

Can you afford some change?



**Ernest
Kirkland**

Recent notification to our retired members that, effective January 2014, the annuitants 1099-R tax statement will no longer be mailed has caused more than a small uproar with some of our retired members. The change notice requires that the retiree visit “Services Online” with a password to view and print out these documents.

While I do have a working knowledge of the process, I believe that it is wrong to require those retirees who have no such knowledge, no access to the Internet, nor even a desire to pay for it, to jump through these hoops. In fact, our membership includes retirees who retired

before the Internet was even in use in this country. We also have some members who retired *before* computers were even available to the general public. And while I applaud the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for its efforts to streamline and save money, these decisions should not be made in a vacuum by computer wizards who have no knowledge of whom they serve.

While my office has attempted to address this issue, it currently appears to fall on deaf (or dumb) ears. Since letter carriers are accustomed to fighting for justice and for their rights, I ask that each retiree who finds this blanket policy offensive do the following:

- **Write/call your representative and your senators and demand that this policy be revisited.** If you can get a group of fellow retirees to visit their local offices in regard to this topic, the effort will be even more effective.
- **Write to OPM to ask that you be allowed to “opt out” of this requirement because you have neither a computer nor Internet access to get your statements.** Its address is: Office of Personnel Management, Retirement Operations Center, P.O. Box 45, Boyers, PA 16017.

On the subject of retirees and their long history of fighting for their rights, I find it alarming that a much greater number than previous of our new retirees are electing to not carry their membership into retirement. If you are planning to retire, I would urge you to continue your membership by filling out a Form 1189 and giving it to your local branch or mailing it to the NALC Membership Department at 100 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Retirees’ dues are very minimal, and being able to keep up with what is happening in Washington alone is well worth the dues.

In addition, if you drop membership and then select the NALC Health Benefit Plan, you will have to pay associate membership dues, which are sometime three times higher than the retiree dues. Once your membership is canceled at retirement, you normally cannot be reinstated.

Each branch should make a personal contact with those retiring to urge them to continue their membership. And while the Membership Department will send recent retirees a form when it receives retirement notification, taking care of this locally at the time of retirement is a good idea.

“For our active members, I urge you to become actively involved with the politics that will be played out this year in Congress regarding your retirement benefits.”

For our active members, and especially those in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), I urge you to become actively involved with the politics that will be played out this year in Congress regarding your retirement benefits. There is a movement to “gut” the FERS retirement and to increase the cost of the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). This will be sold as a way to “balance” the budget. But what it will really do is make retirement an idea instead of a possibility for you or future workers. If you cannot afford to retire due to the severity of these cuts, then you really do not have a retirement plan.

If they try to sell it by “grandfathering” in the current workers so they won’t be affected, it is just a divide-and-conquer plan. If you give up the future workers for your own protection, you will be giving up your future, because after they kill the plan for future workers, they will come back after you. To allow this to happen would eliminate the protection for future city letter carriers that we just fought for with management in regard to a two-tier pay plan. It is time to get involved or to prepare to be run over.

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.*