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June 2021

The Postal Record

The monthly journal of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

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CONGRESS GOES TO WORK ON POSTAL REFORM

—PAGES 6-9

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 3076

To provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

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Understanding Medicare integration under postal reform



Fredric V. Rolando

Thanks to the bipartisan bill H.R. 3076 that advanced through the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform in May, there is genuine hope for success in achieving some of our most important legislative priorities (see story on page 6). The bill includes three important provisions: a reform of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program that would allow the Postal Service and its employees and retirees to maximize savings on health insurance costs via integration with Medicare on a prospective basis; a repeal of the retiree health pre-funding mandate (as provided by the USPS Fairness

Act); and a provision to make six-day delivery of mail and packages a statutory obligation (currently, it is enforced by an appropriations bill that must be renewed annually).

This month, I want to focus on what we have done to shape the FEHB and Medicare provisions to protect the interests of our members, both active and retired. The health care reforms outlined in H.R. 3076 would lower the cost of health insurance under FEHB for active and retired postal employees alike, which would help both the Postal Service and its current and former employees. This would improve the Postal Service's net income and make the billions in funds deposited in our retiree health fund last longer (before the Postal Service returns to the pay-as-you-go system of funding retiree health premiums that existed before 2007).

The bill would place most postal participants in FEHB into one insurance pool (separate from other federal employees and annuitants) and require most existing FEHB insurers to offer postal and non-postal versions of their plans. Most active postal employees (those under age 64 as of Jan. 1, 2023) would automatically be enrolled in the new postal plans in 2023, which will include automatic enrollment in Medicare Part A (hospital services) and Part B (medical services) once they retire and reach age 65. Current annuitants and employees aged 64 or older (as of Jan. 1, 2023) may decide whether or not to enroll in Medicare, and can therefore choose to remain in non-postal plans if they decline Medicare. Fortunately, the cost of these non-postal plans would not rise as a result of this reform. Annuitants who choose to enroll in the postal plans would automatically be enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B.

Having future annuitants enrolled in Medicare would reduce the cost of FEHB premiums for all participants in the postal pool,

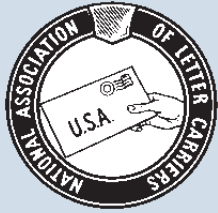
as Medicare is the primary payer of health bills for those 65 and older; FEHB plans cover only the costs of deductibles and copays. H.R. 3076 also would lower the cost of postal FEHB plans by requiring such plans to take advantage of Medicare Part D subsidies for health plans that provide prescription drug benefits—subsidies that are available to company health plans in the private sector.

Of course, about 8 out of 10 retired letter carriers already choose to enroll in Medicare Parts A and B when they become eligible, so the proposed changes in the FEHB Program will not be especially dramatic. All the major plans will remain available, including the market-dominant Blue Cross Blue Shield plan and the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

We have worked hard with allies in Congress to shape the legislation in ways that address employees and annuitants who are in special circumstances. First, in the rare event that no postal plan is available to a participant (in highly rural places, for example), he or she can enroll in a non-postal FEHB plan. Second, if a postal employee's current health plan does not offer a postal version of that plan, he or she can stay in that non-postal plan. However, if the employee ever switches plans, he or she may choose any of the postal plans. Third, if a future annuitant lives abroad or in a place where there are no Medicare providers, enrollment in a non-postal plan will be available. Similarly, if a future annuitant has coverage from Veterans Affairs or the Indian Health Service and therefore does not need Medicare, he or she may enroll in a non-postal FEHB plan. Finally, the bill includes a one-time opportunity for post-age-65 annuitants who chose not to enroll in Medicare Part B at age 65 to do so, with no late enrollment penalty, by choosing a postal plan in FEHB. This will be a great benefit for annuitants who regret not having enrolled in Part B at age 65, since the penalties are very stiff (raising Part B premiums 10 percent for each year after age 65).

Enacting H.R. 3076 is going to be hard work. There is a long way to go. The bill must be considered by two other House committees that share jurisdiction over the Medicare program (Ways and Means as well as Energy and Commerce), go to the House floor for a vote and then pass the Senate, where it must withstand possible filibusters. Thanks to the work of our committee's chairwoman, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), and its ranking member, Rep. James Comer (R-KY), who together co-sponsored H.R. 3076, we are off to a good bipartisan start—the bill won the unanimous support of committee Democrats and Republicans.

As we move forward, we must mobilize active and retired letter carriers alike to push their representatives in Washington to work together to finally make postal reform a reality after a decade and a half of struggle. Watch this space.



