement by administrative or congressional action will be dictated by what Congress will enable. Thankfully, Congress has historically rejected service cuts, privatization efforts and attempts to weaken our bargaining rights.

However, the president-elect has already set the stage regarding opposition. In fact, as the 118th Congress was coming to a close, in the face of a government shutdown, the president-elect made clear how opposition from his own party would be met. "Republican obstructionists

have to be done away with,” Trump wrote in a social media post, setting the stage for GOP members who oppose his priorities to face public backlash, including Trump-endorsed primary challengers. Fear of retaliation will be a challenge, which could affect our efforts.

Understanding and navigating the landscape

All of this considered, it’s important to understand the coming landscape and to have a strategy on how to navigate it.

In the House, Republicans will have an extremely thin majority. With three seats expected to become vacant as members leave for roles in the administration, Republicans will start with only a 217-215 majority. In a full House, 218 is the magic number. Republicans will have a wider majority in the Senate, 53-47. Senate procedural votes require 60, or a two-thirds majority, of those present, and final passage of legislation requires a simple majority or 51, assuming that all members are present.

In each chamber, there are several members on the fringes of both sides who could derail legislation. This means that moderate members will be key to any legislative success. That bodes well for priorities like the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act, which was being reintroduced as this publication was going to print. Since this bill speaks to crime and the safety of our beloved workforce, we expect increasing bipartisan support.

NALC has always been methodical in its approach to engaging leadership, prioritizing achievable success through surgical bipartisanship. It doesn’t matter how we voted, where we live, what our views are on God or guns, the color of our skin, how we define love, or other personal values. We’ve always been guided by a simple formula.

We build relationships to increase our pro-letter carrier majority, educate members of Congress and their staff, and ensure that any policy considered by any branch of government is assessed by two things: Does it protect letter carriers, and does it protect the network? If the answer is yes to both, it is likely that NALC will be front and center. If those answers are no, letter carriers are more than familiar with an aggressive defense.

Ultimately, the 119th Congress will be no different. Trifectas bring no guarantees, and tight margins in the House and Senate bring NALC just as many opportunities to engage offensively as it does for us to be ready to launch our defenses, just as we always have.



By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. Any guideline amounts are merely suggestions, and you may contribute more or less than the guidelines suggest and the union will not favor or disadvantage you by reason of the amount of your contribution or your decision not to contribute. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until canceled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, name of employer and occupation of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in calendar year.

Medical restrictions



Regional Workers' Compensation Assistant Coby Jones

Imagine this scenario: You have an on-the-job injury—say a severely torn rotator cuff—and you have had shoulder surgery. Your job as a letter carrier involves repetitively reaching above the shoulder hundreds of times a day doing timed production work, but your attending physician has placed a “no reaching above the shoulder” restriction on your CA-17. The Postal Service has refused to provide you with limited duty.

During the course of a week, you do the following: shop and reach for an item above the shoulder at the grocery store, reach up to pick some figs from an overhanging branch in the front yard, wave goodbye to your children leaving for school and hang a picture on the living room wall.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) records a video of these activities. The OIG then intimidates your physician, who refuses to be further involved. This happens even though your physician never intended to prohibit you from occasionally reaching above your shoulder in normal life activities (and, in fact, your physician had you begin exercises extending the shoulder and elbow soon after surgery and prescribed a regimen of extensive weight training with a physical therapist).

The Postal Service then issues you a notice of removal charging you with lying to your doctor about the extent of your injury and/or exceeding your medical limitation. Your case goes to arbitration and the arbitrator upholds the removal because there is no evidence from your physician countering the charge and because the video evidence has a strong emotional effect.

Varieties of the above scenario have played out over and over again around the country.

While there are instances where the attending physician intends for the written restriction (on the CA-17 or otherwise) to apply at all times, there are other instances where the physician intends the restrictions to apply only to the work environment. It is often the case that the physician wants the injured worker to test the limits of their restrictions during the course of normal life activities in order to hasten recovery or maintain the function of the injured body part. At the same time, the physician does not want to subject the healing worker to the repetitive stress of timed production work.

Injured letter carriers should seek clarification from their physicians about the scope of their restrictions. If

it is the physician’s medical judgment that the restrictions should apply only to the work environment, the physician should put this in writing over their signature and attach it to the CA-17 or other statement of medical restrictions. The statement could be something along the following lines:

These restrictions apply to timed and repetitive production work in an industrial setting such as casing and delivering mail. To aid my patient’s recovery from their injury [or to maintain the function of the injured body part] they have been advised to use their arms to the extent tolerable as they go about their activities of daily living away from work. This includes the occasional reaching above the shoulder in activities that occur while doing routine life activities.

Such a statement could go a long way toward clarifying the situation for both the injured worker and the Postal Service. It might even hasten the injured worker’s recovery and return to work, as it also reflects recent trends in rehabilitative medicine.

For many years, medical specialists had taken for granted that rest was the most important factor in recovering from injuries. Over the past few decades, however, medical specialists have revised how they manage the recovery of many types of injuries. Bed rest may be indicated, at least initially, for some injuries. But because of recent advancements in areas of medicine such as orthopedic, space and sports medicine, physicians treating many injuries have adopted a “use it or lose it” approach to medical rehabilitation. Disuse results in atrophy and the general deterioration of the injured body part. Testing the limitations of the injury to the extent tolerable, and judicious exercise, hasten recovery not only by increasing the strength and mobility of the injured worker, but also by improving their confidence and outlook.

It is in the injured worker’s and the Postal Service’s interest for the injured worker to recover and return to work as soon as possible. Clarification of work restrictions can help here. Any clarification of work restrictions should always reflect the best medical judgment of the injured worker’s physician. And, of course, the injured worker should always carefully observe the work restrictions imposed by their physician.

MDA looks back at 2024

It hardly seems possible, but 2024 is no more and the new year has arrived. It is a time for looking back at our accomplishments and for planning for the future. You should be proud of your union and the work we do to make our communities better. Whether it is our Disaster Relief Foundation, national food drive on the second Saturday in May, or the heroes we honor, we show up and make a difference in cities and towns across the United States.

Below is a letter from MDA CEO and President Dr. Donald Wood that reflects on 2024:

As we approach the close of 2024, it's a moment for all of us at the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) to reflect on the profound impact we've made together with our partners, supporters, and families. This year has been marked by extraordinary progress in our mission, strengthened through connection and collaboration. From groundbreaking treatments and significant legislative victories to inspiring annual initiatives like MDA Summer Camp, we have made strides in advancing care and treatment for neuromuscular diseases.

A year of major achievements—In 2024, we achieved several remarkable milestones that underscore the strength of our collective efforts.

Notably Advocacy and legislative impact:

- One of the standout accomplishments was the inclusion of essential accessibility provisions in the FAA Reauthorization, which is a significant step in advancing the rights and access for individuals with neuromuscular diseases.
- Additionally, MDA's Access the Vote campaign empowered voters to understand and exercise their rights during a pivotal election year, ensuring that the voices of those impacted by neuromuscular diseases were heard.

Clinical and scientific advancements:

- This year's MDA Clinical and Scientific Conference saw an inspiring address by Brooke Eby, who shared an urgent call for continued progress in research.
- Furthermore, we saw the introduction of new treatments for myasthenia gravis and Duchenne muscular dystrophy, reflecting our ongoing commitment to advancing research and treatment.

Community support:

- MDA celebrated the launch of its first college scholarship program, which aims to connect a new generation of advocates and supporters to the cause.

These milestones are a testament to the power of teamwork, determination, and vision. They lay the groundwork for what promises to be an extraordinary 75th anniversary year in 2025.

Investing in research and treatment: A central pillar of our mission is advancing research to find effective treatments and cures for neuromuscular diseases. This year, MDA demonstrated its continued commitment through key investments and partnerships:

- **ALS research:** MDA awarded a \$500,000 grant to Dr. Sabrina Paganoni of Massachusetts General Hospital, supporting the HEALEY ALS Platform Trial. This pioneering ini-

tiative tests multiple therapies simultaneously to identify promising treatments for ALS, one of the most challenging neurodegenerative diseases. Dr. Paganoni highlighted the importance of collaborations like these to expedite breakthroughs that offer hope to patients and families.

- **Gene therapy innovations:** MDA's Kickstart Program reached key milestones, receiving FDA designations for its gene therapy project aimed at treating congenital myasthenic syndrome caused by CHAT gene mutations. This partnership with UC Davis and Forge Biologics brings us closer to providing life-changing therapies for ultra-rare neuromuscular diseases.

Honoring advocacy and leadership—This year also saw a celebration of the outstanding advocacy and leadership within the neuromuscular community:

- MDA advocate and Major League Baseball player Rhys Hoskins was honored with the 2024 Marvin Miller Man of the Year Award and the inaugural Most Valuable Philanthropist Award by his peers. These awards recognize his leadership on and off the field and his longstanding commitment to MDA's mission. In honor of Hoskins' advocacy, The Players Trust awarded MDA a \$50,000 grant to support our efforts.
- We are also thrilled to welcome Barry J. Byrne to the MDA Board of Directors. A renowned pediatric cardiologist and geneticist, Dr. Byrne's contributions to gene therapy and neuromuscular research will play a pivotal role in shaping our future strategies.
- This year, MDA introduced Ira Walker as the organization's new adult National Ambassador, bringing fresh perspectives and insight to our advocacy efforts. Ira's addition symbolizes the growth of our reach and the diverse voices that are now a part of our mission.

Looking ahead to 2025: 75 years of impact

As we approach MDA's 75th anniversary in 2025, we reflect on the profound legacy we've built and the momentum we've generated in our work. The upcoming 2025 MDA Clinical & Scientific Conference in Dallas promises to be a landmark event, highlighting transformative therapies for conditions such as ALS, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, and spinal muscular atrophy. This event will bring together researchers, clinicians, patients, and advocates to share knowledge and accelerate progress.

Capitol Hill advocacy—Our grassroots advocacy continues to drive real change. In September, MDA on the Hill brought together 95 advocates for impactful meetings with lawmakers, advocating for critical bills that support the neuromuscular community. With over 97 meetings held, we worked tirelessly to promote bills such as the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act and the Accelerating Kids Access to Care Act, which will improve financial independence, rare disease treatment development and access to care for children.

