

National Agreement ratification ballots mailed

Beginning on Jan. 11, every active letter carrier eligible to vote in the contract ratification election was mailed a copy of the proposed 2019-2023 National Agreement between NALC and USPS.

Included in the mailing is a letter from NALC President Fredric Rolando, a summary of the contract's provisions, a ballot and secrecy envelope, a return envelope and instructions for casting a vote. For a ballot to be counted, it must be received by noon on Feb. 16.

Eligibility to vote is defined by Article 16, Section 1 of the NALC Constitution, which provides:

"Ratification shall be a mail referendum vote, and the ballot shall be mailed only to regular members of the NALC, as defined in Article 2, Section 1(a), excluding retirees, OWCP departees, and non-letter carrier regular members, as shown by the records of the National Secretary-Treasurer as of ninety (90) days prior to the date that the proposed agreement is reached."

The proposed agreement was reached on Nov. 25, 2020. 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 the arbitration board are conclusive and binding upon the parties.

President Rolando has appointed a Ballot Committee to oversee the mailing, collection, and tabulation of the ballots. Its members are:

- Delano Wilson (chairman) of Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611
- Homer Christian of Huntington, WV Branch 359
- Ted Lee of Pittsburgh, PA Branch 84
- Chareke Batten of Tidewater Virginia Branch 247
- Sylvin Stevens of Charlotte, NC Branch 545
- Rod Holub of Manhattan, KS Branch 1018
- Andy Weiner of Jamaica, NY Branch 562
- Mike O'Neill of New Jersey Merged Branch 38
- Antonia Shields of Birmingham, AL Branch 530
- Joel Malkush of Saint Paul, MN Branch 28
- Paul Roznowski of Royal Oak, MI Branch 3126
- Ethel Ford of Houston, TX Branch 283
- David Norton of Portland, OR Branch 82
- Barbara Stickler of Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100
- Rene Eberhardt of Casper, WY Branch 1681

Didn't receive a ratification ballot?

If you are eligible to vote on the proposed agreement and have not received a ballot by Jan. 25, call NALC Headquarters at 202-662-2836 (9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Eastern Time) to request a replacement ballot. A replacement ballot will be mailed after your eligibility is verified.

Letter carriers in Phase 1b of COVID-19 vaccinations

Last month, COVID-19 vaccines began being distributed throughout the country. However, due to the limited supply of the vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provided recommendations to federal, state and local governments about who should be prioritized to be vaccinated.

Health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities were slotted to receive the first vaccines. Those individuals are in what the CDC is calling "Phase 1a" of initial distributions. The CDC has recommended that all Postal Service employees be included in the next round of distributions, or "Phase 1b." This phase also will include front-line essential workers such as firefighters, police officers, grocery store workers and public transit workers.

Currently, the specific dates when Phase 1b will be implemented is unknown, and undoubtedly will differ from city to city and state to state throughout the country. Discussions between NALC and the Postal Service regarding the distribution of the vaccine to letter carriers are ongoing. Once NALC is advised of the distribution schedule, we will communicate it to you so that you can take the necessary steps to obtain the vaccine.

If you have questions about the vaccines, you should consult with your doctor or health care professional. The CDC website also contains information that may be helpful.

COVID-19 relief and recovery update

The 117th Congress convened on Jan. 3, and while it will be spending much of January configuring operations, leadership, committee assignments and priorities for this Congress, it also will remain responsible for responding to the needs of Americans, as COVID-19 cases spike and relief and recovery needs remain pressing.

Prior to adjourning the lame-duck session of Congress just days before Christmas, lawmakers passed a \$2.3 trillion combined omnibus/relief package that included \$900 billion for COVID-19 relief and \$1.4 trillion to keep the government funded until Sept. 30, 2021. The deal came together after months of failed negotiations between the leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

House Democratic leaders previously had called for a comprehensive \$3.4 trillion deal in additional relief funding, while Senate Republican leaders failed to advance two packages in the \$600 billion to \$900 billion range.

In the end, it was the efforts of a bipartisan group of senators, prompted to act by the House Problem Solvers Caucus (a group whose influence has risen in Congress with its ability to identify areas of commonality and elevate legislation on those issues) that led to the deal. In fact, the Problem Solvers Caucus was instrumental in passage of the Postal Service Fairness Act (H.R. 2382), which moved to repeal USPS's mandate to pre-fund retiree health benefits. That bill was passed in the House earlier this year but was not taken up in the Senate.

Regarding the Postal Service, the deal reached days before Christmas—the Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act of 2020—included language converting the \$10 billion loan previously approved in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Public Law 116-136) into a grant. That is a far cry from the \$25 billion public-service appropriation NALC supported to help the Postal Service cover COVID-19 expenses. On the appropriations front, the government funding measure preserved six-day language for mail delivery.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 deal failed to include hazard pay for letter carriers and other front-line employees. The deal also failed to include an extension of paid Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave provisions for employees whose school or child care is closed due to COVID-19, or the mandate for emergency paid sick leave, which provided up to 80 hours of paid leave for COVID-19-related absences. Both provisions went into effect in April under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) but expired on Dec. 31, 2020. Instead, lawmakers included a tax credit for employers who choose to extend emergency paid sick leave, thus ending the mandate.

"Members of Congress will need to step up to the plate in the next Congress for letter carriers and the Postal Service," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "NALC remains steadfast in ensuring that letter carriers and the network are protected, and we expect the new administration and Congress to do the same as we remain on the front lines of this pandemic."

COVID-19-related MOUs extended until March 26

By joint agreement (M-01932 in the NALC Materials Reference System), several COVID-19-related memorandums of understanding have been further extended through March 26. These memorandums include temporary expanded sick leave for dependent care (M-01910); temporary additional paid leave for city carrier assistants, or CCAs (M-01911); temporary use of the 7:01 rule (M-01913); temporary workplace changes to promote social distancing (M-01915); and temporary use of temporary carrier assistants, or TCAs (M-01916).

NALC and the Postal Service also agreed to another temporary time limit extension on Step B and arbitration appeals (M-01933), and an agreement giving local parties the ability to develop a sign-up process for full-time employees who previously did not, or could not, place their names on either the overtime desired list or work assignment list (M-01934). Both of these agreements will expire on March 26 as well.

Also extended through March 26 is a USPS memorandum (M-01914) that instructs managers and supervisors to allow liberal changes of schedule to accommodate employees who are dealing with child care issues related to the pandemic. The memorandum also provides for liberal sick leave usage for employees who are sick, and liberal annual leave and leave without pay (LWOP) to the extent operationally feasible, treats COVID-19-related leave as scheduled (as opposed to unscheduled) leave, and directs that leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons during this time not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule.

Each of the MOUs and the USPS directive can be found in NALC's Materials Reference System at nalc.org/mrs.

National Association of Letter Carriers

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Fredric V. Rolando, President

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Ratification ballot deadline pushed back until March 1

Beginning on Jan. 11, every active letter carrier eligible to vote in the contract ratification election was mailed a copy of the proposed 2019-2023 National Agreement between NALC and USPS. Mailing of ballots was completed on Ian. 20. Included in the mailing is a letter from NALC President Fredric Rolando, a summary of the contract's provisions, a ballot and secrecy envelope, a return envelope and instructions for casting a vote.

The original deadline for a ballot to be received and counted was Feb. 16. Due to issues with receiving ballots in several locations, this deadline has been extended to March 1.

NALC encourages all members to mail in ballots as soon as possible after receiving them. If you are eligible to vote on the proposed agreement and have not received a ballot by Feb. 2, call NALC Headquarters at 202-662-2836 (9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Eastern Time) no later than Feb. 5 to request a replacement ballot. A replacement ballot will be mailed after your eligibility is verified.

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Ratification update

On March 1, the Ballot Committee observed the receipt and the beginning of tabulating the ratification ballots for the proposed 2019-2023 National Agreement between NALC and USPS. The original deadline for a ballot to be received and counted was Feb. 16, but due to issues with receiving ballots in several locations, this deadline was extended to March 1.

Mosaic, a marketing and printing company in Cheverly, MD, is performing the tabulation, with the NALC Ballot Committee monitoring and observing the operation. Results will be posted on nalc.org and distributed through the NALC Member App when available.

Postal reform hearing held in House

On Feb. 24, the House Committee on Oversight and Reform (COR) held a hearing to discuss postal reform efforts in the 117th Congress. The hearing was also an opportunity for members of Congress to question witnesses on a variety of topics, including recent service disruptions, the pandemic and its impact on the workforce, concerns regarding the quality of Postal Service leadership, and the USPS's yet-to-be-announced 10-year business plan, which has been under development for months.

Witnesses testifying at the hearing included USPS Board of Governors (BOG) Chairman Ron Bloom, USPS Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, USPS Inspector General Tammy Whitcomb, American Postal Workers Union (APWU) President Mark Dimondstein, Quad Graphics President/CEO Joel Quadracci and American Enterprise Institute Resident Scholar Kevin Kosar.

On the issue of postal reform, a "discussion draft" of a bill was made public just before the hearing. It includes adoption of the USPS Fairness Act (H.R. 695), which would repeal the mandate to pre-fund retiree health benefits, and a proposal to reform postal employee health insurance coverage under the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program to integrate it on prospective basis with the Medicare program, thereby slashing health care premiums for the Postal Service, its employees and its annuitants, and reducing the burden on the postal Retiree Health Fund. In addition, to address ongoing service quality issues, the draft would impose new transparency requirements to improve reporting on service performance and require progress reports to Congress on efforts to improve service.

The hearing was tense at times, with pointed questions and comments directed at both DeJoy and Bloom regarding operational changes and service disruptions that have continued since last summer. However, committee members also focused on the need to finally repeal the mandate to pre-fund retiree health benefits as part of a broader reform measure. The inclusion of this repeal would be a major victory for NALC. As letter carriers recall, the USPS Fairness Act passed the House with a strong bipartisan majority last year, paving the way for its inclusion in this year's postal reform efforts.

Over the course of the hearing, the discussion over the basic elements of a reform bill were largely positive and bipartisan, with COR Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY) committing to support the underlying elements of the bill while citing the need for additional structural and cost-cutting reforms. In addition, each witness expressed general support of the core provisions of the discussion draft.

The discussion draft is expected to be fine-tuned in the coming weeks prior to introduction, and NALC is working directly with the committee to ensure that our feedback is incorporated prior to its formal introduction.

House passes American Recovery Act

At the end of February, the House of Representatives passed the American Recovery Act (H.R. 1319) by a vote of 219-212, with two Democrats-Reps. Jared Golden (ME) and Kurt Schraeder (OR)-and all Republicans opposing. The legislation, which is under Senate consideration, is expected to be the fifth recovery package to reach the president's desk.

The \$1.9 trillion package embodies President Biden's "American Rescue Plan," announced on Jan. 20, which outlined his immediate COVID-19 relief priorities.

Most notably for letter carriers, the bill provides paid sick and family medical leave for federal employees and postal employees until Sept. 30, and establishes a fund to pay for the leave. The fund provides for 600 hours of paid leave for each full-time employee, or a proportional equivalent for part-time employees at a capped rate of \$35 per hour and no more than \$1,400 a week. As letter carriers will recall, the Families First COVID-19 Relief Act (FFCRA) provided letter carriers with paid emergency sick leave, but that program expired at the end of December and was limited to emergency COVID-19 leave. Other provisions in the measure include direct payments of \$1,400 per person to individuals making under \$75,000 and couples making under \$150,000, plus \$1,400 per child; child tax credits of \$3,000 for kids between the ages of 6 and 17 and \$3,600 for children under age 6; additional federal unemployment insurance benefits of \$400 per month through September; an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour, phased in between now and 2025; emergency funding to preserve state and local government public services; money for additional testing, treatment and personal protective equipment and supplies; renter and homeowner assistance; and financial assistance to support virtual learning and to help schools reopen.