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Mail, carriers, multimedia



**Philip
Dine**

Two Cleveland girls spent six months researching/producing a film about free mail delivery's origins and value for the annual National History Day competition. Amid 600,000 contestants in 50 states, 12-year-old twins Aanya and Siya Lakireddy soared.

The judges liked the narration, praised their source material—and reveled in the topic. The sisters captured third place in Cleveland's regional contest, then third again in Ohio's April 26 state competition. They also won the American History Film Project Prize, so their 10-minute documentary will remain available online.

This year's theme: Communications in History.

"The mail has always been delivered to us by letter carriers," Aanya says.

"I wanted to find out how that happened. We should be grateful, because mail is really what started communication among people."

Siya adds, "I learned a lot about free mail delivery and the first mail carrier. Joseph Briggs invented something that would actually change the world today."

After their mother, Manjula, read in a local history newsletter that Cleveland's Briggs had pioneered free delivery in 1863, they approached NALC in March. We sent them a *Postal Record* article as a primary source. The documentary's credits lead with NALC and include the Postal Service, Library of Congress and National Postal Museum.

"Whenever I see a mail carrier now, I make sure I wave to them," Manjula says, "because I have so much respect for them."

Social studies teacher Connie Miller, who oversees the history contest at their school, was fascinated to learn how free mail delivery began: "The fact that it wasn't always there really surprised me. We take so much for granted."

Now this award-winning teacher plans to add it to a curriculum list of "outstanding" local history topics.

View the film at americanhistoryfilmproject.org/improving-communication-through-mail.

NALC's retirement community for letter carriers has received widespread media attention, but is about to get rarified coverage in a scholarly journal—because an accomplished academic finds the place "really cool."

Nalcrest will grace the pages of *Arris: Journal of the Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians*, thanks to Anna Andrzejewski, a University of Wisconsin professor specializing in the social history of architecture. Her research included NALC archives at Wayne State University, old *Postal Record* articles, and a visit to Nalcrest.

Dual factors intrigued her: Nalcrest's unique nature, and its success.

"It looks like the postwar suburbs of the 1950s and 1960s in a lot of ways, single-family row houses and more," Anna says. "But people don't go to work, and there are no playgrounds. That's why Nalcrest is so cool. It looks like a suburb, it acts like a suburb, but it's not a suburb."

The developer tried to build other retirement communities, "but they all failed," she observes. "Nalcrest succeeded because of the strength of the union. I came away from my visit with the sense that the commitment is still there. I think that's a testament to the union."

Boston Branch 34's Anthony Denucche's preferred medium for his music with a twist is television. The 24-year letter carrier plays molar music—tapping his teeth with his fingers. He started in third grade, while trying to think of test answers. Others enjoyed it, so he kept with it.

"I didn't really pursue it," Anthony says. "I have a career. But people keep asking me to do it, so I just go with the flow, and as you can see, it's taken me places."

To David Letterman's show. "The Gong Show." Professional baseball stadiums. Now, to "America's Got Talent," summertime's biggest TV show. After two home video auditions in February, he was among 200 (of 200,000 aspirants) invited to perform in California before judges Howie, Simon, Heidi and Sofia.

"I was surrounded by talent from all over the world," Anthony says. "I'm thinking, 'I'm just a mailman.'"

Before ushering Anthony on stage, actor/host Terry Crews encouraged him: "Do it for your letter carriers!"

"I told the audience I was a mailman," Anthony recounts, "and that during the pandemic we've seen many of our customers losing their job, having to quarantine, and the best we can do is try to deliver a smile for them every day."

"I got a standing ovation. I didn't expect it. Twenty-five seconds is a long time to stand there, as people just clapped. I kept saying 'Thank you'; they just kept going. I sort of teared up."

The 200 filmed tryouts will air Tuesdays, June to September, with the judges choosing 44 contestants for live TV in September, when Americans vote for the ultimate winner. Anthony thinks letter carriers already have succeeded.

"It's good for us. I think speaking for the Post Office, that was the drawing point. They appreciated my story, our story."

Anthony can be found on Instagram at [@anthony_molarman](https://www.instagram.com/anthony_molarman) or on YouTube by searching "Anthony the Molar Man."

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News from Washington

Senate confirms two Postal Service Board of Governor nominees

May was a busy month on Capitol Hill on postal issues with two bills seeing action (see page 6) and two of three postal nominations advancing.

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). McReynolds will hold a term that expires on Dec. 8, 2026, and Stroman's term will expire on Dec. 8, 2028. These confirmations are effective immediately and will fill two of three vacant BOG seats.

The Senate vote on a third nominee, Anton Hajjar, is still pending.