Gratitude and reflection—As we step into the 75th year of our mission, I offer my deepest gratitude to each of you for the focus, creativity, and dedication you bring to MDA's work. Your commitment has made possible incredible milestones and created lasting change for families affected by neuromuscular diseases.

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Before we ring in the new year, I encourage you to reflect on what this anniversary means to you, your team, and the families we serve. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will continue to make a difference.

Wishing you and your loved ones a holiday season filled with joy, peace and a renewed sense of connection and purpose for the year ahead.

Together, we bring forward the spirit, the vision, and the commitment that define MDA.

MDA and NALC dream of a day when every child and adult diagnosed with muscular dystrophy will have access

to treatment or even to a cure. NALC's fundraising helps MDA with that promise as it builds on recent successes.

On that note, the beginning of the new year is a time when many people make resolutions to better themselves or those around them. Has your branch set any goals for community service for 2025? If not, I hope your executive board sits down soon to plan for the year and considers helping with MDA and the needs that are still there.

And if your branch is planning an activity, please let NALC know well in advance. We can use the "Deliver the Cure" Facebook page to help promote the event.

—Christina Vela Davidson

Contract Talk

by the Contract Administration Unit

Route inspections, Part 5 (continued)

(continued from page 41)

abbreviated regardless of who carried the route, according to Section 221.11, because if there is no delivery or if delivery is abbreviated on a Saturday it is not to be included pursuant to Section 221.11 of the *M-39 Handbook*. That section is clear that for one-trip routes with an abbreviated or no delivery on Saturday, the count of mail must be for five consecutive delivery days, exclusive of Saturday. Section 241.33 of the *M-39 Handbook* does not obviate the requirement to comply with Section 221.11 of the *M-39 Handbook*.

This case had several other violations, but for the violation of this rule in particular, the arbitrator ordered USPS to cease and desist from future violations and awarded:

For the eight routes identified with abbreviated Saturday delivery, the Postal Service is directed to reinspect and adjust those routes without consideration of the Saturday delivery times in accordance with Section 221.11 of the *M-39 Handbook*. This shall be accomplished within 90 days of the date of this Award.

Route inspection teams come into an office for a week, do everything they can to build overburdened routes, and head to the next town, leaving both the letter carriers and local managers to deal with the mess they created. The Operations arm of the USPS has historically failed to grasp the concept that a square peg does not fit into a round hole. Letter carriers and union representatives alike should familiarize themselves with the route count and inspection process outlined in Chapter 2, *Handbook M-39* and Chapter 9, *Handbook M-41*. The more educated we are in the inspection and adjustment of routes, the more prepared we will be when management brings that square peg to our offices.

The NALC offers many resources to assist letter carriers and shop stewards with obtaining fairly adjusted routes. Two free publications/resources that every branch in the

country should arm themselves with are:

1. **The NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbook**—This booklet fits in your shirt pocket and is specifically designed to assist letter carriers during the week of route inspection. Every letter carrier who goes through the route inspection process should be provided with a copy of this booklet in advance of the week of mail count and inspection. If your branch does not already have a supply, *NALC Route Inspection Pocket Handbooks* are available at no charge through the NALC Supply Department. Contact your national business agent's office to obtain copies. Note: The pocket handbook is not available online.
2. **The 2018 NALC Guide to Route Inspections**—This book is specifically designed to assist shop stewards before, during and after the week of route inspection. This resource also contains a section that thoroughly explains how to read, and the purpose of, all the route inspection forms USPS uses to evaluate and adjust routes. Once you understand how to read these forms and what to look for, the task of investigating route inspection grievances becomes much easier. It is highly recommended that every shop steward study and become familiar with this guide when USPS announces that an office you are responsible for will be inspected. The guide is available at nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/route-adjustments.

There are more resources related to route inspections and adjustments available on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/city-delivery/route-adjustments. Past Contract Talk articles pertaining to these issues are also available on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/nalc-publications.

Kentucky

As KYSALC turns into a new year, the old adage about “history repeats itself” reappears. Kentucky letter carriers should contact their U.S. reps and two U.S. senators to ensure a strong USPS. Privatizing it would be a historically bad idea that would harm the citizens and the country. It would jeopardize our jobs and benefits. Our health care, collective-bargaining rights, leave, retirement, COLAs and thrift savings could be threatened.

NALC has always represented our union members. Claims after an election should not circumvent congressional oversight. America needs the U.S. Postal Service six to seven days a week. The unions, large mailers, U.S. Postal Service and the PMG all should have a say in the status of U.S. Mail. Not all the parts of the recent Postal Reform Act have been enacted! We can work to improve this cherished institution, older than the U.S. Constitution.

On a sad note, we are grieving for the loss of longtime Kentucky NALC Health Benefits Rep Jim Williams. This state president drove to Bowling Green to pay respects to his family, and spoke to Branch 468 members, including President Ben Abrams. Bowling Green is scheduled to host the Kentucky state convention June 8-9.

Thanks to all who step up to serve NALC

members at all levels.

Bob McNulty

Tennessee

Hello, brothers and sisters!
A quick note on our 99th annual Tennessee State Association convention, which will be held June 5-7 in Gatlinburg. Branch 419, Knoxville, will be the host branch. This event will be held at Greystone Lodge, 504 Airport Road, Gatlinburg. Its contact information is glenstonelodge.com and 800-362-9522 (dial 1 for individual reservations).

There will be a \$50 registration fee for each delegate, and an additional spousal registration fee of 50 for the state association evening dinner. The association will primarily discuss legislative issues and common subject classes. Branches that are authorized to send delegates to the national convention are also authorized and encouraged to send delegates to this convention.

Delegate cards will be mailed out to branches. The white delegate card will be presented at in processing, and the yellow card will be returned to State Secretary Angelia Hartley, 108 Richard Irwin Court, Nashville, TN 37211. You can contact her at 615-308-7003 or melrose-shopsteward@gmail.com.

Tony Rodriguez

Utah

The Utah State Association of Letter Carriers biennial convention is quickly approaching! The delegates from the 2023 convention selected St. George as our 2025 city. We have been planning the details, and it should be another amazing convention. April 4-5 in St. George, UT, at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1731 S. Convention Center Drive will be the place to be.

Elections will take place for every state office. I want to take this opportunity to recognize the great team we have. It has been a pleasure serving with each of you. I also want to encourage anyone interested to run for a position. We have so many up-and-comers in Utah, and I cannot wait to see where you take this union on every level.

It is tradition at the convention to award a Utah Letter Carrier of the Year for each year. Spencer Heinz (Branch 111) and Adam Palmer (Branch 68) were our last Carriers of the Year; they set the bar high! It's now time to start thinking about who our next will be. Please send any nominations for Utah carriers, highlighting their contributions to the NALC, their community and the USPS to nalcsecretaryut@gmail.com. Feel free to also email any questions or concerns about the convention!

See you there!

Kimberly Mortensen

In Memoriam

NALC offers deepest sympathies to the families and friends of departed brothers and sisters

| | | |
|----------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Joe H. Shedd | Br. 4491 | Fairbanks, AK |
| Vincent M. Longo | Br. 704 | Tucson, AZ |
| Raymond A. Root | Br. 704 | Tucson, AZ |
| Leonard T. Biscailuz | Br. 1100 | Garden Grove, CA |
| Benito R. Caserta | Br. 133 | Sacramento, CA |
| Stanley P. Pastor | Br. 133 | Sacramento, CA |
| David J. Bright | Br. 411 | San Bernardino, CA |
| Gary Moy | Br. 214 | San Francisco, CA |
| Gregory J. Moody | Br. 737 | Santa Ana, CA |
| Irvin A. Hernandez | Br. 183 | Santa Rosa, CA |
| Enrique Rodriguez | Br. 2902 | Tri-Valley, CA |
| John R. Cordova | Br. 47 | Denver, CO |
| Claudio D. Pastor | Br. 86 | Hartford, CT |
| Howard R. Fitzgerald | Br. 142 | Washington, DC |
| Josh A. Egalka | Br. 1091 | Central FL |
| Stephen M. Hevron | Br. 2689 | Spacecoast FL |
| Ronnie L. Mikell | Br. 73 | Atlanta, GA |
| Bill M. Szyper | Br. 11 | Chicago, IL |
| Conrad G. Hernbrott | Br. 608 | Oak Park, IL |
| Edmund B. O'Brien | Br. 608 | Oak Park, IL |
| Raymond C. Rahn | Br. 608 | Oak Park, IL |
| Ervin J. Sitkowski | Br. 608 | Oak Park, IL |
| Luther C. Dorsey Jr. | Br. 4739 | Wheeling, IL |
| Christian M. Lewis | Br. 580 | Hammond, IN |
| Ronald V. Jordan | Br. 69 | Sioux City, IA |
| Donald D. Phipps | Br. 69 | Sioux City, IA |
| Leland J. Sedlacek | Br. 373 | Cedar Rapids, IA |
| Dennis M. White | Br. 201 | Wichita, KS |
| David L. Joseph | Br. 124 | New Orleans, LA |