NALC priority legislation reintroduced in 117th Congress

Congress has wasted no time in introducing NALC priority legislation. Below are important pieces of legislation that NALC members can immediately contact their members of Congress about to co-sponsor. These bills are crucial markers that help steer the conversation as Congress tackles postal reform efforts. Strong support sends a message to lawmakers and the White House of what is most significant.

USPS Fairness Act

The USPS Fairness Act was reintroduced in the House (H.R. 695) and Senate (S. 145). Both bills would repeal the mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund decades' worth of health benefits for its future retirees, enacted through the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) of 2006.

In the House, the bill was reintroduced by House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Rep. Tom Reed (R-NY), House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), and Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Collin Allred (D-TX), along with 219 bipartisan original co-sponsors. Exceeding 218 cosponsors demonstrates that a majority of the House supports the measure, making it more likely to be considered on the House floor. As letter carriers recall, the USPS Fairness Act passed last Congress by a vote of 309-106.

In the Senate, the bill was reintroduced by Sens. Steve Daines (R-MT) and Brian Schatz (D-HI).

The pre-funding mandate has cost an average of \$5.2 billion annually since 2007 and is responsible for 84 percent of USPS losses over the last 14 years. In the last Congress, just as momentum was building following the House vote, the COVID-19 pandemic took precedence over other priorities and Senate leadership refused to act on the bill. Fortunately, with new Senate leadership and a strong desire to address this mandate, coupled with support for repeal from the new administration and the Postal Service, the landscape is favorable for finally repealing the mandate.

"We appreciate the leadership of the members in the House and Senate to bring the USPS Fairness Act back to the forefront of its legislative agenda," President Rolando said. "Eliminating this mandate is critical to our success on postal reform efforts. NALC remains committed to working with Congress on all options that can bring financial stability to this agency so that we can continue to serve the public."

Six-day mail delivery House resolution

Reps. Sam Graves (R-MO) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA) have reintroduced a resolution to preserve six-day mail delivery as House Resolution 114 (H. Res. 114).

The resolution is identical to previous versions that have been introduced at the beginning of every Congress since 2009, calling on Congress to "take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its 6-day mail delivery service."

The resolution has continued to achieve a bipartisan majority of support in the House, demonstrating the overwhelming support for maintaining six-day delivery. Over the years, lawmakers have pushed back against attempts to reduce six-day delivery, citing the importance of the network delivering seven days a week. In fact, each year, congressional appropriators include language protecting six-day mail delivery in its annual appropriations bills, signaling the tremendous support for maintaining the service.

Door delivery House resolution

House Resolution 109 (H. Res. 109), which calls on Congress to "take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all businesses and residential customers," has been reintroduced in the 117th Congress.

The bipartisan resolution is identical to previous versions of the resolution and is led by Reps. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) and David Joyce (R-OH), who took over leadership of the resolution following the retirement of Reps. Susan Davis (D-CA) and Peter King (R-NY) last Congress.

In each Congress, the measure has consistently received overwhelming bipartisan support, demonstrating the importance of retaining door service for communities who currently have it.

Anti-postal privatization House resolution

Reps. Stephen Lynch (D-MA) and Rodney Davis (R-IL) reintroduced their resolution calling on the House to take "all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the Federal Government and is not subject to privatization."

The resolution, H. Res. 47, is identical to those introduced over the last two Congresses, both of which exceeded a bipartisan majority of support.

As letter carriers may recall, the resolution's introduction was in direct response to the former administration's government reorganization and restructure plan, "Delivery Government Solutions in the 21st Century," through the Office of Management and Budget. The report, which was deemed dead on arrival on Capitol Hill, took aim at numerous federal agencies, including calls to privatize the Postal Service. The report was followed up by a White House Postal Task Force report, which highlighted internationally privatized postal systems.

President Biden has signaled that postal privatization will have no place in the new administration. In response to his views on privatization of the Postal Service, then-candidate Biden said: "USPS workers are the eyes and ears of the community and are often on the first line of defense for rural and disenfranchised communities. Postal service [is] provided to everyone and every house, regardless of geography, income, race, religion, or sexual orientation and we must honor and defend the USPS's Universal Service Obligation as a core belief of our great nation. As a valuable public service that does not use taxpayer dollars for operating expenses, USPS will be defended from all attempts at privatization when I am president."

A companion bill will need to pass in the Senate, with any differences hammered out before the bill can go to the president's desk to be signed.

USPS awards contract for the Next **Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV)**



On Feb. 23, NALC received notification that the Postal Service has awarded a 10-year contract to Oshkosh Defense to manufacture the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV).

Under the initial contract, Oshkosh Defense, based in Oshkosh, WI, will finalize the production design of the NGDV—a purpose-built, righthand drive vehicle for mail and package delivery. The NGDVs will include fuel-efficient gas engines or gas-electric hybrid powertrains, air conditioning, 360-degree cameras, advanced braking and traction control, air bags, and a front- and rear-collision avoidance system that includes visual and audio warnings. The vehicles will also have increased cargo capacity to better accommodate higher parcel volumes.

The purpose of the NGDV is to replace the aging fleet of Long Life Vehicles (LLVs) and to expand the current delivery fleet. The Postal Service anticipates that Oshkosh will produce between 50,000 and 165,000 NGDVs under the initial contract. However, the Postal Service will have the ability to order more vehicles during the 10-year contract period. Based on the anticipated 18-month timeline communicated to NALC, the first NGDVs will be deployed in the summer of 2023. To bridge the gap between today and the deployment of the NGDV, the Postal Service has acquired commercial off-the-shelf vehicles, such as the right-hand drive Mercedes Metris and the Dodge ProMaster, to supplement the delivery fleet.

For more information on the NGDV contract and letter carriers' involvement with the design and testing, go to nalc.org.

White House announces postal Board of Governors nominations

On feb. 24, the White House issued a press release announcing its plans to nominate Amber McReynolds, Ron Stroman and Anton Hajjaar to the postal Board of Governors. Currently, there are three vacancies on the board with terms that expire in 2021, 2023 and 2026. Once the White House officially sends the nominations to the Senate, we will know which terms each nominee will fill.

Ron Stroman recently served as the former deputy postmaster general and chief government relations officer for the United States Postal Service. He retired in 2020. Prior to joining USPS, Stroman worked on Capitol Hill, serving on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, as well as the House Judiciary Committee. In addition, Stroman also served within the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. He received his bachelor's degree from Manhattan College and his Juris Doctor from Rutgers University. Stroman also recently served as the head of the Postal Service Agency Review Team with NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber.

Amber McReynolds is one of the country's leading experts on election administration and policy and co-author of the book When Women Vote. She is the CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute and Coalition and is the former director of elections for Denver, CO, where she developed the nation's most sophisticated vote-by-mail system. She has proven that designing pro-voter policies and voter-centric processes, as well as implementing technical innovations, will improve representation for all voters. She received her bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana and her master's degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Anton Hajjaar is the former general counsel of the American Postal Workers Union. Hajjar's experience includes pro bono employment discrimination, including for Arab and Muslim Americans after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. He continues to advise the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. He currently serves on the Ameri can Law Institute's governing board. He received his bachelor's degree from Fordham University and his Juris Doctor from Tulane University Law School.

Service standards House resolution

Reps. David McKinley (R-WV) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) have reintroduced House Resolution 119 (H. Res. 119), expressing the sense of the House that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to restore the service standards that were in effect as of July 1, 2012.

Over the last several years, the Postal Service has proposed and implemented service standard reductions resulting in the elimination of overnight mail delivery, delayed mail processing due to the closure and consolidation of hundreds of processing plants, and reduced hours at thousands of post offices.

Social Security Fairness Act

Reps. Rodney Davis (R-IL) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) have reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act of 2021 (H.R. 82), which would repeal the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) titles of the Social Security Act.

Under current law, inclusion of the WEP and GPO in Social Security law have resulted in a benefits formula that significantly disadvantages some categories of federal employees who have a government pension, resulting in decreased or eliminated Social Security benefits.

WEP affects Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees by reducing earned Social Security benefits. WEP also reduces the Social Security benefits of Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees who also receive a public pension from some other job not covered by Social Security. In addition, WEP affects employees who move from a job in which they earn Social Security to a job where they do not earn the Social Security benefit.

GPO affects CSRS employees and spousal benefits of people who work as federal, state or local government employees if the job is not covered by Social Security. GPO currently reduces by two-thirds the benefit received by surviving spouses who also collect a government pension. H.R. 82 would eliminate both WEP and GPO from the Social Security Act.

Despite consistent bipartisan support, unfortunately, efforts to see this legislation pass into law have been unsuccessful due to the price tag. Nonetheless, NALC will continue to support this important legislation.



Get paid to stay healthy

Yes, you read that correctly. You can earn monetary rewards, up to \$50 each, by participating in several wellness incentive programs, by having an annual preventive screening or immunization, or by completing your Health Assessment. The money you earn can be used

to purchase eligible medical expenses not covered by your insurance. All members and dependents of the NALC Health Benefit Plan who are 18 years of age and older are eligible to participate. Visit the HBP website, nalchbp.org, for complete details and start earning your wellness incentives today!

Virtual modified Branch Officers Training offered

On Feb. 28 and March 1, NALC held two sessions of modified Branch Officers Training through a virtual Webex portal. NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine has announced that two more sessions on several timely topics also will be held virtually on March 7 and March 14.

Branch presidents may register branch officers for the training through the branch president's Members Only page. The registration directions are below. To allow for multiple branches to participate, registration will be limited to two officers per branch per session.

The following sessions are included in the training:

- DOL Reporting—This session reviews the history of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) and how it affects the activities of unions and union officers. Participants will learn about each title of the LMRDA and the reporting requirements under the law. (Length: 2 hours)
- Preparing LM-3—This session covers completing the annual LM-3, which is required to be filed by branches with total annual receipts of at least \$10,000 but less than \$250,000. An LM-4 is filed by branches with annual financial receipts of less than \$10,000. Officers that file an LM-4 would also benefit from this session. (Length: 2 hours)

Preparing 990s—This session covers completing the required annual Internal Revenue Service filing. (Length: 1 hour)

"NALC appreciates the White House prioritizing these vacancies and looks forward to working with the Senate to move their nominations as soon as possible," said NALC President Rolando. "NALC urges the White House and Senate to also re-nominate Ron Bloom, who was recently named chairman of the Board of Governors and whose term expired in December." Bloom continues to serve during a one-year holdover year permitted under the law.

NALC March Branch Challenge for MDA now underway

With the COVID-19 pandemic making it difficult for branches to hold MDA fundraisers in support of programs such as summer camps and medical research, NALC Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson issued a branch Deliver the Cure challenge for March. She asked branches to create a virtual donation page to support NALC's 2021 campaign for MDA, and called on every letter carrier to give at least \$5 to MDA through his or her branch's donation page.

It's easy to create a fundraising page by going to mda.donordrive.com/event/nalc2021 and clicking "create a page." Donations are tracked by branch, with all fundraisers listed on the page.

