



NALC

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Bulletin

Open Season 2015

NALC's Health Benefit Plan: Taking care of our own



When it comes to the NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP)—the Plan founded for and run by letter carriers—the numbers tell an impressive story:

- **1950:** The year NALC started its own independent Health Benefit Plan.
- **336:** The number of employees of the NALC Health Benefit Plan.
- **117,000-plus:** The number of members of the Plan. Including covered family members, the Plan protects the health of more than 224,000 people.
- **\$1.2 billion:** The value of claims processed last year.
- **766,089:** The amount of incoming calls from members, physicians and hospitals handled by the Plan's customer service representatives last year.
- **8,239,761:** The number of pieces mailed.

Those are only some of the numbers that tell the story of the HBP—numbers you should consider when choosing a health plan for you and your family. Letter carriers can make changes to their health care coverage during the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program Open Season, Nov. 9 through Dec. 14.

The HBP was created by letter carriers and is still run by letter carriers. It offers an unparalleled level of

personal service. Unlike many health insurance plans, NALC's HBP does not operate to make a profit—it focuses its energy on keeping members healthy.

Plan employees know the health and insurance system inside and out, and they use their experience to help you. The Health Benefit Plan's customer service staff members are employees, not contractors, who work at the Plan's headquarters in Ashburn, VA.

Take a few minutes to review the HBP's poster that accompanies this *NALC Bulletin*. And check out the article and special insert in the November edition of *The Postal Record*.

"Crunch the numbers," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Compare our plan to the others. We think you'll agree that the NALC Health Benefit Plan is the best health plan, and the best value, for you and your family."

Hellman said the Health Benefit Plan is always evolving to keep up with the latest medical knowledge and the needs of its members, based in part on input from letter carriers. "We listen to what letter carriers are saying about their health needs, and that shows each year," he said. "This is our Plan, and we never stop improving it."

In 2016, the NALC Health Benefit Plan's benefits will get even better. And comparing the Plan's benefits to other plans is simple. Just go to opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information.

Active letter carriers have four ways to enroll in the NALC Health Benefit Plan during Open Season: at liteblue.usps.gov, via The Blue Page (Intranet) at work, using Employee Self-Service Kiosks located at some USPS facilities or by phoning PostalEASE (877-477-3273, Option 1).

Annuitants and retirees can enroll by calling Employee Express at 800-332-9798, by going to OPM's Open Season website at retireefehb.opm.gov, or by submitting a Standard 2809 to your retirement office. You can get additional information at opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/enroll/#annuitants. If you submit your change by mail, the address is: OPM, Open Season Processing Center, P.O. Box 5000, Lawrence, KS 66046-0500.

"Take a good look at the numbers and the benefits," Rolando said, "and see why so many letter carriers and their families trust the only health benefit plan founded and run by letter carriers. It's why we say we're 'taking care of our own.'"

Detailed information on the NALC Health Benefit Plan can be found in the official 2016 brochure (RI 71-009) available for download at nalchbp.org. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the official brochure.

Building an NALC Veterans Group

NALC is made up of approximately 275,000 active and retired members, of which almost a quarter are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. As we all commemorate Veterans Day on Nov. 11, we remind ourselves that these veterans traded their military uniforms for letter carrier uniforms, and that they continue to serve their communities and this great nation.

In an effort to express the union's sense of gratitude for our veteran members' service, NALC President Fredric Rolando invites all military veteran members—active and retired, full time and part time—to join the NALC Veterans Group.

"The Veterans Group is intended to be something tangible and useful," Rolando said, "providing NALC members who are military veterans access to the information and tools specific to veterans' rights and benefits within the Postal Service."

The group seeks to provide to these particular members resources, rights information and a sense of camaraderie, he said.

Veterans Group members receive a pin as a special symbol of gratitude for their military service and their membership in the NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card included in the October issue of *The Postal Record* and return it to: NALC Veterans Group, National Association of Letter Carriers, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

You may also visit nalc.org/veterans to download a PDF version of the card.

Rolando asks all members to take a special moment on Veterans Day to remember the sacrifices made by our fellow members to serve, protect and defend the freedoms we hold dear.

NALC responds to flawed Brookings paper on USPS

A paper published in September by the Brookings Institution, a Washington, DC-based think tank, absurdly calls for Congress to partially privatize the U.S. Postal Service, under the assumption that, as First Class Mail volumes continue to decline, such a move would help the agency compete with private-sector competitors.

