

# Keeping vigilant, in politics and on the job



**Manuel L. Peralta Jr.**

**N**ALC recently concluded its election of officers for the four-year term beginning this December. To those of you who cast your ballot, I wish to thank you for your support of our team. And on a personal note, I also wish to thank you for allowing me the honor of serving the membership for another term at this level.

If you did not participate in the NALC elections, ask yourself why. If you are not satisfied with your union, pitch in and get involved. NALC's strength comes from you, not us. If you get involved and bring your ideas forward, you make your union stronger. Some might push back on the challenge, but your input and your contribution are what makes this union stronger.

You strive for better representation and your involvement can help make that happen. Never give up on your union. Get involved.

Shortly after our NALC elections concluded, most of you carried quite a bit of political mail in performance of your duties as letter carriers. Others were involved in get-out-the-vote efforts throughout the country. Much was on the line and it was worth our attention to get the vote out.

The result: These elections turned out the largest number of voters in more than 50 years of midterms. If you exercised your right to vote, good for you, as you participated in the most cherished privilege of democracy.

We must keep a vigilant eye on what takes place on the Hill as well as at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. When we need you to make phone calls and influence our elected officials, please pitch in. Your union needs you.

## A tragic incident...

As I prepare this month's column, I draw much information from recent reports relating to heat injuries or events that demonstrate many of your managers do not pay sufficient attention to your safety needs.

More than six years ago, letter carrier John Watzlawick died in the performance of his duties in Independence, MO. The coroner determined that his death was caused by the heat. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) determined that management failed to comply with the OSHA general duty clause by failing to take sufficient steps to prevent serious harm from the heat. The OSHA citation included the following:

...the employer exposed employees to the recognized hazard of excessive heat during mail delivery. This included a letter carrier who had just returned to work after a five week absence and was not acclimated to the heat. (emphasis mine)

OSHA determined that management failed to allow John time to acclimate, as well as failing to properly implement a "Water, Rest and Shade" program to prevent harm.

## ...and a lesson unlearned

This past summer, Southern California experienced an intense heat wave. On July 6, Woodland Hills letter carrier Peggy Frank returned to duty following an extended absence due to an injury. On her first day back following that absence, the temperature reached 117 degrees.

Peggy was not provided any time to acclimate. She was sent out on her route because her employer refuses to embrace the medically proven fact that the human body must get used to its surroundings before it works at its best.

The coroner recently determined that Peggy's death was caused by overheating.

When we reach out to educate you on safety matters, we do so to protect you and for you to teach others who aren't reading this magazine. We do so in hopes that the information reaches everyone and helps you protect each other.

Peggy trusted her managers enough to go out there and deliver. Her employer failed her and, in doing so, failed her family.

Keep an eye on each other.

**An intense heat wave in July claimed the life of Woodland Hills, CA letter carrier Peggy Frank, who had just returned to work after an extended absence. The coroner has determined her death was caused by overheating.**