Here are other parts of the 2021 MDA campaign:

MDA Virtual Walk—Aug. 7

mda.donordrive.com/team/TEAMNALCVIRTUALWALK

Join Team NALC for the 2021 Tough Mudder 5K

mda.donordrive.com/participant/TEAMNALCToughMudder

NALC MDA gift bags on sale for \$100 each

mda.donordrive.com/participant/nalcmdagiftbags

NALC-MDA poker chips on sale for \$2 each

mda.donordrive.com/participant/NALC-MDAPokerChips

"I look forward to seeing the different ways, including online donor campaigns, that our branches devise to keep resources flowing to MDA in 2021 and to support its vital efforts," Vela Davidson said.

Checks and offline gifts received in March can count toward the NALC Branch Challenge for MDA. Send in donations using the NALC Donation Allocation Form on nalc.org/mda to MDA, 161 N. Clark St., Suite 3550, Chicago, IL 60601.

- Membership & Dues/You've Just Been Elected...Now What?—This session guides branch officers through membership issues that they deal with daily, how to read a dues roster, and focuses on helping officers learn more about branch operations. (Length: 3 hours)

To access the registration option, branch presidents can go to the NALC website at nalc.org and log on to the Members Only portal. Once logged on to the Members Only portal, click the "Meetings Registration" button, which will display a list of upcoming meetings. From there, presidents can register a member by entering their last name in the search box and selecting the correct member from the drop-down list. A member can also be removed from the "Registry" list by checking the box under the delete column next to the corresponding member. Branch presidents will not be able to register more than the maximum number of attendees per branch or exceed the maximum number of attendees for that session. The maximum number of registrants per branch and for the session, as well as the registered-to-date counts, are displayed on the registration screen.

Training materials and other pertinent information may be supplied for each session in the form of PDFs. Access to these documents is available during the registration process. These documents will also be available to registrants on their Members Only page. The documents can be printed, copied and saved.

When a registered member wants to access training materials, view topics or join a meeting, they log on to the Members Only portal. Once logged in, the member will press the "Meetings" button, which will display a list of those meetings the member is registered to attend. For each meeting, there will be three buttons: the "Documents" button will give the member access to the training materials; the "Topics" button will give the member access to a list of topics (if any); and the "Join" button.

The "Join" button will appear 10 minutes prior to the start time on the day of the meeting. If you log into the Members Only portal sooner than 10 minutes prior to the start of the meeting, you will need to exit to the home page and re-enter to access the "Join" button. Once you click "Join," you will be taken to a Webex portal titled "Starting your meeting..." Scroll down to select "Join from your browser." When joining, the member will be prompted to enter their name and email address to attend the meeting. Proceed by selecting the "Next" button, followed by the "Join Meeting" button. All class schedules are on Eastern Time.

National Association of Letter Carriers

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Number 21-04 March 11, 2021 Augusta and a second second

Membership ratifies new NALC-USPS collective-bargaining agreement

The active membership of the National Association of Letter Carriers has overwhelmingly ratified the tentative 2019-2023 National Agreement with the United States Postal Service. NALC has officially notified USPS of the March 8 ratification date. More than 94 percent of participating eligible members voted to accept the tentative agreement that was announced on Nov. 25. The vote to ratify was 60,111 to accept the agreement versus 3,341 to reject it, as reported by NALC Ballot Committee Chairman Delano Wilson of Silver Spring, MD Branch 2611. The 15-member Ballot Committee monitored and observed the dispatch, receipt and tabulation of the ratification ballots conducted by an independent company, MOSAIC of Cheverly, MD.

The breakdown of the vote by NALC's 15 regions is below.

REGION	YES	NO
Region 1	7,681	343
Region 2	2,988	209
Region 3	3,148	206
Region 4	3,026	137
Region 5	2,859	146
Region 6	4,041	232
Region 7	3,003	168
Region 8	2,431	82
Region 9	6,779	243
Region 10	3,754	116
Region 11	4,569	256
Region 12	3,514	342
Region 13	2,418	112
Region 14	4,290	396
Region 15	5,610	353
Total	60,111	3,341



Information on back pay and the implementation of the new contract will be released as soon as possible.

The new contract covers a 44-month term, from Sept. 20, 2019, to May 20, 2023.

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Congress takes up postal reform

Following months of negotiations during a period of intense public scrutiny of the U.S. Postal Service, House and Senate lawmakers have introduced the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076 and S. 1720). The bipartisan legislation encompasses an agreement made between House Committee on Oversight and Reform (COR) Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY) and Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC) Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH), who focused on essential provisions of consensus, setting aside matters that could undermine the bill's prospects.

The near-identical legislation addresses two of NALC's top priorities:

- The repeal of the mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund decades' worth of health benefits for its future retirees, which was enacted through the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006, embracing the bipartisan USPS Fairness Act (H.R. 695 and S. 145).
- A reform of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program to maximize participation in Medicare once active postal employees (as of Jan. 1, 2023) retire and reach age 65. Annuitants as of Jan. 1, 2023, will be given the choice of whether to remain in the existing FEHB system or participate in the postal version of the program that requires enrollment in Medicare Parts A and B, and retirees over the age of 65 who have chosen not to enroll in Medicare Part B will be given a one-time opportunity to do so with no late-enrollment penalty. Annuitants who elect to remain in the existing FEHB will not be required to enroll in Medicare. NALC also successfully lobbied to ensure exceptions to the requirement to enroll in Medicare for those covered under other insurance arrangements (such as the Veterans Affairs) and for those who live in a place where there are not Medicare-participating providers.

"NALC has worked for years to educate members of Congress on the importance of having postal reform legislation that repeals the pre-funding mandate and coordinates the proper integration into Medicare for our members," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "We have significant work to do, but NALC's influence and advocacy on these issues is the reason they were included in this vital legislation. This influence is made possible only by the hard work of NALC's network of letter carrier activists."

H.R. 3076 and S. 1720 also include language that requires the Postal Service to maintain an "integrated" network of both mail and packages six days a week. If this bill becomes law, USPS will be required to maintain mail delivery six days a week. Since 1983, the mandate to deliver mail six days a week has required yearly renewal in the appropriations process. These bills would eliminate the need for the annual fight to maintain this mandate.

In addition, the bills require the Postal Service to provide semiannual reports to Congress on the implementation of its 10-year strategic plan; provides for a public dashboard using nationwide delivery metrics to track delivery performance; directs the Postal Service to use the most efficient means to transport mail, likely moving from air to ground; mandates a Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) review of competitive and non-competitive products and a study of nationwide processing efficiency of flats (magazines and catalogs); provides the PRC with independent budget authority through the Postal Fund, preventing it from being directly affected by sequestration/shutdowns; provides a special postage discount for newspapers; and consolidates the Postal Service's and the PRC's Inspectors General into a single office.

While the bills have bipartisan support, that in itself will not be enough to see the bill through to the president's desk. "For letter carriers, the hard work really begins now," NALC President Rolando said. "Bipartisanship alone is not enough anymore. In today's climate, resolution of issues and good government policy are clouded by political tension and narrow margins in both the House and Senate, as well as the politicization of the Postal Service in both Congress and the public. We must overcome all of these obstacles to see postal reform legislation enacted into law."

As the bill progresses in the House and Senate, NALC will need the full engagement of letter carriers to help educate members of Congress on how this legislation will protect employees and our essential network. Keep an eye out for more information in the Government Affairs section of nalc.org and on the NALC Member App. Members are encouraged to install the app on their smartphones so that NALC can communicate with you when legislation is released and when it moves in the halls of Congress.

Explanation of the health care provisions of H.R. 3076/S. 1720

Task force created in new contract off to a great start

In the recently ratified 2019-2023 National Agreement, the parties agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force that was established for the purpose of jointly seeking methods to improve the cultural and operational environment in city delivery offices. Within the MOU, NALC and USPS reconfirm their commitment to modernizing delivery methods and processes to ensure that the Postal Service remains the provider of choice for our customers and that the parties continue their joint objective of creating an improved work environment for all employees.

Serving on the task force are NALC President Fredric Rolando, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe, Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson, Special Executive Assistant to the President Tim McKay and Assistant to the President for City Delivery Michelle McQuality.

For the term of the 2019-2023 National Agreement, the City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force will, at a minimum, jointly explore, develop and test new work methods and concepts related to:

- Establishment of a positive work environment/culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- Efficiency and use of space
- Staffing and scheduling
- Route evaluation
- Safety
- Contractual compliance
- Mentorship/improving the onboarding experience and retention rate of city carrier assistants (CCAs)
- Business growth

Immediately upon ratification of the National Agreement, the task force, consisting of members from NALC and USPS, went to work discussing ideas related to these topics. Joint subcommittees working under the direction of the task force have also been established to meet and work toward achieving our mutual goals. So far, subcommittees working on route evaluation, office time/activities, office space, complement/staffing and improving city carrier assistant (CCA) retention rates are up and running.

The route evaluation subcommittee meets on a weekly basis to jointly discuss the current route evaluation and adjustment process, as well as potential changes that may need to be made, and the exploration of the use of technology to improve operations, route evaluation, adjustment and optimization, delivery capabilities and visibility. During these meetings, the subcommittee agreed to a joint process using the principles contained in the 2014-2015 City Delivery Route Alternate Adjustment Process to facilitate evaluation and adjustment of routes in a limited number of delivery units. The subcommittee then selected two teams comprised of one NALC member and one USPS member experienced in route adjustments to evaluate and adjust routes in the chosen delivery units. The two teams also are exploring the applicability and use of certain technological advances in regard to a potential future alternate route adjustment process. The subcommittee will continue to meet weekly to oversee this process and the progress of the teams. For more information on this topic, see the June issue of *The Postal Record*.

Two additional joint subcommittees were established to address the parties' joint exploration of office efficiency and use of space. One of the committees is focused on city carriers' office activities, while the other committee is reviewing office space constraints and how to best accommodate increases in parcel volume and changing mail mix. Both committees recently began meeting; they will meet weekly to discuss these issues. The office activities and efficiency subcommittee will focus on reviewing current office activities and processes, route evaluation line items, and whether potential changes need to be made to these processes. The office use and space committee will review things like work floor setup and flow, case configuration, and any other variables that may restrict space on the workroom floor. The committee will use this information to potentially develop new ideas for a more efficient office space for the future.

The complement/staffing subcommittee has been meeting weekly since ratification. Its focus has been on the hiring of CCAs, career conversions and voluntary transfers in understaffed installations identified by the main task force. It has identified and alleviated several bottlenecks in the onboarding process for CCAs, increased the frequency of carrier academies, and authorized the processing of conversions to career and processing of voluntary transfers.

The subcommittee formed to explore improving CCA retention rates also meets at least weekly, and generally several times per week, to work on these ideas. In April, after much discussion and planning, this subcommittee submitted a draft of a pilot program to the task force with some changes to how CCAs are used, mainly in the beginning stages of their USPS careers, with the intent of improving the new employee experience and increasing retention rates.

On April 15, the parties agreed to conduct the pilot program with the signing of MOU RE: New Employee Experience and Retention Program. The pilot program involves various new and modified practices for all CCAs and parttime flexible city letter carriers in two selected offices. The pilot began on May 15 in the Warren, MI, post office and the West Milwaukee, WI, station, and will last approximately one year, unless the time frame is modified by the parties. For a detailed explanation of everything the pilot program entails, see M-01949 in NALC's Materials Reference System in the "Resources" section of the NALC website or at nalc.org/mrs.