| | | |
|----------------------|----------|------------------------|
| James F. Keating Jr. | Br. 6379 | Vidalia, LA |
| Douglas F. Smith | Br. 18 | Southeast MA Mgd. |
| Edward W. Minkley | Br. 46 | Western MA |
| Earl E. Petrone | Br. 46 | Western MA |
| Airana Lightfoot | Br. 1 | Detroit, MI |
| Willie L. Milhouse | Br. 1 | Detroit, MI |
| Theodore J. Zawacki | Br. 1 | Detroit, MI |
| Johann Neverdausky | Br. 56 | Grand Rapids, MI |
| Michael S. Bliss | Br. 232 | Jackson, MI |
| Dionicio R. Perez | Br. 232 | Jackson, MI |
| Elden C. Milting | Br. 654 | Mount Clemens, MI |
| Airon C. Pace | Br. 3126 | Royal Oak, MI |
| Theodore F. Geml | Br. 4374 | South Macomb, MI |
| Gerald S. Gortat | Br. 4374 | South Macomb, MI |
| Russell C. Tiller | Br. 246 | Southwestern MI |
| Dean C. Cripps | Br. 2548 | Hutchinson, MN |
| James A. Cassell | Br. 9 | Minneapolis, MN |
| John A. Dornfeld | Br. 9 | Minneapolis, MN |
| Larrie D. Lovstad | Br. 9 | Minneapolis, MN |
| Harold L. Tilbury | Br. 9 | Minneapolis, MN |
| Billy G. Wyrick | Br. 127 | Jefferson City, MO |
| Beau Packett | Br. 8 | Lincoln, NE |
| Monte C. Bratberg | Br. 5 | Omaha, NE |
| Raymond D. Cooley | Br. 5 | Omaha, NE |
| Ronald L. Malfait | Br. 5 | Omaha, NE |
| Robert L. Lefler | Br. 2778 | Sparks, NV |
| Paul L. Squillante | Br. 425 | Bergen Co. Mgd., NJ |
| Bernard M. Mayer | Br. 38 | NJ Mgd. |
| Andrew A. Serenelli | Br. 380 | Trenton, NJ |
| Alan E. Horstman | Br. 29 | Albany, NY |
| Yazan Alsaras | Br. 41 | Brooklyn, NY |
| John A. Noworyta | Br. 3 | Buffalo-Western NY |
| John E. Rupp | Br. 3 | Buffalo-Western NY |
| Angelo A. Pontillo | Br. 137 | Hudson Valley Mgd., NY |
| Edward G. Lauer | Br. 562 | Jamaica, NY |
| John Spratt | Br. 357 | Long Island City, NY |
| Joseph Zoll | Br. 6000 | Long Island Mgd., NY |
| William E. Benn | Br. 358 | Northeastern NY |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| James H. Banks | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| Joseph H. Bucci | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| Larry L. Fersaci | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| L. L. Kenyon | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| Donald J. Makely | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| Robert A. Terrell | Br. 210 | Rochester, NY |
| Neal W. Vandoren | Br. 134 | Syracuse, NY |
| Ernest T. Collins Jr. | Br. 936 | High Point, NC |
| Charles O. Allen | Br. 897 | Barberton, OH |
| Anthony G. Baum | Br. 43 | Cincinnati, OH |
| Eugene H. Mulroy | Br. 340 | Lancaster, OH |
| Robert E. Slivka | Br. 164 | Steubenville, OH |
| Charles L. Myers | Br. 500 | Harrisburg, PA |
| Robert R. Wisotzkey | Br. 500 | Harrisburg, PA |
| Robert D. Weitzel | Br. 273 | Lancaster, PA |
| Gregory A. Williams Jr. | Br. 157 | Philadelphia, PA |
| John G. Vorko | Br. 84 | Pittsburgh, PA |
| Eugene A. Korjeski | Br. 17 | Scranton, PA |
| James J. Talerico | Br. 17 | Scranton, PA |
| Albert E. Gauthier | Br. 55 | Pawtucket, RI |
| Marion R. Avent | Br. 27 | Memphis, TN |
| Charles L. Boyle | Br. 27 | Memphis, TN |
| Steven P. Salzman | Br. 5734 | Copperas Cove, TX |
| Shamika Burris | Br. 283 | Houston, TX |
| Marcia R. Freeman | Br. 283 | Houston, TX |
| Keesha D. Moten | Br. 283 | Houston, TX |
| Babatunde A. Olujide | Br. 283 | Houston, TX |
| Beverly S. Arnason | Br. 111 | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Richard C. Cuthriell | Br. 2819 | Virginia Beach, VA |
| Lafayette A. Moore Jr. | Br. 79 | Seattle, WA |
| Charles J. Hughes | Br. 6216 | Amery, WI |
| Earl R. Teela | Br. 507 | Madison, WI |
| Steve D. Kohls | Br. 649 | Watertown, WI |
| G. L. Knicely | Br. 66 | Wheeling, WV |
| Walter Kovalchie | Br. 66 | Wheeling, WV |
| Raymond H. Lewicki | Br. 66 | Wheeling, WV |
| Stanley E. Pekula | Br. 66 | Wheeling, WV |

Velma A. Worthy-Lindley was erroneously listed as deceased in a previous issue of *The Postal Record*. We regret the error and apologize for any problems it may have caused.

Retiree Reports

Anchorage, Alaska

Here we are under the new Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB). We should all breathe a sigh of relief that the Postal Service is not running our health plans. As much as they screw up the way they mismanage, they would have us going to the postal nurse for all of our medical care.

And while we are on the subject, the postal nurse here is quitting. She was bullied by the HR manager, among other things. Imagine that: A manager wanting someone else to do their dirty work. Surely the HR manager would have her back and take full responsibility. I almost had you there, believing the HR manager takes responsibility for his dirty deeds. If you want to know who he is and what he looks like, look in the dictionary under “dirt bag.”

I spoke to the manager of Labor Relations after arbitration the other day. He said he was doing good, and I replied, “Too bad your win rate at arbitration isn’t.” He said he has a 100 percent win rate at arbitration. Yeah, keep saying that to yourself in the mirror each morning. The only way that is going to happen is if you arbitrate against the APWU. He can try clicking his red ruby slippers together at the heels as much as he wants, but he may want to call EAP to talk to a counselor about his delusions. The fact is, the NALC has been kicking his a\$\$ in arbitration and laughing all the way to the bank. Here’s to wishing him 100 percent success (in his mind) at arbitration in the new year.

Jim Raymond, Branch 4319

Bergen Co. Mgd., New Jersey

Being retired, I have a lot of free time to put together these articles for your reading

pleasure. I have pretty much covered almost every letter carrier issue or concern. This one I will dedicate to all of the good supervisors and postmasters whom I have worked with.

This is what I had to work with:

Supervisors—blank, blank, blank, blank.

Postmasters—blank, blank, blank, blank.

Are you starting to get my point? They were all no good, but they made it to *The Postal Record*, so that’s something.

Stay informed; attend your union meetings.

Dennis Spoto, Branch 425

Centennial, Colorado

How did I ever find time to work? This past month I’ve been navigating the Postal Service’s new health benefits plan rollout. Phone calls to OPM, Social Security and PSHB have been numerous and a test of patience. At one point getting in touch with my congressman seemed the only solution. These are three large government agencies that apparently do not communicate with each other.

Because my spouse did not sign up for Part B when I retired, he would be punished if he wanted it now. He is a family member on my health plan, and when the Post Office announced it will be paying the penalty for any annuitant along with their covered family members, we decided to apply for the Special Enrollment in April when the application arrived. According to the paperwork we would be notified of acceptance within 60 days.

When that didn’t happen, the “journey” began. I spoke with the retirees’ office first, because there was a line on the form that didn’t make sense. Dan Toth even wrote an article about the form, so National must have been

getting calls. The PSHB stated it was overwhelmed and asked for more time.

I sat in on various Zoom calls, and the common questions from retirees was about the SEP. When I finally spoke with a “Medicare-savvy” representative from Social Security, she explained what the technical agent needed—dates for when my husband had insurance coverage. She assured me that that was all that was needed, and coverage will start on Jan. 1, 2025.

I am blown away by all the new carriers who are stepping up at monthly branch meetings. The future is in your hands. Happy New Year!

In unity—

Barb Larson, Branch 5996

Paterson, New Jersey

By the time this letter comes to print, the summer season will be well over, vacations are done, schools are open, and it is back to work for letter carriers. Summers go quick here in New Jersey, and we try to make the best of the short time of warmer weather to include as many family and friends gatherings as possible.

On a more serious note, it is time to do what we do best: getting back to delivering our nation’s mail.

Summers here in New Jersey are exciting, especially down near our ocean area and boardwalk areas. Even residents who move away still yearn for that boardwalk experience. We welcome back all out brothers and sisters from summer and hopefully everyone returns safe and recharged for another year.

Joseph Murone, Branch 120

Nalcrest Update

From the Trustees

Nalcrest hosted an NALC Health Benefit Seminar during Open Season on Nov. 13 that was attended by many residents and branch members from surrounding branches. NALC HBP Director Stephanie Stewart and staff displayed a detailed presentation and had a Q&A after the presentation. Also in attendance were Region 9 National Business Agent Eddie Davidson, Florida State Association President Al Friedman, and Nalcrest Trustees Fred Rolando and Tony Diaz.

The Nalcrest Trustees Committee business meetings were held Nov. 14-15. The annual Nalcrest Employee recognition luncheon hosted by the trustees was held on Nov. 14, setting the tone for the upcoming holiday season. We thanked all of the employees for their dedication to Nalcrest, especially Nalcrest Property Manager Lisa Senecal, who has worked for Nalcrest for 13 years and has maintained the excellent standards for the community.

Hurricane Milton was not kind to Nalcrest, inflicting damage to many roofs and scattering debris throughout the community. Plans are underway to repair the roof damage, and all of the other issues caused by the hurricane have

been identified and restored to original status.

Nalcrest has 66 residential buildings and 90 total buildings set on a lovely 153 acres. The health of Nalcrest is A-1, and all apartments are occupied with approximately 400 NALC retired members on the waiting list to live at Nalcrest. Our community is an NALC gem that is available for union member retirees to enjoy a wonderful living experience. More information can be obtained by contacting the Nalcrest office at 863-696-1126, nalc.org/nalcrest, and by following us on Facebook at “Nalcrest Foundation, Inc.”

One more thing: In February 2011, then-NALC President Fred Rolando assigned me to investigate Nalcrest because of the warning signs—there was trouble in paradise. What we discovered was that Nalcrest was nearly in a bankrupt condition. Almost 15 years later, with a lot of help and support, the Nalcrest Foundation, Inc. is a self-sustained vibrant community for the membership to brag about. It should be noted that the three Nalcrest Committee trustees that conduct Nalcrest business on the ground are volunteers with no salary paid for the work performed.

I have decided effective Nov. 30 to relinquish my appointment from the Nalcrest standing committee. Thanking many for the opportunity

to serve the union, I will close this chapter in my book of life and turn the page on the next union-involved challenge.

Matty Rose

Apply to live at Nalcrest

For an application to live at Nalcrest, visit nalc.org/nalcrest, call 863-696-1121 or fax 863-696-3333.

