

# Additional rights and benefits upon conversion to career status



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**U**pon conversion from city carrier assistant (CCA) to career status, letter carriers are afforded additional rights and benefits. Some of these benefits require letter carriers to take action to access them. This is an issue I've written about before. Most of the CCAs currently being converted to career status, and those who will be converted in the near future, likely were not letter carriers when these previous articles were published, so it is a good time to update and cover this information again.

What appears below covers only a few of the rights and benefits that become available when one is converted to career status. As mentioned above, these are benefits that require some action to obtain. For a

comprehensive look at all your rights and benefits, I strongly encourage you to read the *Letter Carrier Resource Guide* on the NALC website. It is available electronically there; instructions on how to obtain a hard copy of the guide also appear on the website.

**Health insurance**—After conversion to full-time career status, a letter carrier has 60 days to enroll in a Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) health insurance plan. If this is not done within 60 days of conversion, the letter carrier cannot enroll until the next open season in November, unless he or she can demonstrate that they had a qualifying life event (QLE) as defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The FEHB program has many plans to choose from, including the NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP).

The NALC's HBP is a comprehensive plan that has provided letter carriers and their families with first-rate health insurance since 1950 at affordable rates. The plan is owned and operated by letter carriers, and pays particular attention to their health needs.

If a letter carrier was enrolled in the USPS Non-Career Employee Health Benefits Plan and converted to a career position, that enrollment is terminated on the last day of the month that falls 28 days after conversion to a career position. To avoid a gap in coverage, newly converted letter carriers should enroll in a FEHB plan as soon as possible.

The fastest and easiest way to do so is through the USPS LiteBlue website and PostalEASE. Coverage will begin on the first day of the first pay period after signing up online, or, if a form is manually submitted, after Human Resources Shared Services receives the election.

**Life insurance**—Once converted to career status, letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the Federal Em-

ployees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) to receive basic life insurance, unless it's waived by the employee. The basic coverage begins the first day in a pay and duty status after conversion. USPS pays the entire cost of basic coverage, which amounts to the annual rate of base pay, rounded up to the next even \$1,000, plus \$2,000. Accidental death and dismemberment insurance is automatically included in basic life insurance at no additional cost and is equal to the basic insurance amount described above.

Beyond the basic insurance, FEGLI has additional optional coverage that can be purchased. To elect any of the optional coverages, a letter carrier must enroll by submitting a completed Life Insurance Election form (SF 2817) to the local personnel office within 31 days of conversion. The cost is determined by the amount and type of coverage chosen, as well as the age of the employee. Optional insurance goes into effect the first day in a pay and duty status after the local personnel office receives the election.

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**Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)**—Once converted to full-time career status, letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). It has three components: FERS Basic Benefit Plan, Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

The FERS Basic Benefit and Social Security are defined benefit plans. The Postal Service will withhold the appropriate share of the cost of the basic annuity and Social Security each payday.

The TSP is different. Letter carriers have complete control over how much they contribute, and in which funds the money is invested. The Postal Service automatically contributes 1 percent of each employee's base pay and will match contributions up to 5 percent of base pay.

Participation in the TSP is voluntary. However, newly converted letter carriers are automatically enrolled in the TSP, and 3 percent of base pay will be deducted from each paycheck and deposited in the traditional balance of their TSP account unless the employee elects to change or stop contributions. When converted to full-time career status, CCAs who participate in the NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan may transfer their savings to the TSP. The surrender charge will be waived in this instance only.