



# Step up

**N**ALC and the Postal Service have completed the 2005 updates to the *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*, after several months of discussions at the national level. We are now formatting, indexing and preparing the new book for distribution to the field. As with previous editions, the new *JCAM* will be mailed to each NALC branch, and to each USPS delivery unit for use by shop stewards and supervisors.

The 2005 *JCAM* will be printed as a completely new manual, rather than a transmittal letter with inserts. While there aren't many major changes or additions to the interpretive material, a brand-new printing was needed because of the many rewrites, typographical corrections, and grammatical and formatting changes.

#### Some of the more significant additions include:

Article 7: Language on the national prearbitration settlement regarding the use and designation of casuals from other crafts assigned to perform letter carrier duties;

Article 8: Clarification of PTR schedules, reference to the *ELM* limitations on PTF hours, calculating leave hours relative to the 12/60 hour limitations, and language on the national arbitration award regarding wash-up time;

Article 10: Language on 27 pay period leave years, reference to guidelines and procedures for Annual Leave Sharing, and language on the national arbitration award regarding nature of illness requests as well as on the FMLA second and third medical opinion process;

Article 12: Bidding rights of carriers designated to be excessed, and grievance activity regarding excessed carriers;

Article 15: Handling of grievances regarding proposed removals/decision letters, clarification on use of case file materials in arbitration, and the definition of precedent as established by a Step B decision;

Article 16: Reference to a national arbitration award on review of discipline;

Article 17: Clarification of representatives pursuant to section 17.2.D;

Article 21: Reference to materials regarding employees on active military duty who may be eligible for full USPS payment of life and health insurance premiums;

Article 25: Clarifications regarding pay and duration of higher level assignments;

Article 41: Language on the national arbitration award regarding route changes and Section 41.3.O, and 41.3.O bidding rights of carriers designated to be excessed. I will

describe some of these additions in future columns once the new *JCAM* is distributed.

#### As the new year approaches, I am reminded that in 2006

we will face another year of elections and crucial battles on Capitol Hill that could change the course of our jobs and our lives. There is one way that each and every NALC member can influence elections, the Congress, the Postal Service and our own futures: We can sign up to contribute to COLCPE.

NALC has more than 300,000 members, so our strength is in our numbers. As individual working people, we are not wealthy or powerful. Yet we can gather our voices, pool our money, and speak with a single, united and powerful voice on the national scene. That is the key to our power, and the very meaning of "union."

So how is it that only four percent of NALC members contribute to COLCPE? We honor these members in a special *Postal Record* edition each year—and they certainly have earned that honor. But where are the other 96 percent? We can all do the math: Some 200,000 active members, each giving just a dollar a week, would generate a million-dollar war chest every five weeks. That's how individual letter carriers can stand strong and united, and flex some serious political muscle. So please make it a priority to sign up for regular, automatic contributions before the end of the year. Step up.

#### We are currently in the Open Season for health benefits, and

members should consider taking this opportunity to enroll in the NALC Health Benefit Plan. This is our plan, where your claims are processed by union workers. The plan offers very comprehensive coverage at a reasonable cost. The more letter carriers who join the plan, the greater the opportunity to improve benefits and rates.

As I write, my friend and fellow resident officer Tom Young is preparing his final *Postal Record* column as the NALC Director of Health Benefits. Each resident officer brings to the table a unique combination of talents and puts them to work for the membership. Tom is a highly talented, tireless and respected NALC leader. He has contributed many years of knowledge, wisdom, integrity, experience, and humor to our union. It truly has been an honor and privilege to serve with him. I wish Tom a long and healthy retirement with his family, friends, and golf foursomes.

I wish all of you and your families a healthy and happy holiday season. 