Nalcrest Trustees

NALC Executive Vice President Paul Barner

NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine

NALC Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack I. Julion

NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth

Nalcrest Trustees Vice President Fred Rolando

Nalcrest Trustees Vice President Tony Diaz



Cynthia Martinez
President

National Auxiliary Board

News and updates from the officers



Crystal Bragg
Secretary



Samantha Yerg
Treasurer

From the Treasurer

Brothers and sisters, I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season. Since the convention, there has been a whirlwind of activities, and a tentative agreement has been presented to the union. I'd like to say that means all great things ahead, but it's too early to know.

Back in November my home branch, 100, had our annual retiree luncheon. Our theme was "Retiree Round Up." Deb Pipes was my cohort in planning and is always adding the finesse to all my crazy ideas! The hall was decorated to resemble an old trail wagon, barn-type picnic. More than 70 members were in attendance for good food and great company.

National Business Agent Mark Camilli and NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth were both welcomed at our luncheon and were able to give us information on the tentative agreement and what to do/know about the new insurance, respectively.

I was very pleased to find out that I did not have to do a thing if I wasn't changing plans! It was an absolute nightmare for some of our retirees to just think about having to get online to ensure they have the correct plan.

December brought our annual Christmas party for our members and what is now becoming an annual event, the Toledo Zoo's "Lights Before Christmas" for members and their families. It was a delightful month of activities and events with loved ones and friends.

I hope you all have an amazing year!

The caterpillar works hard to become the butterfly.

Samantha J. Yerg

Sign up for the Auxiliary

To register to join the NALC Auxiliary, visit nalc.org/auxiliary to fill out the membership form.

AUXILIARY OFFICERS

Cynthia Martinez, President

3532 W. Mauna Loa Lane
Phoenix, AZ 85053
602-505-2215
camslm@yahoo.com

Crystal Bragg, Secretary

835 Westland Drive
Mt. Zion IL 62549
217-864-4684
cbragg5414@comcast.net

Samantha Yerg, Treasurer

4553 County Road 137
Gibsonburg, OH 43431
419-410-6162
samanthayerg@yahoo.com

Election Notices

Fort Dodge, Iowa

In accordance with Article 5 of the *NALC Constitution* and the bylaws of Branch 645, this is an official notice to all members of Branch 645 who are in good standing that nominations for president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, chief steward, sergeant-at-arms, health benefits representative, one trustee, MBA representative, and delegates and alternates to the state convention will be held at the regular monthly meeting on Feb. 11.

Members wishing to be nominated must accept such nomination in person or must submit their willingness to be nominated in writing to the branch secretary prior to the February meeting.

Following nominations, elections will be held at the March 11 meeting.

Joshua Ropte, Sec., Br. 645

Framingham, Massachusetts

This is the official notification for all Branch 334 members that the 2025 nomination of officers will take place at the March union meeting at 6 p.m. on March 20 at the Natick Elks, 95 Speen St., Natick. Candidates must accept nominations at the time made or, if absent, in writing by 6 p.m. on April 1. Candidates may accept nominations for only one office.

Nominations will be held for the following branch officers: president, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary/treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, health benefits officer and three trustees. The terms of office will be for two years, beginning in June 2025.

The election (if needed) will be conducted by secret ballot between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. on May 21 and May 22 in the break room of the Framingham Post Office, as well as between 7 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. on May 21 and May 22 at the Ashland Post Office, as well as in person at the May union meeting at 6 p.m. on May 22. All ballots will be collected, and voting will end at 7 p.m.

Any member who, for any reason, will be unable to vote on the above-listed dates may obtain an absentee ballot by writing to the Election Committee, Branch 334 Merged, P.O. Box 1007, Framingham MA 01701. Requests for absentee ballots must be received by the election committee no later than April 22.

Write-in votes are not permitted.

Ballots will be counted and results announced by the election committee during the May 22 meeting.

Graig Samuluk, Pres., Br. 334

Utah

Nominations and elections for the Utah State Association of Letter Carriers will take place April 4-5 at the Utah state biennial convention in St. George for the following positions: president,

vice president, secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, executive board (five positions), director of retirees and editor. The convention will take place at the Hilton Garden Inn, 17731 S Convention Center Drive, St. George.

Kimberly Mortensen, Sec., USALC

Regarding Election Notices

Election Notices must be submitted to *The Postal Record*, not to other offices at NALC. *The Constitution for Government of Federal and Subordinate Branches* requires that notice be mailed to members no fewer than **45 days before the election** (Article 5, Section 4). Branch secretaries must remember the time difference between deadline for submission of notices—the 10th of the month—and publication of the subsequent issue of the magazine, e.g., December's deadline is for the January publication.

To submit items by mail: Mail to The Postal Record, 100 Indiana

Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144. Include the following information: type of item (Election Notice), where it comes from, the person sending it, and how to contact the sender.

To submit items by email: Send to postalrecord@nalc.org with the branch city and state as the subject. The item can be in the body of the email or as an attachment in Microsoft Word. Include the same information as listed above for items sent by mail. If you do not receive an acknowledgment that your email was received, please call *The Postal Record* at **202-662-2851**.

Branch Items

Albany, New York

We recently experienced a loss in Branch 29. Brother Jean Morival passed away at the very young age of 37 years old, leaving behind a wife and kids. Like any of our significant others, his wife was left with very little information about what steps to take after his untimely passing as it applied to USPS benefits.

We are one big family in the NALC, but have we connected our work family with our home family? Have you explained to your family what a shop steward is, or that they can call the union if something were to ever happen and they needed assistance? I've written plenty of articles about the job and the union; for this article, I'd like to focus on your immediate families.

Have you prepared as much as you can in the unfortunate case that you pass away? All it takes is a peek inside one of those cars driving by you while you're delivering mail to see 80 percent of the drivers not paying any attention to the road in front of them, and realize that we are in danger every day. Do you have a will, health care proxy, and a power of attorney set up? A call to your lawyer and a few simple questions now can make all the difference later on. Does your family know the location of these documents if you do have them?

All active carriers have at least basic life insurance through the Post Office; some of the smart ones have an additional NALC MBA life insurance policy. Does your family know the policy numbers and where to find them?

Google "NALC when an active member dies" for a great resource on who to contact if someone passes away with phone numbers listed.

Norris Beswick, Branch 29

Boston, Massachusetts

On behalf of the Branch 34 officers and executive board, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all my fellow union brothers and sisters and their families a happy new year, merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah, happy Kwanzaa, or to the holiday throughout the year you observe as special. May you and your entire family enjoy this special time of the year.

2024 has been an interesting year, to say the least. The nation is finally coming out of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, and now it's time for the Postal Service to get back to keeping the American public connected through mail delivery.

As usual, and as the No. 1-trusted entity of the United States government, the men and women of the NALC have stepped up to create a record-breaking delivery of Parcel Post this holiday season. Every letter carrier should be proud of the work they do. Although management does not recognize your commitment to service, the American public values us in ways they cannot express. This type of accomplishment can only be achieved using the union way.

Here's a small recap of 2024. For the first time in decades, Branch 34 has added full-time routes to the Boston installation. In doing so, the branch has added it to its membership list. As everyone knows, a union is only strong in

numbers. If you're a letter carrier who does not pay your fair share, I'm asking that your New Year's resolution be to reconsider your stance and join with your union brothers and sisters to fight off management attacks.

Again, happy new year to all my union brothers and sisters. Let's make 2025 a strong union year!

Tom Rooney, Branch 34

Camden, New Jersey Merged

I think I must be insane. They say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Here I am, filing the same grievances over and over again, and I literally expect management to finally learn something as a result of a Step



Northeastern New York Br. 358 members Billy Ganey and David Wright show off USPS vehicles at a "Touch a Truck" event.

B decision. I fully expect my manager to one day tell me, "Chuck, you were right. You were right about everything." And for a brief time, I thought that was actually possible.

For a brief time, as a result of an intervention, management was resolving almost all of our grievances at the local level. And while the manager at the time didn't tell me I was right about everything, he did sign off on some really good Formal A settlements. I guess the district didn't like that too much, so they replaced him with someone who is untrained and unqualified. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "That's everyone in management." While that may be close to being true, there is unqualified and then there is *unqualified*.

Another example of poor decision-making at the district level was when they decided not to bring carriers in early for an a.m. parcel run. This is something we've done in the past, during our peak season, and it has been highly successful and safer. While the carriers are in the dark in the early-morning hours, as they are in the later hours, it is safer in the morning. There are fewer cars, and the dismounting for parcel delivery is less hazardous than walking a park-and-loop in the dark. After all these years, I am still amazed at the idiotic decisions made by our POOMS and district managers. So, yes, I may be insane.

Chuck Goushian, Branch 540

Charlotte, North Carolina

Branch 545 would like to wish everyone a happy new year. We look forward to all the exciting things that 2025 will bring to our branch and the NALC. We are planning a

branch outing for MDA at the Charlotte Hornets game on Jan. 20. For ticket information, there is a link on our branch Facebook page, you can contact the union office, and there should be flyers posted in all the stations. We look forward to seeing everyone at the game.

We would like to congratulate our fellow carrier, Sonya Jackson, on her recent retirement. Sonya was assigned to our Downtown Station and has been with the Postal Service for 30 years. We all wish you the best in the next chapter of your life.

The union leadership would like to let all our members know that we are continuing with our in-person local union meetings. We are holding our meetings the third Tuesday of every month for anyone who is interested in an attending. Food will be provided at the meeting for those who are able to attend. We look forward to seeing all of our members who are able to make it out. Also, if anyone is interested in participating in our local union in any capacity, please contact our local union office or speak with the union steward in your office.

Justin Fraley, Branch 545

Cincinnati, Ohio

Well, fellow postal carriers, we have finished another strong year together, hopefully satisfying most of our customers. As we all know, not everyone will be happy with the service we give them, no matter what. We deliver through all types of weather, and we also must deal with dogs, and over the last couple of years, robberies.

Here in the Queen City at the present time, at least 20 carriers have had to deal with this problem of possibly being held up in many different ways for your Arrow Key. Please always keep your head on a swivel. We have some people in town this month, looking for distracted driving and other things that keep us from staying safe on the street. Always stay focused on the task at hand, because in this day and age, more than any other time, we are all possibly in harm's way.

