



2009: Winding down, or is it just the start?

By action of the U.S. House and Senate and the signature of President Obama, federal workers who were hired after January 1984 are now entitled to receive service time credit for their unused sick leave upon retirement under Public Law 111-84. Any FERS employee retiring between now and January 2014 will receive a partial credit of 50 percent of their unused sick leave balance toward their annuity. Those retiring after January 1, 2014, will receive full service credit for unused sick leave.

There is no retroactivity allowance in this new provision, so those who have already retired under the FERS provision will receive no additional benefit. While not perfect in its passage, the bill is still a huge step toward the protection and improvement of the retirement benefits for FERS workers.

Also in the bill is a provision that allows recent retirees to temporarily return to the federal sector without an immediate offset to their Civil Service annuity. Under the provision, a retired federal annuitant can now return to federal employment and work part-time at a new or former position without losing part of their annuity.

There are hourly restrictions on this re-employment. During the first six months after retirement, there is a limit of 520 hours work, with subsequent limits of up to 1,040 hours in any 12-month period. After total re-employment of 3,120 hours, the annuitant will be subject to a pension offset. This re-employment provision is available for both FERS and CSRS retirees.

While COLCPE contributions continue to increase, it still baffles me that as of November 1, we only have 19,723 of our members (6.77 percent) contributing via automatic donations to the fund. Of this number, 15,694 are active workers and 4,029 are retirees who still recognize the need for supporting our Legislative Department.

With our recent 1.9 percent increase in the base pay for active workers, I find it hard to believe that those who are not contributing cannot now find the resources to join their fellow NALC members in providing for our legislative future. Recent success in fighting for passage of legislation that temporarily postpones the raid on USPS funds relating to "future" health benefit cost and the actions by Congress on FERS sick leave should show that we

can be effective if given the resources to fight for you.

Your name will not appear in the COLCPE issue in February unless you make a contribution before the end of 2009. Now is the time!

Hopefully, each member has received information regarding the Health Benefit Plan Open Season. If you do not have the NALC health plan, I urge you to compare and see why our plan is the best available. When I use my NALC health plan, I always ask the provider how we compare to other plans. It is always unanimous that our plan is one of the easiest plans to use and the response time to claims is best.

May I express condolences to the family and friends of the third NALC director of retired members, Brother Walt Couillard. He contributed much to the Retirement Department in his eight years as director of retired members (1986-1994). May he rest in peace.

In closing, your NALC Retirement Department (Ernestine Douglas, Vickie Bowman and myself) wish each of you an enjoyable holiday season.

So often in the past decades we found ourselves at odds continually over the goals and direction of our country. We sometimes seem to have lost our respect for our fellow countrymen and fail to recognize the blessings that come from being citizens of the greatest country that has existed on this planet.

May our differences be ones of debate and not hate. And may our goals be ones of inclusion not exclusion. The words of President John F. Kennedy should serve our country and our labor organization as a springboard for even greater things for our country: "So, let us not be blind to our differences, but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved." ✉

NALC Retirement Department
Toll-free number: 800-424-5186
Available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only
from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m.
(Eastern time)
This toll-free number is answered ONLY during these hours on the days indicated.