Many members may have questions about the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program and Medicare provisions included in these bills. Unfortunately, misinformation about them is common. Let us start with the proposed changes in FEHB.

FEHB reform

Under the legislation, postal employees and annuitants would participate in a restructured FEHB program. All the major plans now available to participants—Blue Cross Blue Shield, the NALC HBP, Kaiser, etc.—would continue to be offered to postal employees and retirees as a postal-only version of their FEHB plans. But their premiums would be significantly reduced because postal participants would be placed in a separate risk pool with new rules regard-ing Medicare enrollment.

The new legislation would not change a current postal annuitant's right to decide whether they want to enroll in Medicare. Although 90 percent of current postal annuitants are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A (hospital services) and nearly 80 percent of them voluntarily enroll in Medicare Part B (medical services), no current annuitant would be required to enroll in either Medicare Part A or Part B. All active employees under the age of 64 (as of Jan. 1, 2023) would be automatically placed in the postal version of the health plan they choose, and if retired upon reaching Medicare age, they would be enrolled in Medicare (absent the exceptions discussed below).

Active postal employees (as of Jan. 1, 2023) who are 64 and older and all current postal annuitants as of that date would be given the choice of whether to join the postal-only version of FEHB plans (integrated with Medicare) or remain in the non-postal version of such plans, depending on whether they want to enroll in Medicare Part B, which currently carries a premium of \$148.50 per month. The reason most annuitants already choose to enroll in Medicare Parts A and B when they turn 65 is because enrolling virtually eliminates any out-of-pocket costs such as deductibles and co-payments. However, under the proposed law, current annuitants (as of Jan. 1, 2023) would decide whether to enroll. Those who do not want to enroll in Medicare would remain in the non-postal version of their FEHB health plan—and the Postal Service would continue to pay the government's share of their premiums.

The postal-only plans in FEHB will be regulated and operated in the same way current FEHB plans are regulated and operated today. There will be an annual Open Season that will allow participants to choose among a range of plans with separate rates for postal and non-postal participants.

Special protections

NALC lobbied aggressively for the inclusion of special exceptions that are contained in the legislation. Future postal annuitants who do not need Medicare because of coverage by Veterans Affairs or by another non-FEHB program, or who cannot use Medicare because they live in a place (for example, overseas) without Medicare providers, would be allowed to enroll in the non-postal version of their FEHB plan. We also worked to include a provision to give current annuitants who did not enroll in Medicare Part B at age 65, but who now wish to do so, a one-time opportunity to enroll in Part B without the late-enrollment penalty that currently applies. That penalty, which raises Part B premiums by 10 percent for each year after age 65 that a retiree delays enrollment, is very expensive.

Why prospective Medicare integration makes sense

The reason it makes sense to create postal-only plans within FEHB and to maximize Medicare participation is that it will reduce health care costs for both the Postal Service and participants. FEHB premiums would be reduced for active and retired postal employees alike. Because Medicare is the first-payer insurer for its enrollees, the costs covered by postal-only FEHB plans will be reduced, thereby reducing the premiums for postal employees. This would reduce the Postal Service's health care expenses by hundreds of millions of dollars annually and reduce its future liability for retiree health benefits by approximately \$50 billion.

Battling misinformation

Since the introduction of these bills, misinformation about the Medicare provisions included in the legislation has circulated through other outlets. Most noticeably, the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) has distributed inaccurate information about the bills. NARFE has falsely claimed that these bills would cause the premiums of non-postal federal employees and annuitants to increase, allow the Postal Service to "cherrypick" individuals who are less costly to insure, and allow the Postal Service to avoid its full financial obligation to those retirees who choose not to enroll in Medicare.

None of this is true. In fact, non-postal FEHB premiums would decline somewhat (about 1.0 percent), since the non-postal workforce is younger and less expensive to insure than the postal workforce. A recent professional actuarial analysis of the proposed FEHB reforms conducted by PRM Consulting Group for the Postal Service demonstrates this clearly. That analysis mirrors the findings of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) review of S. 1486 (the Postal Reform Act of 2014), which also included FEHB and Medicare integration reforms. The CBO Cost Estimate for S. 1486 (July 14, 2014) states on page 14:

The effect of the legislation on federal on-budget payments for health insurance premiums in the FEHB program would partially offset the increase in Medicare spending. Premiums charged to non-postal enrollees in the FEHB program would be based on expected health costs of the employees, annuitants, and dependents remaining in the FEHB program after the health care costs of USPS workers, annuitants, and their dependents are shifted to the PSHB program. Because non-postal enrollees cost FEHB plans slightly less than postal enrollees, on average, CBO estimates that premiums in the FEHB program would be lower than under current law. Thus, the amount the federal government would contribute toward its share of annuitant premiums would be lower.

The City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force meets regularly to discuss the progress of the subcommittees and explore ideas to address each of the elements of the MOU. Additional subcommittees are in the process of being formed to further explore how we can best achieve our mutual goals.

White House releases the American Families Plan

On April 28, the White House released the American Families Plan, a \$1 trillion plan that seeks to increase access to education, provide paid family and medical leave, and make health care and child care more affordable and more accessible. The American Families Plan is the second major part of President Joe Biden's economic recovery plan, following the American Jobs Plan released March 31.

As it relates to letter carriers, the plan calls for a new national program providing paid family and medical leave for all workers. By Year 10 of the program, the \$225 billion investment would guarantee workers 12 weeks of paid leave with payments of up to \$4,000 a month for leave required to care for a child, an ill family member, personal illness and other such circumstances.

Overall, the plan expands the scope of universal public education by proposing \$200 billion for free preschool and \$109 billion for two years of tuition-free community college. It also would invest \$85 billion in Pell grants. The plan includes investment in child care, ensuring that lower- and middle-income families would spend no more than 7 percent of their income on child care. Additionally, the proposal includes \$45 billion for nutrition programs, including free and reduced-price meals for children across the country.

The plan makes permanent elements of the short-term American Rescue Plan passed in March, including the child tax credit, the dependent tax credit and the earned income tax credit. It also proposes lowering health care premiums for those covered by Obamacare exchanges.

The White House proposes funding the American Families Plan with tax increases for high-income Americans that would raise \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. The plan would raise the top income tax rate from 37 percent to 39.6 percent, reversing a portion of the 2017 tax cuts implemented by the previous administration. The tax increases would not affect anyone earning less than \$400,000 per year. The plan also proposes full funding of the Internal Revenue Service to improve tax enforcement and auditing on the wealthiest Americans, which the White House projects would raise \$700 billion over the next decade.

The American Families Plan is an ambitious proposal, and it is up to the House and Senate to craft legislation that reflects the administration's initiatives. Partisan tensions remain high in Congress, and White House officials have reiterated that President Biden is open to discussing ideas on how to fund and invest in programs in the plan.

"NALC appreciates President Biden's efforts to strengthen America's social safety net, which has been seriously weakened by state-level cuts over the past several decades," President Rolando said. "We look forward to working with both parties in Congress on legislation inspired by his plan that would improve the lives of our nation's workers and their families."

NALC Donor Drive

A reminder for NALC branches for 2021: NALC Headquarters is matching every contribution from the branch's treasury to a local food bank. Headquarters will match that donation to that same local food bank. Please mail proof of branch donations (copy of branch check and food bank receipt) and information on the food bank to: Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, c/o NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001.



Paid family and medical leave bill introduced in Senate

On April 15, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act (S. 1158) in the Senate. The bill, which mirrors H.R. 564, introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in the House in January, would provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for federal employees, including Postal Service employees.

CBO estimates that federal payments for health insurance premiums for non-postal annuitants enrolled in the FEHB program would be reduced by about \$1.6 billion over the 2015-2024 period.

Finally, USPS would not be able to cherry-pick who to insure—it will pay the full cost of all postal participant premiums, whether participants are in the postal or non-postal version of their FEHB plans. NALC, along with other postal unions, addressed these false claims in-depth in a letter to the president of NARFE. Read the letter on nalc.org.

Senate confirms three Postal Service Board of Governor nominees

On May 13, the Senate approved the nominations of Amber McReynolds and Ronald Stroman to serve on the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG). Two weeks later, on May 28, the Senate approved the nomination of Anton Hajjar to serve on the BOG as well.





Amber McReynolds Anton Hajjar

McReynolds is one of the country's leading experts on election administration/policy, and a co-author of the book *When Women Vote*. She is chief executive officer of the National Vote at Home Institute and Coalition and the former director of elections for Denver, CO, where she developed one of the nation's most sophisticated vote-by-mail systems.

Ronald Stroman

Stroman is the former deputy postmaster general and chief government relations officer for the Postal Service. He retired in 2020. Prior to joining USPS, Stroman worked on Capitol Hill, serving the House's Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the House Judiciary Committee. In addition, he served in the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Stroman also led the Biden-Harris transition team for the Postal Service, which included NALC Chief of Staff Jim Sauber.

Hajjar is the former general counsel of the American Postal Workers Union. Hajjar's experience includes pro bono representation of victims of employment discrimination, including Arab and Muslim Americans after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He currently serves on the American Law Institute's governing board.

Emergency Federal Employee Leave update

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Postal Service have issued guidance implementing the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which was signed into law on March 11. This law established an important new leave category called Emergency Federal Employees Leave (EFEL). Prior to OPM issuing the guidance, the Postal Service had been approving EFEL on an interim basis in two-week increments.

When requesting this leave, employees must submit a completed PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence, and a COVID-19 Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL) Employee Notification and Leave Request Form, along with documentation supporting the need for the leave. Employees also will need to submit a signed Employee Agreement in Connection with Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL), provided under Section 4001 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, before the first use of EFEL.

The Postal Service has issued guidance, and a document about frequently asked questions, on EFEL. To view these documents and the forms referenced above, go to nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/emergency-federal-employee-leave-update.

NALC will continue to provide updates regarding this leave as they become available.

A similar bill, the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, previously passed in the House during the 116th Congress, but the Senate narrowed the legislation to 12 weeks of paid parental leave, which ultimately did not include USPS employees.

Employees could use the paid leave for personal illness, caring for a family member, or time off work needed for a family member leaving or returning from active military duty. Currently, federal employees are entitled to 12 weeks of leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act for such reasons, but they are not guaranteed paid leave.

NALC will continue to monitor this legislation and will update letter carriers on any future actions.

Deaf or hard of hearing?

To ensure that our deaf or hard-of-hearing members are receiving appropriate accommodations to communicate with other Postal Service employees, including their union representatives, NALC is planning to reach out to these individuals to discuss and learn more about any challenges they face. We are in the process of planning a virtual conference for this purpose. We are asking letter carriers who are deaf or hard of hearing to contact the union by going to the NALC website at nalc.org, clicking on the Members Only portal in the upper right-hand corner, and log-ging in. From there, you can simply check the appropriate box if you would like to be identified as deaf or hard of hearing. Doing so will let NALC know who you are, where you work and the branch of which you are a member.

What should you do in preparation for the heat of summer?

Letter carriers should first educate themselves on heat safety. One way to do this is to download and install the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)'s Heat Safety Tool Smartphone App. Once the app is installed, it can detect your location and provide you with the current temperature, humidity and heat index (combination of temperature and humidity). It also will provide the expected heat index for the balance of the workday.

For more information on heat-related safety, see the Contract Talk column in the May 2021 *Postal Record*, available on nalc.org.