I'm pretty sure starting early this month, if not the day after Christmas, we will all be held even more accountable for every movement that we make throughout our day. As has been the New Year's resolution by management over previous years, they try to crack the whip.

Remember to slow down and stay safe, and always, if needed, fill out the 3996, even though it will be denied. For some stupid reason, they all can predict the future of our day first thing in the morning before you hit the street by how many flats and letters you must case in. One of my favorite things to write on my 96 every morning, especially this time of year, is, "It gets dark earlier in the day, and at Sharonville, we start at 8 now instead of 7:30 from early November. It takes longer in the dark."

Meetings are the second Thursday of the month.

Chris Rought, Branch 43

Cleveland, Ohio

Happy New Year!

Webster's dictionary has multiple definitions for happiness:

- A state of joy of well-being or contentment.
- A pleasurable or satisfying experience.

Happiness is subjective, as what might make one happy may not transcend to another.

We now live in an age of technology, with likes and dislikes providing instant gratification, misinformation, and access to many avenues to vent one's frustrations, however misguided those frustrations may be. Clearly, the new proposed tentative agreement has caused many to be *unhappy*, as I have witnessed firsthand the rhetoric of disdain.

My patience, as well as others', was tested over a 32-year career awaiting contracts to be negotiated, voted on, and ratified, but at no time was quitting this union the answer. Be careful, brothers and sisters: It is easy to pound one's fists, raise one's voice, walk away, though it is not an example of strength but a sign of weakness.

Many of you will have voted by the time you have read these words. I would hope that, regardless of how you voted, you will take the time not just to stay in the moment but connect to the past.

The history is there: multiple attempts to privatize, the years of fighting for postal reform, and management seemingly trying to run this company into the ground. There is an old adage, "nothing new under the sun."

Political power matters, and those taking power this month do not have a favorable view of collective bargaining, COLAs and pension benefits. There are no two sets of facts, just the evidence of past attempts to dismantle this company you work for.

Empower your union moving forward by contributing to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, giving it the resources to fight to preserve your benefits and future.

Nestor J. Chaves, Branch 40

Emerald Coast, Florida

For the past several weeks, our office has been under a barrage of acts by the acting MPOO and her team of outsiders supposedly trying to get our office straight.

I was interrupted in the strangest way: During a stand-up with the carriers, which has been sanctioned by several previous postmasters, she interrupted the meeting and requested to speak with me. I then got questioned about whether I was conducting a union meeting on the floor. I stated, "No, a stand-up." Next question: "Who authorized you to do this?" I stated that many previous postmasters had. Well, it got better—she informed me that it was management's job to brief the carriers. I explained to her that it was management who wanted me to do it, because they felt the carriers would listen to me better than them. She stated that that was the problem.

I don't give two hoots who does it if the carriers are informed. Now, I don't always agree with management in their thinking, but what I didn't like, nor did the carriers, was the fact

that she called out the local management in front of the carriers. We felt that this was something that should have been done behind closed doors and was disrespectful. Not only did she do it at this meeting, but at a recent one, they had mandated all carriers to work on Sunday due to peak—*grievance*. Had an outsider tell me that the carriers can waive their guarantee by signing a slip. Wrong answer—*grievance*.

With us being in the peak season now, with their infamous wisdom, they have decided to now do counts in the office. Where do we do this during peak season? You can't make this @#\$^ up.

Hope everyone enjoyed their holiday.

Percy Smith Jr., Branch 4559

Fargo-West Fargo, North Dakota

I hope everyone had a good holiday season. Like most organizations, we too need to be flexible and follow direct orders. If there are contractual problems that result, we have trained stewards who are available to help work on a remedy.

By the time this is printed, we will have made it through the four-week peak period, but we will be right in the middle of our coldest month of the year. The time has been extremely trying for many. With being short-staffed, increased parcel volume, snow and ice conditions, and winter darkness, many of the carriers are spending more time at work than at home. Some carriers have young children at home. Some may leave before they get up, and often they could be getting home around their children's bedtime. Time spent with their family and children are a precious commodity, and often many are forced to be working longer than they choose.

Into our exclusionary period, we found out *not* all the rules were known/learned regarding forcing. Now that it's been made known, this will likely avoid some past issues. There are many contractual rules related to overtime, mandating, forcing, exclusionary period, etc. Don't feel all the information presented to you may have received in the academy, can or will be understood or remembered. Reach out to a trusted carrier/steward for help, if needed.

With the upcoming Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday approaching on Jan. 20, take time to appreciate the contributions Dr. King had made for social justice for everyone.

David Steichen, Branch 205

Fresno, California

The time has come to ratify the 2023-2026 NALC-USPS National Agreement. Retirees like me do not get a vote. I have heard and read much criticism about it, especially the three 1.3 percent pay raises being up front. I decided to research this compared to previous agreements.

Letter carriers in our 2016-19 agreement received 1.2 percent and 1.3 percent wage increases. The 2019-23 agreement provided wage increases of 1.1 percent, 1.1 percent and 1.3 percent. All three agreements provided

COLA increases. My top pay when I retired was \$28.50 per hour. From the time I started as a letter carrier, it took eight years to reach the top pay.

Our active members can vote to ratify, or not. Contractual pay raises slightly more than 1 percent are nothing new for at least eight years. The TA all of you will be voting to ratify, or not, totals 3.9 percent, plus COLA, for the life of the agreement. Quit complaining and vote yes, or no. It's in your hands now. Vote your conscience.

Jesse Dominguez, Branch 231

Kansas City, Missouri

Whew! It seems like the NALC will barely have time to catch its breath before the next adventure begins. Without being fully staffed, tons of campaign mail was delivered, stretching carriers mentally, while an increased parcel load taxed physically and it's not peak season yet.

Throw in the Branch 30 Ed Gorman MDA Bowlathon, won this year by the team from The Plant, consisting of Art Cole, Jean Cole, Willie, and Daniel McNeal. The Branch 30 retirees dinner followed as new and not-so-new retirees were honored. Columbus Day, Veterans Day (salute) and Thanksgiving makes for a holiday season like no other. With the Branch 30 Christmas party looming on the horizon, there's no doubt the "Party Poohbah" will kick it up a level.

With the general election finished, how and where will the NALC come out of it? With many of our Democratic friends gone, what will be the status of pending legislation that serves the NALC's interests, especially the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act? Many of *today's* letter carriers are unaware of the Republican Party's long-sought desire to privatize the USPS. Especially at times like these, any crack in union unity could lead to attempts of exploitation.

A tentative agreement released by the NALC Executive Council has been received with mixed opinions. Based on views from online media and locally, the push has been for disapproval. Whether dissatisfaction is related

Notice

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. Any guideline amounts are merely suggestions, and you may contribute more or less than the guidelines suggest and the union will not favor or disadvantage you by reason of the amount of your contribution or your decision not to contribute. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until canceled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, name of employer and occupation of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

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to comparison of contracts by UPS, UAW and others, or the loss of trust and confidence in NALC President Brian Renfroe, is open to debate. Regardless, failure to ratify the tentative agreement totally places the fate/future of the NALC into an arbitrator's decision. As with the general election, each member in good standing is asked to vote their conscience.

Oh, in unity, season's greetings.

Calvin Davis, Branch 30

Knoxville, Tennessee

Happy New Year, brothers and sisters! Hope everyone enjoyed the holiday period. Hopefully, no one had to call ERMS to request Emergency Annual Leave (EAL) or Un-scheduled Sick Leave (USL). Lately we have had a few circumstances whereby a carrier would call ERMS requesting EAL or USL and, upon return to work, the supervisor would present them with a computer-generated PS Form 3971 (Request for Notification of Absence). Blindly, they would sign it and not look at the period or type of leave in question. Later, when they review their pay stub, they'll see that there is a problem with the type of leave they were charged with. At that time, a supervisor will remind them that, since they failed to furnish required documentation (*ELM* Sec. 513.365), their leave was changed to AWOL/LWOP or Absent from Overtime (AOT). If the affected carrier had checked the block on the type of leave, the problem could have been averted.

So, for the record: Carriers must prepare and submit their PS 3971 upon their return from EAL (*ELM* Sec. 512.411-12) and USL (*ELM* Sec. 513.332).

How to avoid this issue? Always fill out your own PS 3971. Do not rely on the computerized printout! If one went out on EAL or USL, they might be required to provide requested documentation. In addition, attendance control officers have been given guidance to check social media websites (Facebook) to search for a carrier who may have attended a football game or social event on the indicated leave dates. Carrier beware!

Tony Rodriguez, Branch 419

Lima, Ohio

Hello, Lima. I would like to start out by hoping everyone enjoyed the holidays, and wish everyone a good year! As you know, a tentative agreement had been reached, and *The Postal Record* reported that ballots were sent out on Dec. 13 and to be returned with your decision by Jan. 13. Hopefully, everyone made an informed decision.

Once again, a reminder to keep your guard up at all times! This article from 14 News in Louisville, KY: The U.S. Postal Inspection Service were searching for three suspects in three different robberies across Louisville. Three men robbed three different carriers on the same day, Nov. 25.

Article stated: They "held the carrier by gunpoint and escaped with postal keys." Be aware of your surroundings, stay off phones and earbuds, and keep dog spray handy!

Also, in the November issue, National thanked veterans for their military and postal service. Thank you!

Cold weather reminder: If you experience numbness or tingling in your fingers or toes, get back to the truck and warm them up. Use hand and foot warmers when necessary and when icy, walk in old footsteps or crunchy snow.

Get on Facebook and check out the NALC Branch 105 page and follow it! Lastly, union meetings are held at Rigali's Pizza Village every second Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.

Jeffery Steegman, Branch 105

Little Rock, Arkansas

This is an official notice to all members of Branch 35 that proposed changes to Article VI (chief steward) Heath Benefits will be discussed at the general meeting on Feb. 7. The changes will be voted on at the general meeting at 7:15 p.m. on March 7 at the union hall, 10112 Chicot Road, Suite 212, Little Rock.

