



Some delays in retirement processing continue

Recent reports from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) have shown some improvements in its retirement “finalization” efforts. While the current backlog of applicants has decreased from 61,108 to 41,787 in the past seven months, it still has a long way to go to make the process timely for federal retirees. With the improvements made so far this year, it will take OPM almost four months just to process the existing claims. When you consider that it receives on average more than 8,000 new claims during the “non-peak” months (peak months are November through March, when claims can exceed 12,000), it will be August 2014 before OPM reaches its anticipated “manageable backlog” of 13,000 cases pending.

I guess that the good news would be that the average age of city letter carriers is 48 years old, so most will be around when/if OPM finally fixes it. Of course, with the Paul Ryan budget plan of raising the retirement age and reducing the benefits for federal workers, the application process may not be needed, since most employees would have to work until they pass away. It would sure balance the budget, but it would return us to the early 1900s when people worked until they died or moved in with their children. That approach reminds me of the “Back to the Future” movies—except in this scenario, we would go back and make that our future.

A glance at the retirement process shows that during this year, the following applications and processing occurred:

Month 2012	Claims Received	Claims Processed	Claims Pending
January	21,479	8,749	61,108
February	6,415	9,953	57,570
March	7,090	12,386	52,274
April	6,770	8,028	51,016
May	7,523	9,066	49,473
June	7,814	8,964	48,323
July	8,660	12,304	44,679
August	8,973	11,865	41,787

And while OPM reports that it currently has reduced the process time from 168 days to 117 days to finalize new applications for retirement, that number is questionable, based on the calls our office receives. My belief is that it is more like seven months, and that is just for the basic or clean applications. Applications that involve Quattro

(Qualified Domestic Relations Order), other federal agency transfer issues, OWCP wage loss, military service issues or other issues will take even longer to process. Whatever the precise delay, it is too much. Current employees who are contemplating retirement in the next 12 months should consider saving as much annual leave (up to the 440-hour maximum) that they can cash in at retirement. This continues to be a good financial bridge during the “interim” pay period of the retirement application process.

Our office continues to be available to assist both active and retired members with their retirement questions or concerns. Please remember that if you contact our office by mail, please provide a phone number that we can use if additional information is needed to facilitate any responses.

Convention update

It has now been more than three months since our very successful 68th Biennial Convention in Minneapolis. The intent of our office this year was to provide retirement information to all in attendance. Through the CSRS/FERS retirement classes, the Social Security workshop and the Thrift Savings presentation, we attempted to provide assistance to both active and retired members. I hope we were successful. The Social Security class was so large that we had to turn people away at the door. That will be fixed in 2014, when we venture to Philadelphia.

Nalcrest update

Another highlight from the convention was the effort to reintroduce our membership to their retirement village in Nalcrest, FL. The response at the booth was tremendous and through August, we had leased 19 units to new residents. Kudos is given to the Three Musketeers of Nalcrest—Matty Rose, Don Southern and Tom Young.

If you are considering retiring or even visiting the sunny haven that is Nalcrest, make sure you get on board early. While we still have some vacancies, they are going fast. Additionally, we will have some “snowbird” furnished units available for weekly or monthly rental. More information on this subject can be found elsewhere in this *Postal Record*. 