National Association Fredric V. Rolando, President of Letter Carriers EDITORIAL STAFF: Dilio Diros Diros de Computation Diros Diros de Computation

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Virtual conference for deaf and hard-of-hearing members to be held

NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr. and Director of Retired Members Dan Toth have announced a virtual conference for deaf and hard-of-hearing members to be held Sunday, Aug. 8, at 2 p.m. Eastern time.

This conference will consist of a training on Management Instruction EL-670-2021-x, Providing Communication Accommodations to Employees and Applicants Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, as well as a brief overview of other relevant contractual provisions regarding deaf and hard-of-hearing accommodations.

Accommodations

The conference will use certified American Sign Language interpreters as well as closed captioning. The conference will run approximately two hours.

Branch officers and shop stewards

In addition to any deaf or hard-of-hearing members who wish to attend, branch officers and shop stewards who represent deaf or hard-of-hearing members are encouraged to join. To register, follow the instructions below.

Registration

Registration opened on July 12 and will close the day of the conference, Aug. 8. To register, go to nalc.org and click on the Members Only portal button in the upper right-hand corner. Once logged on to the Members Only portal, click the "Meetings Registration" button, which will display a list of upcoming meetings. From there, select the "Deaf and Hard of Hearing Conference" and submit your registration information. Branch and state presidents also can register their members by logging on to the Members Only portal and then clicking the "Meetings Registration" button, which will display a list of upcoming meetings. From there, presidents can register members by entering their last names in the "Search" box and selecting the correct members from the drop-down list. A member also can be removed from the "Registry" list by checking the box under the delete column next to the corresponding member.

Training materials

Training materials and other pertinent information will be supplied in the form of PDFs. Access to these documents is available during the registration process. These PDFs also will be available to registrants on their Members Only page. The documents can be printed, copied or saved.

Accessing meeting information and joining the meeting

When a registered member wants to access training materials or join the conference, he or she can go to nalc.org and log on to the Members Only portal. Once logged in, the member will press the "Deaf and Hard of Hearing Conference" button. For each meeting, there will be three buttons: The "Documents" button, which will give the member access to the training materials; the "Topics" button, which will give the member access to a list of topics (if any); and the "Join" button. The "Join" button will appear 30 minutes prior to the start time on the day of the meeting.

If you log on to the Members Only portal more than 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting, you will need to exit to the home page and re-enter to access the "Join" button.

Once you select the "Join" button, you will be taken to a Webex portal titled "Starting your meeting..." Scroll down to select "Join from your browser." When joining, the member will be prompted to enter his or her name and email address to attend the meeting. Proceed by selecting the "Next" button followed by the "Join Meeting" button.

Self-identification

Those who identify as deaf or hard of hearing can self-identify by going to the NALC website at nalc.org, clicking on the Members Only portal in the upper right-hand corner, and logging in. From there, you can simply check the appropriate box if you would like to be identified as deaf or hard of hearing. Doing so will let NALC know who you are and which branch you belong to, for the purpose of providing services and help when needed.

CCA retention pilot program started

NALC and the Postal Service have launched a joint pilot program designed to improve the experience of newly hired letter carriers and to prompt more new carriers to stick with the job.

Many city carrier assistants (CCAs) and part-time flexibles (PTFs) find the job tough at first—the long hours, physical work and steep learning curve take their toll. Unfortunately, too many new hires quit within a few months. The experience is not only an unpleasant way to start the job as a carrier; it's a waste of time and resources when new hires leave.

The pilot program began in May in the main post office in Warren, MI, and in the West Milwaukee station in Milwaukee. The program involves various new and modified practices for all CCAs and PTFs in these offices. It is scheduled to run for about a year.

The pilot program focuses on improving the experience of new carriers from Day One. Designed together by NALC and USPS, it includes



"This joint program has the potential to assure that new letter carriers start their jobs on the right foot and stay long enough to enjoy the rewards of carrying the mail," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "It's a win-win."

Under the program, new carriers receive the attention and materials they need for success, with a welcome checklist for supervisors to use to assure that all bases are covered. On their first day, carriers are handed a welcome package—a satchel with items inside such as a USPS cap, vest, water bottle and dog spray.

Before their Carrier Academy training concludes, new carriers will receive information such as the address of their employing office where they are scheduled to report, and the proper shoes and clothing to wear for their first days on the route. The pilot includes a Day One office tour introducing the new employee to the station, to other employees, and to union representatives. The new carriers will receive essential information such as how to contact supervisors or stewards as well as the location of safety and other employee bulletin boards and emergency exits.

"The goal of the pilot program is to give new carriers what they need to succeed and to feel welcome," Rolando said. The program includes additional help for CCAs as they ease into the job. After completion of Carrier Academy and On-the Job Instruction, the pilot program encourages stability in route assignments with gradual increases in workload to help promote confidence in the new employee. The program ensures that once the new carrier is out delivering a route alone, both a steward and a supervisor will check on the CCA on a regular basis. The pilot program also restricts new carriers to working only in their employing office for the first four weeks following completion of Carrier Academy.

A new carrier's weekly hours will be capped at eight hours a day and 40 hours a week for the first two weeks, and 10 hours a day and 56 hours a week for the next two weeks, followed by a limit of 11.5 hours a day and 60 hours a week.

The pilot program also assures that CCAs receive frequent check-ins to track their success and provide help when they need it, including ensuring that they receive the required evaluations at 30, 60 and 80 days into the job. During these progress reviews, management will identify opportunities for improvement, offer constructive feedback,

and consider whether additional training could benefit the new carrier.

Throughout the pilot program, CCAs will be asked for feedback, including through surveys, to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

High turnover among CCAs has been an ongoing concern since the CCA position was created in 2013. As part of negotiations for the 2019-2023 National Agreement, NALC and USPS agreed to form a joint City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force, with a renewed commitment to improving the experience and retention of newly hired CCAs as part of its agenda.

A subcommittee of the task force composed of NALC and USPS representatives studied the issue. It relied heavily on input from CCAs about their initial experience joining USPS, gathered through several focus groups.

Using this information, the subcommittee developed the

pilot program and agreed in a memorandum of understanding (MOU Re: New Employee Experience and Retention Program) to test it. For a detailed explanation of everything the pilot program entails, see M-01949 in NALC's Materials Reference System in the "Resources" section of the NALC website or at nalc.org/mrs. "In the long run, the pilot program is part of an effort to improve the overall culture at USPS," Rolando said.



NALC Health Benefit Plan Seminar update

Despite our efforts to host an in-person event, as a Health Benefit Plan, our primary concern must be to ensure all necessary steps are taken to protect the health and wellbeing of our members. So, we are excited to announce: The NALC Health Benefit Plan is going virtual for the 35th National Health Benefit Plan Seminar.

Save the date for Oct. 17-18.

Although the details have not been finalized, the staff at the Plan is diligently working on preparations for this two-day event to include innovative classes, exciting Plan updates, keynote speakers, vendor presentations and much more.

This will be a free event available to all health benefit representatives and other branch officers enrolled in the Plan. Registration information and event details will be announced as soon as they become available.

Although this will be a new experience for everyone, we are confident that this is not an event you will want to miss. Mark your calendars today.

NALC March Branch Challenge for MDA now underway

With the COVID-19 pandemic making it difficult for branches to hold MDA fundraisers in support of programs such as summer camps and medical research, NALC Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson issued a branch Deliver the Cure challenge for July. She asked branches to create a virtual donation page to support NALC's 2021 campaign for MDA, and called on every letter carrier to give at least \$5 to MDA through his or her branch's donation page.

It's easy to create a fundraising page by going to mda. donordrive.com/event/nalc2021 and clicking "create a page." Donations are tracked by branch, with all fundraisers listed on the page.

Here are other parts of the 2021 MDA campaign: **MDA Virtual Walk—Aug. 7** mda.donordrive.com/team/TEAMNALCVIRTUALWALK

Join Team NALC for the 2021 Tough Mudder 5K mda.donordrive.com/participant/TEAMNALCTough-Mudder

NALC MDA gift bags on sale for \$100 each mda.donordrive.com/participant/nalcmdagiftbags NALC-MDA poker chips on sale for \$2 each mda.donordrive.com/participant/NALC-MDAPokerChips

"I look forward to seeing the different ways, including online donor campaigns, that our branches devise to keep resources flowing to MDA in 2021 and to support its vital efforts," Vela Davidson said.

Checks and offline gifts received in July can count toward the NALC Branch Challenge for MDA. Send in donations using the NALC Donation Allocation Form on nalc.org/ mda to MDA, 161 N. Clark St., Suite 3550, Chicago, IL 60601. Also, please send a copy of the allocation form and checks to Headquarters for your records.





NALC Donor Drive

A reminder for NALC branches for 2021: NALC Headquarters is matching every contribution from the branch's treasury to an approved 501(c)(3) local food bank. Headquarters will match that donation to that same local food bank. Please mail proof of branch donations (copy of branch check and food bank receipt) and information on the food bank to: Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, c/o NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001.

"Letter carriers, especially new CCAs, need to know that the Postal Service gives them room for work-life balance and respects them," he added. "This collaborative effort is a great first step in transforming USPS for the benefit of both the Service and its employees."

Several provisions in the new National Agreement improve the status of all CCAs, Rolando noted, including removal of the lowest pay step to boost their starting pay, an increase in the employer contribution for health care benefits and a guarantee of conversion to career status within 24 months of their hire date.

"We can all do our part to help our new carriers—who are the future or our union, after all—by supporting them as they join our ranks," Rolando said. "Let's welcome newly hired carriers and give them a helping hand."

Virtual Branch Officers' Training offered

NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine has announced that additional modified Branch Officers Training on several topics will be held virtually July 25, Aug. 8 and Aug. 22.

Branch presidents and state presidents may register branch officers and state officers for the training through the branch and state presidents' Members Only page. The registration directions are on nalc.org.

To allow for multiple branches and state associations to participate, registration will be limited to two officers per branch and state association per session.

The following sessions are included in the training, which kicked off July 11 with the first round of classes: **Auditing Branch Records**—This session is for trustees and will teach how to perform a complete audit.

Length: 2.0 hours—This session will be offered again on Aug. 8.

- **Payroll and lost time issues, questions you should be asking** This session covers the ins and outs of payroll. Length: 1.5 hours—This session will be offered again on Aug. 8.
- **Cybersecurity**—This session explores the exposure branches may have regarding cybersecurity risks. Common cybercrimes will be discussed, as well as what your branch can do to protect itself from becoming a victim. Length: 1.5 hours—This session will be offered again on Aug. 8.
- **Constitution and bylaws**—This session covers what is required in branch bylaws and common errors, including covering the process for amending bylaws.

Length: 2.0 hours—This session will be offered July 25 and Aug. 22.

- **Branch elections**—This session covers the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures*. Length: 1.5 hours—This session will be offered July 25 and Aug. 22.
- **Branch policies, taking minutes, notifications and what am I signing?**—This session identifies policies that every branch should have in place, maintaining accurate and complete minutes, required notifications and the proper way to make them, and will cover the responsibility for branch presidents/vice presidents that goes along with signing certain documents.

Length: 1.5 hours—This session will be offered July 25 and Aug. 22.

2021 Doherty and Donelon Scholarships selection delayed

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the announcement of the winners for the 2021 Doherty and Donelon Scholarship winners has been delayed.

The Scholarship Committee, composed of Sandy Laemmel, Detroit, MI Branch 1; Kimetra Lewis, Dallas, TX Branch 132; and Lawrence Kania, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3, has not yet been able to review the applications to prepare them for the judges, as many applicants are having difficulty obtaining the necessary transcripts and recommendation letters from their schools.