Chad W. Dollar, Branch 35

Louisville, Kentucky

Merry Christmas and happy new year from Branch 14! We've had an eventful year and look forward to what the new year is going to bring. Major changes are coming our way, and new faces are taking positions. I'd like to say thank you to Tom Webb, Bobby Hack, Larry Terry and Ron Gast for your years of dedication to Branch 14. We hope to make you all proud, but they're big shoes to fill.

Here in Louisville, we've had a string of incidents that have happened to our carriers. They've been robbed for their Arrow Keys, and one carrier caught someone breaking into their personal car. We preach safety, and hope that we never face anything out on the street. We need a plan! When a carrier is attacked, it affects more than just the carrier—it affects the whole station. Morale is down, and carriers are scared.

On another note, we're all patiently waiting for our ballots. Maybe the new year will bring us a contract!

Adriane Shanklin, Branch 14

Norristown, Pennsylvania

Tell me, would you rather step up or be stepped on? Would you rather rise up or fall down? Would you rather be part of the solution and not the problem? Do you like to fight a good fight? We have a lot of young people who are gonna be around for a long time. Would you like to be a hero in your office? To be the one who they look to for answers and they're gonna get the truth, or would you rather just listen to management and believe what they say? Become a union rep in your office and be heard! Come to a meeting and learn some things.

Joel Stimmler, Branch 542

North Florida

Branch 53 held its elections for officers with the following results: president, Jim Thigpenn; executive vice president, Bob Broecker; vice president, Steve Parris; recording secretary, Elaine Pfeifer; financial secretary, Michael Cooney; and treasurer, Tim Muse. Ballots are still being counted for trustees and delegates to the state convention. All other officers were reelected by acclamation. Congratulations to everyone who participated in this election.

Branch 53 has 1,258 members, and only 318 of them voted. There were things said and written without facts to back it up, and then there are those who choose social media to vent instead of calling the office or actually coming to a meeting or training to learn. Many of those non-voters are the biggest complainers. Perhaps it's time to come together and work toward saving our jobs, retirement and, most of all, the USPS.

A branch editor in New Hampshire wrote an article titled "Does anyone read this newsletter?" I get a copy and told Bob Gibbons that I did, but does anyone else? Chances are, if they don't vote, they don't read it. Give it a try!

Branch 53 wishes everyone a happy new year.

Bob Henning, Branch 53

Northeastern New York

It is with sadness, but with great memories Branch 358 has with the retirement of Bob Riley—"Rabbit," as he has been affectionately known by delegates all across the country. Rabbit started his career by becoming a steward in the Troy branch. After being merged with Branch 358, Rabbit continued to represent letter carriers throughout the branch.

He has served the branch in many functions, and currently he is the 1st vice president. Rabbit was a tireless devotee of community services. Spearheading food drives, organizing the annual golf tournaments, and political action were functions Rabbit tirelessly worked on. One of the reasons Branch 358 was successful in raising money for MDA was because of his efforts.

One of the highlights of Rabbit's union work was the awarding of the first pin for congressional liaisons to him at the 2016 Biennial National Convention by President Rolando. Rabbit's work was recognized by the NALC for his congressional lobbying efforts for letter carrier issues. He understood how important it was to be bipartisan in his congressional duties.

Rabbit has been a role model to all letter carriers. If a carrier was in need, he would be the first to assist them. He will be sorely missed by all.

In closing, I will always treasure my friendship with Rabbit. I always will keep the words he always told us, "Always try to put a smile on someone's face!"

Frank P. Maresca, Branch 358

Palatine, Illinois

The following are the dates for Branch 4268's 2025 union meetings: Jan. 8, Feb. 12, March 12, April 9, May 14, June 11, July 9, Sept. 10, Oct. 8 and Nov. 12.

Andre Young, Branch 4268

Portland, Oregon

Branch 82 retiree Eldon Ashmore recently celebrated his 100th birthday on Sunday, Nov. 24. Eldon is a World War II veteran and has more than 75 years of loyal membership to this union.

Eldon started working nights at the Post Office Department in 1948 sorting letters at the old Main Post Office in Portland, OR, until he transferred to the letter carrier craft.

He started working at Piedmont Station and stayed there the rest of his career, retiring in 1980.

Eldon's grandson, Mark, followed in his grandfather's footsteps and also became a letter carrier. Mark has even spent the bulk of his career at Piedmont Station as well.

Eldon was always a staple at our monthly retiree luncheon and still attends the yearly Branch 82 retiree banquet.

Congratulations to you, Eldon, on a long, successful career and an even longer retirement. Reaching 100 years is quite an achievement, and we are so grateful to have you and your grandson in our union family.

Suzanne Miller, Branch 82



Eldon Ashmore

Providence, Rhode Island

I hope everyone had a happy holiday season with friends and family.

It is not an easy thing for letter carriers nowadays. I guess it shouldn't come as that much of a surprise at this point, as it continues to get worse every year. Starting with the sheer incompetence of our supervisors and their bosses. "Safety first" is what we're told every day; meanwhile, they have us out there working more hours and days, with higher volume, while dealing with adverse weather conditions, while working in the dark for hours on end, while not bringing us in early for parcel runs—you get the point. Overworked, underpaid and mismanaged.

The second quarterly safety meeting was held at the end of November, with one letter carrier from most stations represented. If you have any safety questions or suggestions, you can let your steward know, and they can reach out to the chief stewards or the president to bring it up at the next meeting.

Lastly, Branch 15 union meetings will now be held on the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m.

Anthony Turcotte, Branch 15

Racine, Wisconsin

Greetings from Racine. So, what's going on around here? Same biscuit, different gravy, I reckon. We grew up with rugs over rugs, Stretch Armstrong, pop rocks, and VCRs. We asked, "Where's the beef?" were told not to squeeze the Charmin, "O what a relief it is," and the Magic 8 Ball told all. Today, they sell Narcan over the counter, but I still have to fetch a clerk with the magic keys to open the cage to get my razors and cough medicine. I'm neither making a shank nor am I gathering ingredients for a meth lab.

A shout-out to fellow scribe Jerry Martens of Branch 45, Springfield, OH. Your last month's PR article validated what I've been crabbing about for years. DPS continues to be a shoddy product full of errors with no pride in workmanship from the plant. With zero accountability, it's just a plain mess most days. That black powder is from the machine jam? I would not have known that; I assumed it was a dropped tray and they scooped it back up, dirt and all.

Just a few thoughts here. Back in time, working past 4 p.m. was a stretch. Working in the dark would have been inconceivable. DPS technology should be evolving with the times, not regressing. That, my brother, is the weak link. I guess that's a question for the Magic 8 Ball. I'll rewind my cassette tape with a pencil while I ponder that question.

The LLVs are the perfect delivery vehicle. Just keep the framework, adjust the interior, update the mechanicals, lighting, bigger tires, etc., and you got yourself a solid vehicle without spending billions of dollars on it.

There you have it. My 2 cents and two months until spring.

Chris Paige, Branch 436

Roanoke, Virginia

In accordance with Article 3 of the bylaws of Star City Branch 524, this is an official notice to all members of Branch 524.

The monthly Branch 524 business meeting of Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2025, is now scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 21. In addition, the monthly Branch 524 business meeting of Tuesday, Nov. 11, is now scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 18.

The time of all Branch 524 business meetings remains at 7 p.m. The Branch 524 business meetings are held at the union hall, located at 1015 Georgia Ave. NE, Roanoke.

John "Jack" M. Green, Branch 524

Rockville, Maryland

I want to thank Alton Branson for installing our 15 officers on Dec. 4. We thank the members for having the confidence to return every officer to their same position for another term. We will do our best to get the National Agreement complied with and for letter carriers to be treated with dignity and respect.

Steve Klein won an inequitable distribution of overtime grievance at the Gaithersburg Main Office. Eight carriers won a total of \$2,870. Nice work, Steve! Melissa Johnson won a case for 32 hours of continuation of pay worth about \$800 at the Rockville Main Office. Great job, Melissa! It's a shame that we must file grievances to get continuation of pay. After all, management is violating the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA), a law passed by Congress!

Route inspections are coming to the Rockville Main Office in early February of 2025. In the past, management has violated everything they could in order to eliminate routes. Many times we prevailed in the grievance procedure to have the inspections thrown out. It's crazy that management fights for overburdened routes. All this does is put overtime and double-time in our members' pockets and hurts service to our customers. Not one carrier has been removed for using too much time on a route over the last 46 years! In fact, no carrier has been successfully disciplined for unauthorized overtime as long as they submitted a 3996 and called back to inform management that they could not complete their assignment in the allotted time.

Please visit our website at nalc3825.com. We have more than 353,141 hits! We have lots of escalating remedies posted and copies of huge checks to the branch due to repeat violations of our contract. The top three checks are for \$74,600, \$50,000 and \$40,000! In the struggle—

Kenneth Lerch, Branch 3825

St. Louis, Missouri

As I was preparing to write this article and extend new year's best wishes to all members of the NALC family, it struck me that this is my 30th year writing a Branch Item for *The Postal Record*.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge in those years. I've written columns about political figures, national contracts, conventions, legislation and even personal stories about the men and women who fought to shape and

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

- The 2025 projected COLAs for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) is **0.1 percent**, and for the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), **0.1 percent**, following the release of the November consumer price index (CPI). The 2025 COLAs will be finalized with the publication of the September 2025 CPI in October 2025.
- The 2025 projected COLA under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) is **2.7 percent** following the release of the November CPI. This COLA will be based on the change in the CPI between December 2023 and December 2024.
- Visit nalc.org for the latest updates.

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strengthen our national agreements, and in so doing elevated our standard of living.

I've always admired our senior union brothers and sisters and always feel privileged to spend some quality time with them reminiscing about those early struggles. If you have the honor to have some of those members still alive, I encourage you to take the opportunity to ask them to share their recollections of that pivotal time in our union's progression.

That window of opportunity to engage with those senior members is rapidly closing. Many of those members also served in World War II, and I needn't remind anyone that those numbers are dwindling.

So much of what we enjoy today as active and retired members of the NALC rests with the courage and sacrifices of those men and women who take those bold chances. It was their hope to elevate our standard of living so that we could prosper and enjoy a quality of life for ourselves and our families.