McReynolds is one of the country's leading experts on election administration/policy and is 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.

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



Ronald Stroman



Amber McReynolds



Anton Hajjar



Kiran Ahuja

attacks. He currently serves on the American Law Institute's governing board.

On April 28, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs (HSGAC) advanced the nominations of Hajjar, McReynolds and Stroman for the BOG and Kiran Ahuja as director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In his opening statement, Hajjar referenced the opportunities within USPS to grow business and improve service for the American people. McReynolds mentioned the crucial role USPS plays in our democracy by delivering ballots and emphasized that universal service obligation is a top priority. Stroman spoke about the commitment and resilience of USPS employees, his experience with the Postal Service, and his goal to work in a bipartisan manner to restore financial stability, improve operations and grow business for USPS.

"The Postal Service and its dedicated workers continue facing unique challenges that have been compounded by the ongoing pandemic," HSGAC Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) said. "It is essential that nominees to the Board of Governors are qualified leaders who will focus on service, and work with Congress to ensure our postal workforce has the right support to deliver for the American people each and every day."

HSGAC Ranking Member Rob Port-

man (R-OH) also emphasized the important role of the BOG. "Providing high-quality mail and package services to all Americans remains vital," he said. "If confirmed, you have a challenging road ahead, and I hope you will work closely with us, and your colleagues already on the Board, to see it through."

During the hearing, the nominees were questioned on a range of topics including declining service quality, the universal service obligation, and opportunities for enhancements and innovations within USPS.

The three nominees agreed that improving service was one of their top priorities, and they committed to working with the BOG and Congress to do so if confirmed. The nominees reiterated their commitment to working with the postmaster general, the BOG and stakeholders to improve service.

Ahuja, an attorney who served as chief of staff to the OPM director from 2015 to 2017 and spent six years as director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, was also questioned during the hearing. If confirmed, Ahuja would lead OPM, the federal agency that provides human resources policy and manages health care, life insurance, and retirement benefits for federal employees and retirees.

Regarding postal employees, Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE) asked Ahuja to

commit to reviewing a recommendation to adopt private-sector pension allocation for USPS if confirmed. NALC supports this change.

The nominees received the support of all Democratic committee members. Hajjar, Reynolds and Stroman all received support from Portman while McReynolds and Stroman received support from Sen. Mitt Romney (R-UT). Ahjula's nomination, which received no support from Republicans, will go to the full Senate for a confirmation vote.

"NALC congratulates McReynolds and Stroman on their confirmations to these important positions," said NALC President Fredric Rolando. "A fully functioning Postal Board of Governors and competent leadership at the OPM are critical for letter carriers and other postal employees. We look forward to working with them and the rest of the BOG to ensure that letter carriers have a voice when decisions affecting their interests are made."

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 initia-

tives. 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."

Paid family and medical leave bill introduced in Senate

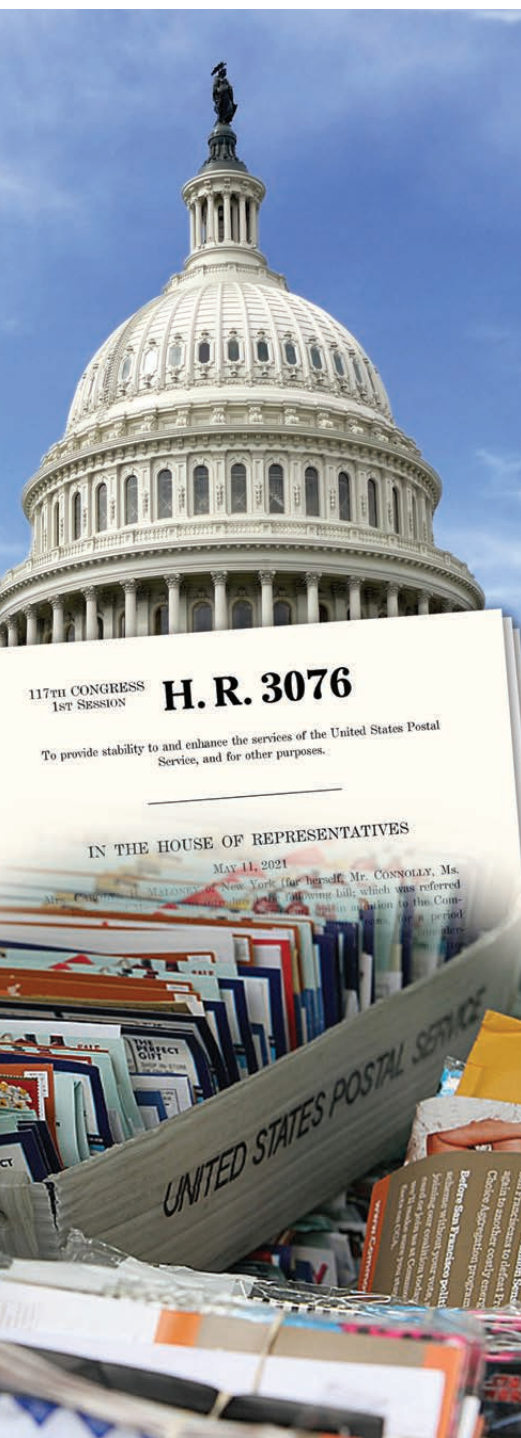
On April 15, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced the Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act (S. 1158) in the Senate. The bill, which mirrors H.R. 564, introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in the House in January, would provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for federal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