NALC Headquarters is working diligently with the applicants to obtain the outstanding documentation so that the Scholarship Committee and judges can perform their work and announce the winners as soon as they are able.

National Association of Letter Carriers

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Back pay and COLA update

Most eligible city letter carriers have received retroactive pay pursuant to the 2019-2023 National Agreement in their Aug. 20 paychecks. Back pay for 244 letter carriers required manual calculations. These calculations should be completed during the current pay period and retroactive pay received on the next paycheck.

Back pay is calculated for all paid hours between Nov. 23, 2019 (the date of the first general wage increase in the agreement) and April 9, 2021 (the day before new pay rates were implemented, as explained at nalc.org/news/nalcupdates/new-pay-rates-implemented). The following pay increases will be included in the retroactive pay from the effective date indicated for each:

For career city carriers:

- 1.1 percent general wage increase, effective Nov. 23, 2019
- \$166 cost-of-living adjustment, effective Feb. 29, 2020
- \$188 cost-of-living adjustment, effective Aug. 29, 2020 •
- 1.1 percent general wage increase, effective Nov. 21, 2020
- \$416 cost-of-living adjustment, effective Feb. 27, 2021 •

Note: Cost-of-living increases referenced above are paid proportionally to city carriers in Table 2, in accordance with Article 9.3.E of the National Agreement.

For city carrier assistants:

- 1.1 percent general wage increase and additional 1.0 percent increase, effective Nov. 23, 2019
- 1.1 percent general wage increase and additional 1.0 percent increase, effective Nov. 21, 2020

Note: CCAs receive the additional 1.0 percent increases referenced above in lieu of cost-of-living adjustments, pursuant to Article 9.7 of the National Agreement.

Retired and separated employees who worked during the back pay period will be paid by check mailed to their last work location. Retroactive pay adjustments for now-retired letter carriers may result in adjustments to annuities. The Office of Personnel Management will make any necessary annuity adjustments.

Fourth COLA is \$1,934

The fourth regular cost-of-living adjustment under the 2019-2023 National Agreement will be \$1,934 annually for letter carriers in Table 1 and at Step O of Table 2. Cost-of-living increases are paid proportionally to city carriers in Table 2, in accordance with Article 9.3.E of the National Agreement. This adjustment will be effective Aug. 28 and reflected in paychecks dated Sept. 17.

CCAs will receive additional 1.0 percent increases effective Nov. 20, 2021, and Nov. 19, 2022, in lieu of cost-ofliving adjustments, pursuant to Article 9.7 of the National Agreement.

The new pay rates can be seen in the new letter carrier pay schedule below.

Congress returns to work on postal reform

With the House of Representatives and the Senate back from August recess, we expect Congress to pick up where it left off on the Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076/S. 1720).

H.R. 3076 advanced out of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform in May. Since that time, Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY) have been working with stakeholders to finalize technical modifications to the bill.

In the Senate, the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee has yet to consider S. 1720, but Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH) have been coordinating with the House on the identical measures. S. 1720 has attracted 13 Republican co-sponsors, which means that if all 50 Democrats support the measure along with those 13 Republicans, the bill could surpass the 60-vote threshold needed for passage.

As a reminder, the legislation achieves key priorities for NALC, including:

- The repeal of the mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund decades' worth of retiree health benefit premiums. •
- A reform of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program to maximize Medicare integration.
- Language to permanently protect six-day mail delivery.

Postal Service revises face covering policy

On Aug. 27, the Postal Service revised its policy on face coverings, reverting to the policy that was in place prior to a July 16 change. The policy requires all employees to wear face coverings in the following situations until further notice:

- In public-facing settings when there is a state or local face covering order or directive in place; or
- When an employee who does not deal directly with the public cannot achieve or maintain social distancing in the workplace.

On Jan. 25, President Biden established the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force to oversee the implementation of COVID-19 workplace safety plans across the federal government. In late July, the task force updated its COVID-19related workplace guidelines. In the guidelines, the administration urged all Americans, including all federal workers, who are eligible for the vaccine to get vaccinated. Under new guidelines, onsite federal employees and contractors must confirm that they are fully vaccinated with a signed attestation, or they will be considered non-vaccinated when applying the new guidance.

The guidelines do not require adherence by independent agencies such as the Postal Service; however, the administration strongly encouraged independent agencies to comply.

Subsequently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its guidance to advise both vaccinated and non-vaccinated Americans to wear face coverings in indoor settings in locations with a substantial or high level of community transmission of COVID-19. As of press time for this NALC Bulletin, well more than 90 percent of the country fell into this category. After discussions with NALC and the other unions, the Postal Service changed the face covering policy to revert to the policy in place prior to the July 16 change.

We continue to have discussions with Postal Service representatives about incorporating elements of the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force's COVID-19 guidance for vaccinated and non-vaccinated employees, with the goal of ensuring that USPS policy prioritizes and maximizes the safety of letter carriers and other postal employees.

COVID-19-related MOUs and USPS directive to continue through the end of September

In early August, NALC and the Postal Service agreed once again to continue several pandemic-related memorandums of understanding (MOUs). Five of the MOUs, all which can be found in NALC's Materials Reference System on the NALC website, were extended with the signing of M-01958. They include temporary expanded sick leave for dependent care (M-01910), temporary use of the 7:01 rule (M-01913), temporary workplace changes to promote social distancing (M-01915), temporary use of temporary carrier assistants (TCAs) (M-01916), and the suspension of MOU Re: Temporary Additional Paid Leave for CCAs (M-01941). These MOUs are extended through Sept. 30.

M-01910 provides some relief for certain letter carriers dealing with child care needs caused by the pandemic. This MOU allows career letter carriers to use Sick Leave for Dependent Care (SLDC) to care for a child as the result of a closed day care facility or school, or the unavailability of the child's primary caregiver, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

M-01913 institutes the use of *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*, Section 432.53, City Letter Carriers (7:01 Rule). With this rule, a full-time city letter carrier who actually works more than seven hours but less than eight hours of a regular scheduled day will, upon their request, be officially excused from the completion of the eight-hour tour and still be credited with eight hours of work time for pay purposes. Any hours not worked between the seventh and eighth hour of a regular scheduled day, pursuant to ELM 432.53, are included in an employee's regular rate of pay, pursuant to ELM 443.212.g.

M-01915 directs the local parties to discuss potential scheduling and office setup changes, such as staggered start times, scheduling of letter carriers to begin tours in groups of 10 or fewer, the manner in which stand-up talks are given, as well as break locations and times, and other initiatives to maximize social distancing. The MOU also commits the parties to limiting individuals to working only in their employing facilities to the extent possible.

M-01916 allows the Postal Service to employ TCAs as operationally necessary for the sole purpose of replacing city letter carriers absent due to COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, letter carriers have needed to use leave to care for themselves and their families. To limit disruptions in mail service as a result of taking this necessary leave, not only to protect letter carriers and their families but also to protect the overall general public, the ability for the Postal Service to employ TCAs has been helpful.

M-01941 suspends the MOU Re: Temporary Additional Paid Leave for CCAs. The agreement to do so is based on the recognition that under the American Rescue Plan Act, city carrier assistants may be granted up to 600 hours of paid Emergency Federal Employee Leave for COVID-19-related reasons.

NALC and the Postal Service also agreed to another temporary time limit extension on Step B and arbitration appeals (M-01960), and an agreement giving local parties the ability to develop a sign-up process for full-time employees who previously did not, or could not, place their names on either the overtime desired list or work assignment list. The latter agreement (M-01959) is due to the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing levels. Both of these agreements will expire on Sept. 30 as well.

In addition to these MOUs, a USPS directive (M-01914), originally issued in March 2020 by then-USPS Vice President, Labor Relations Doug Tulino, and most recently extended by current USPS Vice President, Labor Relations Katherine Attridge, also will remain in effect until the end of September. The directive is to management in the field regarding agreements with NALC, leave policy and approval of requests for changes of schedule due to child care needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter states that in addition to allowing SLDC, managers and supervisors should allow liberal changes of schedule in recognition of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent operationally practicable, managers and supervisors should accommodate employees who submit PS Form 3189, Request for Temporary Schedule Change for Personal Convenience, as a result of child care issues caused by day care closures, school (pre-K through Grade 12) closures, or the unavailability of a child's primary caregiver as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both chambers have focused on technical changes to the legislation to ensure that the future integration with Medicare is seamless. This careful coordination has required guidance from the Office of Personnel and Management, the Office of Management and Budget and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Service. In addition, these agencies are collaborating with the House Committee on Ways and Means, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and the Senate Finance Committee to ensure that final language can be legally adhered to.

NALC has been working directly with all involved to ensure that the final legislation benefits active and retired letter carriers. We also have been actively pushing back against false claims regarding the legislation. As we navigate our way to the finish line, other congressional matters, such as the Sept. 30 deadline to raise the national debt limit, the funding of government agencies for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 and the president's "Build Back Better" agenda to invest in the nation's infrastructure, could interfere with the timeline for passage of postal reform. Letter carriers are encouraged to contact their members of Congress, using the action center found on the "Government Affairs" section of nalc.org, and ask representatives and senators to co-sponsor H.R. 3076/S. 1720 as we work to keep up the positive momentum on this important bipartisan legislation.

Letter Carrier Pay Schedule City Carrier Wage Schedule: Effective Aug. 28, 2021 (uly 2021 COLA)

The following salary and rate schedule is for all NALC-represented employees.

Caroor city lottor carrier increases

Career city letter carrier increases			City carrier assistant increases			
Effective Date Nov. 23, 2019 Feb. 29, 2020 Aug. 29, 2020 Nov. 21, 2020 Feb. 27, 2021	Type of Increase General wage increase January COLA July COLA General wage increase January COLA	Amount 1.1% \$166 \$188 1.1% \$416	Date Nov. 23, 2019 Nov. 21, 2020 Nov. 20, 2021 Nov. 19, 2022	Type of Increase General wage increase General wage increase General wage increase General wage increase	Amount 2.1% 2.3% 2.3%	
Aug. 28, 2021* Nov. 20, 2021 TBA* TBA* Nov. 19, 2022 TBA*	July COLA General wage increase January COLA July COLA General wage increase January COLA	\$1,934 1.3% TBD TBD 1.3% TBD		ts for the two general wage I be calculated and paid by		

NOTE: Upon conversion to Full-Time, Part-Time Flexible employees in Table Two will be slotted into the Full-Time Step commensurate with their number of weeks as a PTF, and retain their time credit toward the next step.

NOTE: Effective Nov. 19, 2022, Table One and Table Two will be modified to include an additional Step P that is \$444 more than Step O of the basic salary schedule in Tables One and Two.

NOTE: Carrier Technicians receive additional compensation equivalent to 2.1% of the employee's applicable hourly rate for all paid hours. NOTE: The full COLAs will be added to the salaries of all steps in Table 1 and Step O of Table 2, with proportionate application of the COLA to Steps A-N of Table 2. * NOTE: In accordance with Article 9.3.B, COLAs become effective the second full pay period after the release of the January and July Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers.