Each generation of letter carrier must come to realize that our wages, health care and contractual advances weren't handed to us by a benevolent employer. They were fought for and won by the dedicated members of this union who came before us.

We have an obligation to fulfill. Let's honor them by continuing their legacy.

Tom Schulte, Branch 343

Seattle, Washington

My recollection of management, now that I'm retired, is that they could hardly contain themselves when they found the rank and file with a defect in their performance. They would all but roll over and wet themselves, such a joyous occasion to find someone, a person who does all the common labor, the worker, slipping up. The letter carrier job is rife with the opportunity to get things wrong, but there's seldom any mercy, compassion or forgiveness afforded to the guys who are slinging a pouch for a living. Nope, there's usually a Letter of Warning, or some type of punishment that needs to be assessed.

As a shop steward, I was continually disappointed when, what I considered trivial matters, could never be resolved in the office. I didn't understand the logic behind constant draconian measures that were meted out, when a simple discussion could have resolved an issue in-house, and perchance enhanced the feeling of esprit de corps within the station. After all, we were/are all engaged in a common goal: to get the mail out and delivered. It constantly amazed me how management often turned everyday mishaps into "gotcha" moments.

There's a lot of time on their hands with which they tend to over-cogitate and catastrophe-think an outcome from an innocent oversight. Then they march around like so many mobile mannequins—for all the help they provide, they could be replaced with cardboard cutouts, or better yet, a pull-string puppet. "There's a snake in my boot!" "You're to have the mail cased and ready in one hour!" "You're still here?" "Why haven't you left yet?" And other lovely managerial chestnuts that get cast about as the workers work and the shirkers shirk. "I'm giving you a Letter of Warning for unauthorized overtime!" Yeah, right. Bring it!

Don Nokes, Branch 79

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

This year the charity Sleep in Heavenly Peace started a chapter in Sioux Falls, SD. The charity builds and donates beds (twin-size single and twin-size bunks) to children ages 3 to 17 in their communities that do not have one. Since the chapter opened mid-July, it has received a huge demand from families, CPS, Social Services, etc. It had a goal of delivering 200 beds by the end of the year. The community has



Members of Sioux Falls, SD Br. 491 help build beds for children to support the Sleep in Heavenly Peace charity.

had some local sponsors step up financially for the materials, several bed-building volunteer opportunities, but were running critically low on bedding to complete their goal. Our local, Branch 491, always spearheads some sort of Christmas collection, but this year really inspired everyone. Postal employees in Sioux Falls stepped up and came together to help donate bedding. Employees from all crafts, including city carriers, clerks, rural carriers, EAS, maintenance and mail handlers came together to help these kids obtain their dream of sleeping in a bed. That's something most of us would take for granted, but it is such a gift to these children. It's so heartwarming to see all crafts come together for a common cause and help some of the most vulnerable members of their community—kids.

We were able to collectively donate 35 complete twin bedding sets, 13 comforters, 18 sheet sets, four blankets and 17 pillows. There was also \$100 mailed into the charity for the drive. Since the bedding drive in November, some members of the branch have even started volunteering for the charity with building and the actual delivering of beds.

They have chapters in every state all over the country if you feel inspired and want to help the kids in your area. No kid should have to sleep on the floor in any town.

Stacy Douglas, Branch 491

South Jersey, New Jersey

As we head into the new year, hopefully we have a contract we can all live with until 2026, and start to focus on what is important for the membership, as we will face many obstacles in the near future.

I understand how everyone is so consumed with how this whole process of a new agreement has transpired, but the way our organization works is by a democratic process every

four years, where we can reelect or reject the parties in power. There are many factions out there that want blood right now, but in my opinion, this is the wrong message to be delivered.

As this entire fiasco continues to explode throughout the membership, through social media, we are becoming more and more divided every day. I have been around this great union for more than 44 years, and can say this is nothing I ever thought would happen. I have had many national leaders who I have personally disagreed with, whether it was the contract they agreed to or their way of doing business. I always said if I thought I, or someone else, could do a better job, we could run against them in the next election.

I understand the frustration with how these last few years have turned out, but the way the social media gurus are going about their unhappiness with our leaders I say is not the way to get change. Creating many different factions is fine, but to constantly bad-mouth our elected leaders doesn't look good. If you have a platform to run on, I say put it out there for the membership to see if that's what they want.

I may not agree with our leaders at times, but I do respect the office. You should as well.

Gary DiGiacomo, Branch 908

Southeast Michigan

Branch 2184's active members begin a new year in the midst of a Michigan winter season, with cold, snow and ice adding to the other challenges of letter carrier work. A wholly inadequate uniform allowance has added to the difficulty of purchasing sufficient clothing and items and necessary winter protection gear, with many letter carriers making out-of-pocket purchases of necessity.

Because postal uniforms are mandated for letter carriers, per Article 26 of the National Agreement, the entire cost for a reasonably complete set of work uniforms and all necessary accessories should always be borne by the Postal Service, with no exceptions. This is not a novel idea, and is widely utilized by other industries and companies requiring uniforms for their employees. Instead of a fixed yearly "allowance" for uniforms, there should be a specific and complete listing of uniform items and accessories for all letter carrier work environments that is provided and paid for directly by the USPS. This would also give the Postal Service some actual incentive to challenge or avoid the absurd price gouging done by uniform vendors.

Fixing the uniform debacle as well as other long overdue changes in the process of how things are done in the Postal Service is just another example of the failure by its management as well as our union to work constructively to address critical systemic issues that directly affect the most valuable asset of the USPS—its city letter carriers. There is a lot of blame to be found, but ultimately none of that matters. The first syllable of the word "leadership" is lead. Problems do not fix themselves.

Joe Golonka, Branch 2184

Southeast Pennsylvania Merged

Happy New Year! For most, this is a time to reset goals and aspirations. 2024 was a long and arduous time for letter carriers. Postal management has been steadfast in keeping their proverbial feet on our necks. As hard as it has been for them to find staff to deliver the mail, it has been even harder to find supervisors. So, instead, they promote letter carriers who will do *anything* not to carry mail. These “stupervisors” (in most cases) don’t look the part, dress the part, or act the part. Just when we thought (20 years ago) things could not get worse, they still have not hit rock bottom.

The current crop of managers doesn’t do what their titles suggest. They just bark orders spoon-fed to them by their superiors. Carriers are now being disciplined for as little as one missed day of work, one missed parcel scan, and one mistake scanning to the street. The pre-disciplinary interview (PDI) has become a verb (“I’m going to PDI you”; “Have you PDI’d those carriers yet?”). And don’t get me started on their misuse of emergency placement. Some carriers are illegally placed on EP, only to be bought back to work after a few days (but without pay for those days missed). Thank God for NALC!

Thankfully, we successfully fought these illegalities. But often, we don’t know these things occur. Carriers do not inform us they were issued discipline, etc. So, to blame management for everything would be inappropriate.

We all know about management, but we must take accountability for *our* actions. We can’t give them reasons to under serve us. We are not required to be perfect, but management will always over discipline us as an intimidation tactic. Let’s not make it easy for them!

#NewYear,SameOldUSPS #WeAreTooProud-ToNotFightForOurBrethren

Eric Jackson, Branch 725

Springfield, Ohio

Greetings, one and all. Locally, we are holding union elections for our branch. Our current president, Brian Dewell, is running again. He’s been president for 12 years. It can be a thankless job with long hours, especially at our office because the position is not full time. Our union president has always had to carry a route as well as deal with the responsibilities of the union. Many carriers do not realize the amount of time involved. Over the course of the last 12 years, the union treasury has grown, and we have been able to send people to various trainings and pay them for an eight-hour day. It wasn’t always like this. We have a young workforce, and some are clamoring for change. There will come a time for change, but this is not the time. The grass is not always greener.

We are losing our senior supervisor. Rather than pay her for all the work she actually does, the revolving door of POOMs would rather let her go to a smaller office as a new postmaster. A lot of knowledge will be lost with her departure. We can only hope her replacement will be as fair and open-minded as she is.

By the time this is published, we will have survived another Christmas season. From Fri-

day, Nov. 29, through Friday, Dec. 6, our office delivered 60,000 parcels. Many years ago, I used to rent a costume and carry mail on our downtown walk out route dressed as Santa Claus. Cars honking and people hollering and kids smiling always made the hassle of delivering mail in costume worth the while. Our job does matter. Take pride in what you do. Service is the most important part of USPS.

Union meetings are the second Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Jerry Martens, Branch 45

Staunton, Virginia

My dad used to tell me that the older he got, the faster time passed for him. I didn’t believe him when I was younger, but I now know he was a very wise man. I think the speed of time passage is magnified by the crazy pace at which we live today. Two weeks of overtime, activities with the kids, chores, meetings, scrolling social media and more passes in the blink of an eye.

How is this relevant to letter carriers and contract enforcement? Management is always searching for the easy win when we file grievances. Their favorite tactic lately? Timeliness. It seems like almost every arbitration or grievance I work on has a claim by management that the union failed to grieve within the timelines outlined in Article 15. They claim it regardless of reality. But if we are unprepared to defend against this arbitrability issue, our grievances can be killed before the merits are even heard.

Members, please notify your union rep by requesting time to speak with them as soon as you suspect a violation. At work and on the clock, if possible—stewards have personal lives, too. Help us help you! Union reps, dot your I’s, cross your T’s and include the documents demonstrating the proper timeline in the file. Undisputed facts signed by both parties can be invaluable. Help the advocates help you if the grievance goes to arbitration.

“Better three hours too soon than one minute late.” —W. Shakespeare

Speaking of time, I wish you all a peaceful and safe new year.

Solidarity!

Cindy Connors, Branch 513

Toledo, Ohio

It has been a difficult challenge for our grievance representative, processing an average of 50 grievances per week. And a fine job they have been doing, considering management’s refusal to settle hardly any grievances, creating even more work for everyone. Management’s tactics are one thing, but their attempt to go it alone with route inspections has been a complete debacle, especially at our Reynolds Corners Station.

Since it’s no longer a joint process, our only option is to grieve the results: the flawed data created. With the increased number of grievances and management’s intransigence, it’s going to be a while before anything is settled. Add to that the frustration caused by management’s delay and deny. Once again, if manage-

ment would just follow the rules, all of this could have been avoided. The longer they delay, the higher the cost.