NALC President Fredric Rolando wrote a letter to the author of the paper, urging her to withdraw the paper, which he labeled as "deeply and irretrievably flawed."

"It largely misdiagnoses the major problems the Postal Service faces," he wrote, adding that the paper "fundamentally misunderstands the Postal Service's universal service obligation, which covers and includes both market-dominant services and competitive services. This makes the paper's chief recommendation—to break up the Postal Service in two—both illogical and unfeasible."

"Finally," Rolando wrote, "after proposing the break-up and partial privatization of the Postal Service, [the paper] fails to analyze and explore the implications such a proposal would have on the country, the U.S. economy and on the major stakeholders in the postal industry."

Since its publication, the paper has been quoted and referenced in a number of news stories—including in *The Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun*.

Rolando wrote a letter to the editor of *The Post* about the paper's article on the study.

"The article lacked any serious discussion of how the Brookings plan would work or whether it makes sense," he wrote. "(It doesn't.) What was the point of this article, beyond touting *The Post's* policy preferences?"

NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber was quoted in a separate Oct. 7 *Washington Post* story about reaction to the study.

"The conventional wisdom is that the Internet is killing the Postal Service," Sauber said. "I'm not denying that the Internet is having profound effects both positive and negative. But most of the loss is from the pre-funding [requirement] and the recession itself."

In *The Baltimore Sun's* story about the study, Sauber noted that USPS has reported an operating profit for the last two years and that the agency's \$5.5 billion net loss in 2014 was entirely the result of the 2006 congressional mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund its retiree health care costs decades into the future—a requirement placed on no other employer.

The chief of staff also said that UPS and FedEx now use USPS to deliver up to 30 to 40 percent of their packages for the "last mile."

And USPS spokeswoman Toni G. DeLancey told *The Sun* that separating and privatizing the agency's package delivery business "is poorly conceived at best. At worst, and aside from being politically and economically unrealistic, the proposal aims to shift an enormous financial burden onto taxpayers—which is unnecessary and unwanted in any policy context."

Penalty Overtime Exclusion

As referenced in Article 8, Sections 4 and 5, of the National Agreement between the NALC and the U.S. Postal Service, the December period (during which penalty overtime regulations are not applicable) consists of four consecutive service weeks.

This year, the December period begins Pay Period 26-15, Week 2 (Dec. 5, 2015) and ends Pay Period 01-16, Week 1 (Jan. 1, 2016).

Study: Millions depend on trillion-dollar postal industry

The Envelope Manufacturers Association's (EMA) Institute of Postal Studies recently released its latest "Mailing Industry Job Study."

The study found that the U.S. Postal Service remains at the center of the \$1.4 trillion industry that provides 7.5 million jobs—6 percent of all jobs in the United States. And 73 percent of these jobs are dependent on a thriving delivery infrastructure. The job tally includes manufacturing and distribution, as well as mail management and actual mail delivery.

Further, as the economy has continued to improve following the Great Recession, sales revenue associated with the delivery of the mail climbed to \$158.8 billion in 2014, a 9.5 percent increase over figures from just three years before.

Visit the "Latest News and Updates" page at nalc.org to learn more.

Mailing Industry is Critical to the Economy

The U.S. mailing industry contributes to the economy with:

\$1.4 T in sales revenue
and
4.6% of U.S. Total Output

Source: Envelope Manufacturers Association's Institute of Postal Studies' "Mailing Industry Job Study."

Congratulations!

Customer Connect brings in \$2 billion

Because of the diligence and dedication of city letter carriers, NALC and the U.S. Postal Service are celebrating \$2 billion in estimated revenue earnings generated by the Customer Connect program.

"When the Customer Connect program was deployed 12 years ago," NALC President Fredric Rolando said, "its purpose was to call on letter carriers, through our valuable relationships with our customers, to generate new business while providing them with a better mailing value."

Over the last decade, the Customer Connect program has become a successful generator of new customers and revenue for USPS. The power of individual letter carriers is a key element in growing package volume and revenue.

"And as letter carriers," Rolando added, "we are a trusted and integral part of our customers' day—so there is no group better than letter carriers to communicate with the more than 15 million potential new customers."

On Nov. 17, NALC and USPS will observe National Customer Connect Day and will officially announce reaching the \$2 billion milestone. (Please note that this is a change from the Nov. 10 date reported in the November *Postal Record*.)



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