Table 1: City Carrier S								RSC Q (NALC)
This schedule applies to all carriers with a career appointment date prior to Jan. 12, 2013. Most Basic Annual Salaries PREV							Most Prev.	
	A B	C D	E F	G H	I J	K L	M N	O STEP
	6,710 61,039 7,901 62,323	62,423 65,585	66,044 66,506	66,960 67,416	67,877 68,323	68,787 69,24		
City Corriger (Crede 2)	20.26 20.5			1,2	Iourly Basic Rate		1 2412 2426	24.50
	28.36 30.52 28.95 31.10		32.34 32.57 33.02 33.25	32.79 33.01 33.48 33.71				
		Full-T	ime/Part-Time R	Regular Employe	es - Hourly Basi	c Rates		
	27.26 29.3 27.84 29.9		31.10 31.32 31.75 31.97					
	27.04 29.90	, ,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,		e Waiting Perio			9 99.91 99.74	JJ.7J
Steps (From-To)	A-B 96)-E E-F	F-G G-H 44 44	• •	J-K K-L 34 34		N-0 YRS. 24 12.4
** Carrier Technicians receive a	n additional 2	.1%						
Table 2: City Carrier S	chedule							RSC Q7 (NALC)
This schedule applies		rriers with a c	areer appoi	ntment date	on or after la	n. 12. 2013		Most
				asic Annual S	-			Prev.
AA	A B	C D	E F	G H	I J	K L	M N	O STEP
	2,542 44,443 3,435 45,370			53,955 55,858		61,564 63,46 62,857 64,79		
Carrier Technician** 43,435 45,376 47,318 49,260 51,203 53,143 55,088 57,031 58,972 60,914 62,857 64,797 66,742 68,683 70,624 1,941 Part-Time Flexible Employees - Hourly Basic Rates								
	21.27 22.22 21.72 22.69	2 23.17 24.12		26.98 27.93 27.54 28.52	28.88 29.83	30.78 31.7		
Full-Time/Part-Time Regular Employees - Hourly Basic Rates								
	20.45 21.3 20.88 21.8		24.11 25.02 24.62 25.55					
	2110	221,75 25100	21102 25155	Percent Step (50122 5111	5 52.05 55.02	55.75
63	.50% 64.25%	67.00% 69.75%		78.00% 80.75%	83.50% 86.25%	89.00% 91.75%	% 94.50% 97.25%	100.00%
Step Increase Waiting Periods (In Weeks)								
Steps (From-To) AA-A 46	A-B 46			F-G G-H 46 46		J-K K-L 46 46		N-O YRS. 46 12.4
** Carrier Technicians receive an additional 2.1%								

Managers and supervisors also should allow liberal sick leave usage for employees and liberal annual and leave without pay usage to the extent operationally feasible during this time period. If an employee requests leave for reasons related to COVID-19, such leave should be treated as scheduled (as opposed to unscheduled) leave. Leave taken for COVID-19-related reasons may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM 511.43.

The national parties have agreed to revisit each of these issues immediately prior to their expiration to determine if further extensions are appropriate.

House passes combined FY 2022 appropriations bill, maintains six-day mail delivery

Prior to its summer break, the House passed the Defense, Commerce, Justice, Science, Energy and Water Development, Financial Services and General Government, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Act, 2021 (H.R. 7617), which provides fiscal year funding to the majority of the federal government through Sept. 30.

Financial Services and General Government legislation has broad jurisdiction over agencies or entities, such as the Internal Revenue Service, the Treasury Department, the Office of Management and Budget, the General Services Administration, the Small Businesses Administration, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Postal Service.

As it relates to the Postal Service, NALC works hard each year to ensure that our longstanding language preserving six-day mail delivery is in place. Once again, those efforts were successful due to the hard work of letter carriers in educating members of Congress on both sides of the aisle.

In addition, appropriators included an amendment that would prevent the Postal Service from implementing the Expedited to Street Afternoon Sortation (ESAS) pilot program and from making changes to services standards that were in effect on July 31, 2020. NALC filed a national-level grievance on the implementation of the ESAS program. That grievance was resolved in August 2020, making clear that any changes such as those included in the ESAS program must comply with our collective-bargaining agreement.

The House-passed measure also included an amendment to provide \$2 million to the Postal Service for a postal banking pilot program, and funding for the Postal Service Office of Inspector General to encourage the Postal Service to investigate mail delivery issues in Chicago. NALC will monitor all postal-related measures as the Senate continues its work regarding the appropriations process.

Senate passes budget resolution, paving way for massive infrastructure investments

Prior to departing for summer recess, the Senate passed the FY 2022 budget resolution. The 10-year \$3.5 trillion framework drafted by Senate Democrats includes funding for improved family services, health care, education and combatting climate change to complement legislation investing in the nation's physical infrastructure, which also is currently moving through Congress. The budget resolution sets top-level spending guidelines and provides instructions for Senate committees. The instructions reinforce President Biden's "Build Back Better" agenda, a three-part plan to rebuild the U.S. economy. The successful passage of the budget resolution in August paved the way for Democrats to use the so-called "budget reconciliation" process to protect the legislation from a GOP filibuster in the Senate.

In the budget resolution, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee would receive \$37 billion in new funding. This funding would be used to fully electrify the federal vehicle fleet, including the Postal Service's fleet. It also would be deployed for federal building rehabilitation projects, cybersecurity infrastructure, border management investments and other federal investments related to clean energy procurement.

The House had not yet voted as of press time on the budget resolution, and Democrats will have to continue to navigate within their own party to get the legislation through Congress. The House cut short its summer recess to return the week of Aug. 23 to begin work on the budget resolution and reconciliation. After the House passes the budget resolution, committees in both houses of Congress can begin drafting their portions of the bill. These committees would need to hold markups during the first two weeks of September to meet the non-binding Sept. 15 budget resolution deadline.

If the Senate and the House are able to work out any differences between their infrastructure and reconciliation bills, Congress as a whole will potentially consider these major pieces of legislation in late September or early October. NALC will continue to monitor these bills as they move through Congress.

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Table 3: City Carrier Assistant Schedule		Hourly Rates		RSC Q4 (NALC)		
This schedule applies to CCA Hires with no previous			This schedule applies to CCA Hi			
TE service.				after Sept. 29, 2007, who were o	on the rolls as of	Jan. 10, 2013.
	BB	AA			BB	AA
City Carrier (Grade 2)	18.51	19.01		City Carrier (Grade 2)	20.00	20.50
Carrier Technician (add 2.1%)	18.90	19.41		Carrier Technician (add 2.1%)	20.42	20.93
Steps (From BB to AA) in weeks 52		I	Steps (From BB to AA) in weeks	5	2	

NOTE: Effective June 19, 2021, the Step CC pay rate in Table Three was eliminated. All CCAs at step CC as of that date were moved into step BB, receiving a 50 cent per hour raise. Step BB and its pay rate are the new entry step or new CCA hires. The new waiting period from Step BB to Step AA is 52 weeks. CCAs who were in step CC on June 19, 2021, will maintain their time in step credit toward step AA and will receive their next step increase to step AA after 52 weeks of service. CCAs that were in step BB as of June 19 will have 12 weeks added to their current time-in-step credit toward step AA. This will ensure all CCAs will reach step AA after 52 weeks of service.

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City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force updates

NALC continues its work on the task force established by the Memorandum of Understanding Re: City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force. The task force includes President Fredric Rolando, Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe, Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson, Special Executive Assistant to the President Tim McKay and Assistant to the President for City Delivery Michelle McQuality.

NALC officers and staffers have been working with Postal Service representatives in subcommittees on a daily basis. While work has proceeded on addressing issues included in the MOU, recently, much of the work of these subcommittees has focused on the multitude of staffing issues in installations around the country.

Efficiency and use of space

One of USPS's biggest challenges during the 2020 peak season, and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in some locations, has been space in postal facilities to create the necessary capacity for processing and preparing parcels for delivery. Some of the space issues are prevalent in mail-processing facilities. The Postal Service has undertaken several initiatives to remedy this issue. One of those involves removing some Flats Sequencing System (FSS) machines and using the space for automated parcel-sorting machines. This has resulted in a number of delivery units and ZIP codes no longer receiving FSS mail.

This space crunch also has affected delivery units. The Postal Service is in the process of deploying smaller parcel-sorting machines that sort parcels by route at the delivery unit level. This subcommittee worked on ideas and came to agreement on a pilot test for the duration of peak season that is designed to create space where needed using a two-in-one casing method. The pilot approaches the two-in-one method much differently than did previous unilateral versions of this concept. The local parties jointly identify routes that will use the concept and identify which carrier routes will keep their current start times and which will be assigned the much earlier start times.

NALC and USPS will evaluate the pilot through peak season and determine if and where it may be beneficial to use in the future.

Staffing and scheduling

One of the biggest challenges both outside and during peak season is maintaining appropriate staffing levels in many locations. This subcommittee has continued to do deep dives into the staffing issues in a number of installations. One of the most widespread issues we see is difficulty hiring an appropriate number of city carriers.

There are several locations in Colorado and California where NALC and USPS have reached agreement in the past few years to hire and employ an all-career workforce in installations that have experienced this hiring difficulty. It has been successful in those locations. NALC is working toward an agreement with USPS to apply the same or a similar concept to other installations around the country that are having difficulty hiring. Appropriate staffing is crucial for letter carriers and for the service USPS provides. The success or failure of the Postal Service during peak season and beyond could depend on it. In other locations where the Postal Service doesn't have hiring difficulties, NALC and USPS are evaluating the need to hire beyond the normal complement in order to adjust to employee availability and high attrition rates.

Route evaluation and adjustment

NALC and USPS continue to explore and incorporate the technology that is now available in a route adjustment process. That work continues, and progress is being made. Additionally, NALC is now spending a significant amount of time with USPS executives and staff discussing the possibility of a national joint route adjustment process that would potentially kick off in early 2022.

Both parties at the national level have shown a sincere interest in developing the first national joint process in several years. NALC task force members are encouraged by the discussions and are optimistic that NALC and USPS can reach agreement on a process that builds on our past success in jointly evaluating and adjusting routes.

NALC Health Benefit launches app

The NALC Health Benefit Plan announces the launch of its new mobile application and updated member portal. Members now have secure access to their personal health information whenever and wherever they are. After creating an account, members can manage or view information about their deductible, claims history, out-of-pocketexpenses or benefits with 24/7 access; they can even message the NALC Health Benefit Plan and upload documents.

You can access the member portal on your desktop by visiting nalchbp.org and clicking the member login/register tab and creating an account. Or you can download the mobile app from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

- To download the app on your mobile device:
- 1. Open the app store on your device.
- 2. Search for the NALCHBP Member Portal.
- 3. Click the "Get" button in the right corner.



Mentorship and the new letter carrier experience

The New Employee Experience and Retention Program is a joint pilot program that involves various new and modified practices for all city carrier assistants (CCAs) and part-time flexible city letter carriers in selected offices. It began in May at two stations in Wisconsin and Michigan. Since then, the pilot has expanded twice to a total of 75 stations in four states.

NALC and USPS have also launched a joint pilot program designed to provide newly hired city letter carriers the opportunity to have mentoring relationships with experienced city carriers, through which feedback, coaching and positive reinforcement can be shared. The New Employee Mentoring Program kicked off in September and is being tested in 40 installations located in California, Iowa, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas.

With these two programs, progress is being made toward improving the learning experience for newly hired city letter carriers. More information about the details of both pilot programs is available on the NALC website at nalc.org and in M-01949 and M-01961 in the Materials Reference System, which is located at nalc.org/mrs.

Please check future editions of *The Postal Record* and the NALC website for further updates.