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. **PR**

Congress takes up postal reform



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

As this magazine was going to print, H.R. 3076 passed out of committee on a voice vote with no amendments. The 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 (PAEA) 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 VA) and for those who live in a place where there are not Medicare-participating providers.

Because they have jurisdiction over the Medicare program, the bill will be referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means as well as the House Committee on Energy and Commerce for possible amendments before it can be debated by the entire House of Representatives.

"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 also includes 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. This bill would eliminate the need for the annual fight to maintain this mandate.

In addition, the bill requires 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.

Recognizing that members of Congress had priorities that were not going to be addressed in the underlying bill, Chairwoman Maloney introduced a secondary measure, the Postal Service Improvement Act (H.R. 3077), which also was considered and advanced out of committee. This second bill includes a variety of provisions, including ballot tracking measures for votes cast by mail; paid parental leave for postal employees; Merit Systems Protection Board rights for managers and supervisors; an \$8 billion appropriation for the Postal Service to make 75 percent of its vehicle fleet electric and to build charging stations at postal facilities; a requirement that the Postal Service maintain January 2021 service standards on first-class mail; a pilot program to study using postal employees to conduct the Census; and a measure to allow members of Congress to inspect postal facilities at their discretion. However, many of

these provisions may lack the broad bipartisan support necessary to become law.

While H.R. 3076 has bipartisan support, that by itself will not be enough to see it 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."

The difficulties are compounded by the slim majority in the Senate, with 50 Republicans, 50 Democrats/Independents who caucus with Democrats, and Vice President Kamala Harris holding the tiebreaking vote as president of the Senate. As this publication was going to print, Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH) were beginning discussions on a Senate companion bill.

As the legislation 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 the legislation is released and when it moves in the halls of Congress.

Why is postal reform needed?

The mandate that USPS pre-fund decades' worth of health benefits for its future retirees went into effect in 2007. This is an onerous burden faced by no other public agency or private company in the country. It had the impact of creating an artificial financial crisis that has harmed the Postal Service ever since.

As reported in the Postal Service's annual 10-K financial statements, the mandate has cost an average of \$5.2 billion annually since 2007 and is responsible for 84 percent of USPS losses over that period, while accounting for 100 percent of losses from 2013 to 2018—and actually disguising what otherwise would have been net profits. Absent this unique burden, USPS would have recorded surpluses of nearly \$4.0 billion in that latter period.

The pre-funding mandate has prevented the Postal Service from properly investing in its networks. Even worse, the resulting red ink has been used both to threaten core services that Americans rely on—such as door-to-door service, six-day delivery and convenient post office hours—and to advance proposals to privatize the Postal Service and attack the jobs and rights of postal employees.

But where did the pre-funding mandate come from?

Nobody knew it at the time, but 2006 marked the end of perhaps the four most successful years in Postal Service history—with positive annual net incomes between 2003 and 2006 totaling more than \$9 billion. USPS sales topped \$72 billion in 2006. USPS's debt was just \$1.2 billion, a fraction of its \$15 billion debt limit. But the world was about to change dramatically, with the arrival of the worst recession in

Postal reform (continued)

some 80 years. No one could possibly anticipate what was about to happen; unfortunately, this included the members of Congress who were then debating postal reform legislation in the form of the PAEA.

The political forces driving action on postal legislation varied. Some were ideological. Some were technological. And some were the practical result of prior policy decisions.

On the ideological front, conservatives dominated Washington with President George W. Bush in the White House and the Republican Party in control of both houses of Congress. Three years earlier, a presidential commission had been formed to consider the future of the Postal Service. Although the commission ultimately rejected calls for postal privatization, it did call for improving the costly and

factors had to do with the prior policy decisions that spurred Congress to take up postal reform.

