

Honoring and celebrating



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Memorial Day is one of the 10 federal holidays contained in Article 11 of the NALC/USPS collective-bargaining agreement. This particular holiday is often confused with another holiday, Veterans Day. Both holidays have an association with veterans but the difference is rather significant.

Veterans Day celebrates the service of all United States military veterans, while Memorial Day is a day in which we remember the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice and died while serving their country. The Memorial Day holiday originally was observed on May 30 but is now observed every year on the last Monday of May.

In 1868, three years after the American Civil War, an organization of Union veterans known as the Grand Army of the Republic (founded in Decatur, IL), established a day when the nation would decorate with flowers the graves of those who died serving in the war. At that time, it was known as Decoration Day. History tells us that the first large observance held was at Arlington National Cemetery, just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. However, local observations around the country claim to have occurred as early as 1865. During that commemoration, small flags were placed on each grave, a tradition that still exists today.

The Confederate Army held a similar tradition but on a different day. By the 20th century, Memorial Day was expanded to honor all Americans who died while in military service and, in 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress.

To make sure that the sacrifices of our fallen veterans are never forgotten, Congress passed and the president signed into law The National Moment of Remembrance Act (P.L. 106-579), creating the White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance. The Act encourages all Americans to pause at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation.

On this Memorial Day, I ask that we all take a minute out of our day to remember those U.S. military men and women who died while serving our country.

Mother's Day is a holiday honoring motherhood that is observed in different forms throughout the world. In the United States, Mother's Day became an official U.S. holiday in 1914. While dates and celebrations vary internationally, Mother's

Day in the U.S. falls on the second Sunday in May (this year, on May 8) and traditionally involves giving mothers gifts, flowers and cards. It is also one of, if not the highest, phone traffic days. Many families celebrate by giving their moms the day off from cooking. Restaurants are packed, flower shops are busy, and families enjoy the day together.

I wish every mom a wonderful and happy Mother's Day, and to those of us who no longer have our mothers here with us, may we reflect on all the great memories and special life experiences they provided our families.

Milestones of membership and how a branch can request years-of-service pins and plaques are found in the *NALC Constitution*. Since this article is related to celebrations and honoring individuals, I thought it would be a great time to remind branches of a way to help honor years of membership. One milestone in particular we all look forward to achieving is lifetime membership. Those who achieve lifetime membership should be honored and celebrated for reaching the 50-year membership milestone.

Instructions for how to do so are listed in Article 2:

Section 5 (a). When receiving proper notification by the Branch Secretary that a member will complete twenty-five (25) years, or thirty (30) years, or thirty-five (35) years, or forty (40) years, and forty-five (45) years of membership, the National Association of Letter Carriers shall provide a suitable lapel pin to such member. In the year when a member is to complete fifty (50) years membership in this Association, and by proper request having been directed by the Branch Secretary to the National Secretary-Treasurer, a member shall be given a Life Membership Card of gold which shall entitle him/her to all privileges of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers without payment of dues, per capita tax, or special assessments from the date of issue of such Life Membership Card; provided, however, that a Life Member shall not be exempt from the requirements of premium payments to the Mutual Benefit Association or the Health Benefit Plan. Life Members shall also be issued a suitable lapel pin. The Life Membership Card and the lapel pin shall be issued by the National Association through the office of the National President.

(b). In the year when a member is to complete fifty-five (55) years, sixty (60) years and sixty-five (65) years and when receiving proper notification by the Branch Secretary, the National Association of Letter Carriers shall provide a suitable lapel pin to such member.

(c). In the year when a member is to complete seventy (70) and seventy-five (75) years and when receiving proper notification by the Branch Secretary, the National Association of Letter Carriers shall provide a suitable plaque for such member.

(d). For purposes of this Article 2, Section 5, membership in the National Alliance of Postal Employees prior to January 1, 1969 shall be treated as equivalent to membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers. Article 2, Section 5 shall also apply to any members who were denied NALC membership after January 1, 1969 and joined the National Alliance of Postal Employees.