Congress funds government, raises debt limit through Dec. 3; negotiations continue on other priorities

The House of Representatives and the Senate passed legislation to fund the government and increase the country's debt limit until Dec. 3.

Both chambers passed a continuing resolution on Sept. 30 to fund the government until Dec. 3. President Biden signed the continuing resolution into law on Sept. 30, just hours before the midnight deadline to avoid a government shutdown.

This short-term fix includes funding to sustain federal agencies until Dec. 3, as well as \$28.6 billion in aid to respond to recent hurricanes and wildfires and \$6.3 billion to help resettle refugees from Afghanistan.

House members voted 219-206 on Oct. 12 on a rule (H. Res. 716) that cleared a bill that passed in the Senate (S. 1301) on Oct. 7 to raise the debt limit with an extension that expires on Dec. 3.

President Biden signed the bill into law on Oct. 15.

The bill raises the nation's borrowing authority by \$480 billion, avoiding a default on the country's debt. This is a temporary bipartisan fix, and it leaves much work to be done on addressing the debt ceiling, which Republican lawmakers have said Democrats must do on their own. The debt limit and government funding will both expire on Dec. 3.

"The Democratic House has taken action to honor our responsibility to address the priority of the debt limit," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said. "We have done so because this is about protecting families. The failure to lift the debt limit could result in a loss of up to 6 million jobs, the elimination of \$15 trillion in household wealth and drastic increases in the cost of loans, car loans, mortgages, student loans, credit card bills and other borrowing."

The votes to avoid a government shutdown and to increase the debt limit have allowed lawmakers to temporarily shift their focus back to other priority legislation, including the bipartisan Infrastructure Improvement and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684) and a budget reconciliation package estimated to be \$1.5 trillion to \$3.5 trillion, both critical parts of President Biden's Build Back Better agenda.

As this Bulletin was going to print, negotiations were still underway to reduce the overall price tag of the budget reconciliation package. As a result, we can expect to see numerous proposals and priorities being eliminated or included at lower funding levels. Check the Government Affairs section of the NALC website for updates as they happen.

Update on NALC priority bills/resolutions

NALC remains focused on working with Congress to pass key pieces of legislation that affect letter carriers. A bill needs the support of 218 House members to pass when it comes to the floor for a vote. The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) has surpassed 218 co-sponsors, with 231 co-sponsors at press time. However, other NALC priority resolutions need additional support to surpass the 218-member threshold. Securing 218 co-sponsors as soon as possible is important because it helps solidify the language of a bill. For example, reaching 218 co-sponsors on the Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076) will stop those who are trying to remove important language from the bill that continues six-day delivery.

NALC appreciates our members who have contacted their representatives to advocate for letter carriers' best interests, and we encourage you to continue to reach out to your members of Congress. As many congressional offices continue to function virtually or in a hybrid manner, the best way to reach your representatives is through district outreach emails. NALC encourages all members to contact their representatives to support these critical pieces of legislation:

CCAs have choices for their health benefits

The second week of November signifies the start of the 2021 Federal Benefits Open Season. Now is the time for city carriers and their families to review their health benefit options. Open Season is usually the one opportunity each year carriers have to enroll in or make changes to their health, dental and vision plans. Each year, Open Season runs from the Monday of the second full workweek in November through the Monday of the second full workweek in December. The Office of Personnel Management officially announced the dates for this year's Open Season as Monday, Nov. 8, through Monday, Dec. 13.

This article will discuss the health benefits available to newly hired employees throughout their time spent as a city carrier assistant (CCA) and upon transition to a career position for the Postal Service. Careful planning, as well as understanding what plans are available and the eligibility requirements to enroll in them, will ensure a successful health benefits enrollment process.

CCA rights regarding health insurance can be found in the 2019-2023 USPS-NALC National Agreement, Appendix B Section 3. Other Provisions, F. Article 21 – Health Insurance.

CCAs have two options for health benefits. One option is the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan, in which newly hired CCAs may enroll and participate upon being hired. This option is available to all CCAs, regardless of length of service. CCAs may elect coverage in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan within 60 days of the date they were hired, or within 60 days upon being reappointed to another 360-day term after a five-day break in service.

For self-only coverage in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan, the Postal Service will make a biweekly contribution to the total premium for any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan (USPS Plan) self-only option equal to the greater of (a) \$125, or (b) the minimum required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

For self-plus-one or self-and-family coverage in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan, the Postal Service will make a biweekly contribution equal to 65 percent of the total premium for any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan (USPS plan) for either self-plus-one or self-and-family coverage during a CCA's initial year of CCA employment. After a CCA's first year of employment, the Postal Service will make a biweekly contribution equal to 75 percent of the total premium for either self-plus-one or self-and-family coverage.

The 2019-2023 USPS-NALC National Agreement maintains the Postal Service's biweekly contribution of \$125 toward self-only coverage in the USPS Noncareer Health Plan for Plan Year 2021. For CCAs who wish to select selfplus-one or self-and-family coverage under the USPS plan, the first-year contribution by USPS will be 65 percent for the remainder of Plan Year 2021. However, effective in Plan Year 2022, the Postal Service will contribute 75 percent of the premiums for self-only, self-plus-one or self-and-family coverage, regardless of the year of employment.

The second health benefit option available to CCAs is to participate in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. This option is available to CCAs after completing one 360-day term and being reappointed to another. The National Agreement provision governing CCAs' right to participate in FEHB is found in Appendix B, Section 3. Other Provisions F. Article 21 - Health Insurance.

CCAs may enroll in any available FEHB plan, including the NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP), but there is no Postal Service contribution toward the premium. This means that the entire cost of the premium is the CCA's responsibility.

The NALC HBP is a comprehensive plan that has provided letter carriers and their families with first-rate health insurance since 1950. The plan is owned and operated by letter carriers and pays particular attention to their health needs. The plan is not for profit, focusing only on the health of its members. The NALC HBP was started by letter carriers for letter carriers, so it truly is your plan. The Plan partners with Cigna to provide the membership with a network of doctors, hospitals, ambulatory surgery centers and laboratories that all offer their services at a discounted rate. Cigna has more than 4 million providers and more than 21,000 facilities nationwide to choose from.

You can compare FEHB plans by visiting opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/open-season.

Upon conversion to career status, a letter carrier's health benefits options change significantly. Most importantly, once converted to a career status position, letter carriers have 60 days to enroll in an FEHB health plan. Converted CCAs will receive a package of information in the mail that includes a brochure listing the available plans and their costs. FEHB is available to all career letter carriers.

If a CCA was enrolled in the USPS Noncareer Employee Health Benefits Plan and converted to a career position, their enrollment would be terminated either 1) the last day of the month that is 28 days after they are converted to a career position, or 2) if they choose to enroll in an FEHB plan, the date the coverage begins, whichever is earlier.

Opportunities to enroll or make changes to health benefits are limited.

Carriers who do not enroll during their first 60 days of eligibility will have to wait to enroll, or to make changes, during Open Season, unless they have a qualifying life event (QLE)—for example, marriage or birth of a child. Since QLEs are not the same for all programs, carriers should visit the USPS LiteBlue page for the most updated information at liteblue.usps.gov/humanresources/benefits/elections/qualifying_life_events.

Now is Open Season, and it's important that letter carriers don't miss out on the opportunity to enroll in a health benefit plan or to make changes to their current enrollment during this period. It is beneficial for new employees to take the time to review the health benefit options and eligibility requirements listed above so that they can make an informed choice regarding the health benefit needs for both them and their family.

For more information about enrolling in the USPS Noncareer Health Benefits Plan, visit liteblue.usps.gov/ humanresources/benefits. For more information about enrolling in an FEHB plan, visit opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/open-season. For more information about enrolling in the NALC HBP or for a plan brochure, visit nalchpb.org.

- Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H. R. 3076/S. 1720)—a bipartisan bill that aims to provide financial and • operational stability to the United States Postal Service.
- The Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H. R. 4268)—a bill that would provide certain federal employees the opportunity to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as temporary employees after Dec. 31, 1988, thus making such time creditable service under the Federal Employees Retirement System, and for other purposes.
- **Door Delivery (H. Res. 109)**—calls on Congress to ensure that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.
- Anti-privatization (H. Res. 47)—calls on Congress to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the United States Postal Service remains an independent establishment of the federal government and is not subject to privatization.
- Six-day Delivery (H. Res. 114)—calls on Congress to ensure that the United States Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its six-day mail delivery service.

Freedom to Vote Act introduced in Senate

On Sept. 15, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) introduced the Freedom to Vote Act (S. 2747), a bill to expand voting rights and reduce the influence of big money in politics. The bill is co-sponsored by Sens. Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jon Tester (D-MT) and Raphael Warnock (D-GA).

The bill includes several measures to address voter access and election administration. The bill would ensure that all voters could request a mail-in ballot, improve the delivery of election mail, and apply minimum standards to ensure that ballot drop boxes are available and accessible to all voters. Additionally, the legislation would implement automatic voter registration, make Election Day a federal holiday, allow same-day voter registration and expand early voting.

The bill also includes measures to improve election integrity through the protection of election records, infrastructure and ballot tabulation. It also would task the Election Assistance Commission with developing training and recruitment programs for non-partisan election officials. The bill would prohibit partisan gerrymandering and would require super PACs and other organizations that spend money in elections to disclose donors.

"With the Freedom to Vote Act, the entire voting rights working group, including Sens. Manchin and Merkley, is united behind legislation that will set basic national standards to make sure all Americans can cast their ballots in the way that works best for them, regardless of what ZIP code they live in," Sen. Klobuchar said. "This bill will ensure Americans can request a mail-in ballot, have at least 15 days of early voting, and can register to vote on Election Day."

Overall, S. 2747 is a scaled-back, narrower voting rights package than the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1), which passed in the House earlier this year but was blocked by Senate Republicans. The Freedom to Vote Act has Democratic support; however, without the backing of any Republican senators, it would not receive the 60 votes needed to bypass the Senate filibuster.

Kubayanda renominated to serve on Postal Regulatory Commission

President Biden announced on Oct. 6 his intent to renominate Michael Kubayanda to serve as a commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). Kubayanda, who has served as the chairman of the commission since January, has been a member of the PRC since 2019. The renomination of Kubayanda is good news for the PRC and the U.S. Postal Service.

Prior to his service on the PRC, Kubayanda served as a board member and privacy officer for a digital health startup. He also previously worked with the USPS Office of Inspector General and as counsel to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.



The PRC is the independent body that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. Its responsibilities include preventing anticompetitive practices, promoting accountability, adjudicating complaints, setting postal rates and helping oversee delivery service standards. The PRC has five commissioners, who are nominated by the president for six-year terms and confirmed by the Senate.

NALC also has strongly urged President Biden to prioritize the renomination of Ron Bloom to serve a new term on the USPS Board of Governors (BOG). Bloom, the BOG chairman, currently is serving in a holdover year from his partial term that expired in December 2020.

Bloom has been an important leader in helping the Postal Service navigate through one of its most turbulent periods during the COVID-19 pandemic. In his time on the BOG, he has called for broad relief for the Postal Service in various COVID-19 recovery bills, led a subcommittee overseeing the Postal Service's national election task force alongside fellow BOG member Lee Moak, and urged the BOG to support and maintain six- and seven-day delivery. Bloom has actively worked with Postmaster General Louis DeJoy to bring wide bipartisan support for postal reform legislation, a top priority for postal workers across the country.

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Fredric V. Rolando, Presiden

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