And the delays don’t end there. I received a postcard from the Postal Service regarding the ship-by dates to hopefully get your gifts delivered by Dec. 25. The Priority Mail “service” suggested date was Dec. 19. Priority Mail now takes six days? For Express, the date was Dec. 21. What’s express about four days? Once again, take the “service” and run it into the ground.

Despite all of this, we’re trying to get into the season’s mood. With the arrival of cold weather, our party planners, Sam Yerg and Deb Pipes, along with the assistance of some elves, have turned our meeting hall into a tropical wonderland. Our tropical Christmas was held on the 7th. Everyone was asked to wear their best tropical outfit for a “best” contest. Hula skirts galore and a good time was had by all. Later in the month we will have our annual festivities at the “Lights Before Christmas” at the Toledo Zoo.

Onward and upward in the new year!

Ray Bricker, Branch 100

Tri-Valley, California

Have you ever played the game “Telephone”? The game basically goes like this: I tell the person next to me a sentence that only they can hear. They then have to tell the person next to them so only they can hear. It goes on and on until it comes back to me, and then I relay what the final sentence sounds like. By the time it reaches the original person, what you end up with is usually completely inaccurate, with perhaps a lot of the same phonetic sounds but the meaning completely changed.

The reason I bring up this game is because of the tentative agreement (TA) conversations being discussed by members of our branch. Talking heads have their own opinions and perceptions about the TA and why it should be voted down. Some of these carriers are followers and might not know how to research facts. And because of this, inaccurate information about the TA is being passed from one person to another like a virus.

Podcast warriors, social media gladiators and keyboard conquerors provided information to their respective followers. Some of the information may be accurate, or not; realistic, or not. And, like the game Telephone, the more people who are listening, the farther the message has to go, and the more distorted it may become. When discussing the TA with letter carriers at our branch general meetings and during my station visits, it’s amazing how the interpretation changes from person to person based on what they’ve heard. I also heard chatter that swing from “not entirely true” to “absolutely false,” and of course, conspiracy theories. I encourage everyone to vote on this TA; make an informative decision based on self-needs/facts. Don’t let anyone sway your vote in any direction.

James C. Perryman Jr., Branch 2902

Mutual Exchanges

CA: Burbank (6/15) to Fresno, Clovis, CA. Regular city carrier. Great work environment, strong local union, and good weather. Not far from amazing beaches. Both Sun Valley and Burbank in bidding cluster. Overtime available. Taron, 818-299-1763 or taron299@gmail.com.

TX: Denton (3/18) to East-Central IL. Dallas area. City carrier. Large, strong union. Great co-workers. Abbie, 907-251-0661 (text).

How to place a Mutual Exchange ad

The cost of Mutual Exchange ads is \$15 for up to 30 words and \$25 for 31-50 words per month. Ads must be received by the 5th of the month preceding the month in which the ad will appear (e.g., January's deadline is for the February publication). Mail ad with check (payable to NALC) to: Mutual Exchange Ads, Postal Record, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Ads are published for NALC members only. A branch officer or steward must endorse the ad to certify membership. Include your name, address and branch number. Begin each ad with your state abbreviation, city and seniority date.

Specific route information or mention of three-way transfers will not be published, nor any wording that offers cash or property to facilitate an exchange. Mutual exchanges must be approved by both postmasters involved. Seniority of carriers involved shall be governed by Article 41, Sec. 2E of the National Agreement. Carriers may not exchange assignments, since vacated positions must be posted for bids in accordance with local and national agreements.

Honor Roll

NALC recognizes its brothers and sisters for their long-term membership

NALC members who have completed 50 years of membership in NALC are awarded a Life Membership Gold Card that entitles them to all privileges of membership in NALC without payment of dues. To receive a gold card and 50-year lapel pin, the branch secretary must write to the NALC secretary-treasurer and request the award for the member. This is in accordance with Article 2, Section 5 (a) of the *NALC Constitution*.



Additionally, the national secretary-treasurer's office handles

branch requests for lapel pins. Accordingly, the secretary-treasurer's office can only provide suitable lapel pins when receiving proper notification by the branch secretary in the year when a member is to complete the following number of years as a member: 25 years, 30 years, 35 years, 40 years, 45 years, 50 years, 55 years, 60 years and 65 years. Special plaques are available for members who complete 70 years and 75 years. This is also per Article 2 of the *NALC Constitution*.



All requests must come from the branch secretary. Longtime members are encouraged to inform their branches when they reach a longevity benchmark.

Below is a list of those NALC members who have received an award in the past month:

70-year plaques

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Harry J. Kireakedes | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Henry B. Jones Jr. | Cleveland, OH | Br. 40 |

65-year pins

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Johnnie C. Gay | Hammond, IN | Br. 580 |
| John C. Hantz | Hammond, IN | Br. 580 |
| Lewis R. Hill | Hammond, IN | Br. 580 |
| George Wolotka | Hammond, IN | Br. 580 |

60-year pins

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Kenneth A. Taylor | Washington, DC | Br. 142 |
| Kenneth C. Maginot | Hammond, IN | Br. 580 |
| Herman A. Scott | Hannibal, MO | Br. 291 |
| Floyd P. Lennick | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Dominick R. Massaro | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| Frank Gullusci | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Robert B. Morton | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |

55-year pins

| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Cecil Diggs Jr. | New Haven, CT | Br. 19 |
| Beverly A. Horner | New Haven, CT | Br. 19 |
| Edward A. Jackowicz Jr. | New Haven, CT | Br. 19 |
| Bernard J. Kennedy | New Haven, CT | Br. 19 |
| Richard J. Laden Jr. | New Haven, CT | Br. 19 |
| James Burgos | Tampa, FL | Br. 599 |
| James D. Washington | Savannah, GA | Br. 578 |
| Albert D. Boaz | Decatur, IL | Br. 317 |
| John L. Childers | Paducah, KY | Br. 383 |
| Edgar L. Martin | Paducah, KY | Br. 383 |

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Bobby J. Shelby | Paducah, KY | Br. 383 |
| Delbert F. Allen | Hannibal, MO | Br. 291 |
| Donald W. Peuster | Hannibal, MO | Br. 291 |
| Charles E. Wade | Hannibal, MO | Br. 291 |
| Russell L. Gaines | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Gordon B. Garrett | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Alvin R. Grote Jr. | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| W. H. Harrison | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| W. L. Hinkle | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Samuel M. Hobson | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Charles F. Hollins Jr. | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Allen J. Hunt | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Claude S. Jones Jr. | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| John W. Kelly | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| Jerry W. Richardson | Kansas City, MO | Br. 30 |
| John L. Budge | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Cletus M. Emineth | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Morris B. Flemming | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Wilbur E. Ostwalt | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Robert S. Reiter | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Hans Treumann | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Randolph L. Werholz | Billings, MT | Br. 815 |
| Theodore H. Brendes | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| Peter N. Cianfrocco | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| R. N. Corabi | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| D. C. Luvera | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| Frank Pugliese Jr. | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| Angelo J. Scaccia | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| G. A. Sessa | Utica, NY | Br. 375 |
| James J. Amato | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Frederick L. Debarros | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Donald J. Divney | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| J. R. Jennette | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Paul P. Juliano | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |

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|-----------------------|------------------|---------|
| Odell Rodgers | Cleveland, OH | Br. 40 |
| Norman W. Rood III | Cleveland, OH | Br. 40 |
| Roosevelt Andrews Jr. | Steubenville, OH | Br. 164 |
| Boyce L. Nicholson | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |

50-year gold cards and pins

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|----------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Larry B. Dawson | Central IA Mgd. | Br. 352 |
| Robert J. Vivian | Grand Rapids, MI | Br. 56 |
| Craig S. Westrum | Albert Lea, MN | Br. 718 |
| George R. Bender Jr. | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Nicholas J. Colonna | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Christophe Del Plato | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Kendell Eccles | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Peter J. Fortini | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Larry M. Goldstein | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Michael F. Mal | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Guillermo A. Ramirez | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Mariano Roldan Jr. | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Michael Schwartz | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| John J. Scollo | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Frank Sorrentino | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Thomas G. Springman | Brooklyn, NY | Br. 41 |
| Joseph A. Maddi | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Joseph A. Maselli | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Philip F. Tavano | Westchester Mgd., NY | Br. 693 |
| Wendell L. Donelson | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |
| William A. Nesbitt | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |
| Christine D. Reed | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |
| Laferre Ryan | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |
| Sylvester L. Stamps | Memphis, TN | Br. 27 |
| David W. Baehler | Milwaukee, WI | Br. 2 |
| Ronald E. Flanagan | Milwaukee, WI | Br. 2 |



Install the free NALC Member App for your iPhone or Android smartphone

As technology increases our ability to communicate, NALC must stay ahead of the curve. We've now taken the next step with the NALC Member App for iPhone and Android smartphones. The app was developed with the needs of letter carriers in mind.

The app's features include:

- Workplace resources, including the National Agreement, *JCAM*, MRS and CCA resources
- Instantaneous NALC news with personalized push notifications and social media access
- Interactive Non-Scheduled Days calendar
- Much more
- Legislative tools, including bill tracker, individualized congressional representatives and PAC information

Go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "NALC Member App" to install for free

Help your NALC family affected by natural disasters

The **NALC Disaster Relief Foundation** provides hands-on relief for carriers affected by natural disasters, such as wildfires, hurricanes, floods and tornados. It receives donations to be used to assist regular NALC members affected by natural disasters.

NALC response teams throughout the country are activated to go to disaster locations and offer assistance to NALC members and their families who live in the same household. Basic supplies, including uniforms and food, are available for those who need assistance.

Financial support may be available depending on the availability of funding and qualifying criterias. Any regular member of NALC who has faced hardship as a result of a natural disaster will be able to apply for assistance.

Make a donation by sending a check or money order to:

**NALC Disaster Relief Foundation
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144**

The foundation is a 501(c)(3). Your contribution to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation may be eligible for a tax deduction. It is recommended you seek further advice from your tax advisor.



**NALC
Disaster
Relief
Foundation**