In 2003, Congress had reformed the funding rules for the Postal Service's Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) account. It did so after an audit revealed that USPS would massively overfund its CSRS pension benefits by tens of billions of dollars if the funding rules were not changed. The resulting legislation saw Congress set up an escrow account to hold most of these excess pension contributions until it could decide what to do with the money.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration's Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had shifted tens of billions of dollars in liabilities for military pension benefits to the Postal Service when the 2003 law was implemented—

“We’ve been working on the pre-funding problem for 15 years now. Repealing the pre-funding mandate and prospective Medicare integration have proven to be the most viable solution for the various stakeholders interested in finding a real solution that allows the Postal Service to innovate and grow in the years ahead.”

litigious system of postage rate-setting and for placing strict limits on the kinds of services the Postal Service could offer in competition with private companies.

On the technological front, there was widespread concern about the likely impact of the internet on postal volumes and finances. Some worried about the viability of the Postal Service in the digital age.

But perhaps the most important

basically making the Postal Service pay for CSRS benefits earned by its employees during their prior service in the armed forces. As funds began to pile up in the escrow

account, further postal reform was becoming urgent. Indeed, there was real concern that Congress might use the money for non-postal purposes. Moreover, the leadership of the General Accountability Office (GAO) had become concerned with the cost of future retiree health benefits. Congress already had addressed the unfunded liabilities for federal pensions when it created FERS in 1987. Although

private-sector accounting rules do not require companies to pre-fund these benefits, the comptroller general of the United States (the head of GAO) called on Congress to require all federal agencies to pre-fund their future retiree health benefits—effectively, to apply pension funding rules to retiree health benefits. For various reasons, this proposal made little sense—and it was rejected by both the White House and Congress in the ordinary budget process in the years before 2006.

Unfortunately, GAO's idea—this time applied only to the Postal Service—emerged as a perceived potential solution to the problem created by the 2003 CSRS funding reform law and the troublesome escrow account. Congress decided to compel the Postal Service to pre-fund its retiree health benefits with its excess pension contributions and thereby avert an increase in the budget deficit. This is what led to the legislated schedule of 10 annual payments ranging from \$5.4 billion to \$5.8 billion between 2007 and 2016—and to the mandate to continue pre-funding even after the first 10 years with so-called “normal cost” and “amortization” payments.

The Postal Service and its stakeholders were reluctant to accept this solution, but Congress offered two significant inducements. First, it reversed OPM's cost shift of the \$27 billion in military pension liabilities. Second, it gave USPS the right to raise rates one last time within one year of enactment of the law—that is, to build the cost of pre-funding into the postage rates before a new Consumer Price Index price-cap system was implemented. (Unfortunately, the USPS declined to use this one-time opportunity in the face of mailer opposition.) Fatefully,

PAEA was passed by a lame-duck session of Congress in December of 2006.

Though nobody saw it coming at the time, a perfect storm was brewing in the global economy that would have devastating effects on the Postal Service. Just a few months after the pre-funding mandate was enacted, the U.S. economy would enter the worst recession since the Great Depression. Unemployment soared to more than 10 percent. Millions of Americans lost their homes. Mail volume plummeted as the downturn hit the most mail-intensive parts of the economy—advertising, publishing, real estate and financial services. Meanwhile, the crushing cost of the pre-funding mandate took effect, driving up the Postal Service’s financial losses.

In the immediate crisis, most people blamed the recession for the Postal Service’s financial woes—and Congress reduced the pre-funding payment in 2009 from \$5.4 billion to \$1.4 billion and then deferred the 2011 payment until 2012. But once the U.S. economy began to slowly recover, observers started to blame the internet for the repeated losses, overlooking the impact of the pre-funding mandate. Indeed, many failed to see that the Postal Service had bounced back dramatically after 2012, thanks to an e-commerce boom made possible by that very same internet, and to rising productivity made possible by the Postal Service’s craft employees.

That allowed some, including those seeking privatization or intent on attacking a significant share of the federal work force, to promote a false narrative—that USPS’s financial problems indicated that it was a relic overtaken by electronic communications. In fact, flawed public policy was at issue here.

The bottom line: The Postal Service faces a manufactured financial crisis as a result of the 2006 congressional mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits—as would any company or agency forced to make such payments decades in advance.

Solutions to the pre-funding crisis

Over the years, NALC and other stakeholders have sought legislative solutions to the pre-funding crisis. From the beginning, NALC proposed repealing the pre-funding burden as the easiest solution to ending the Postal Service’s financial crisis. However, following House passage of the USPS Fairness Act in February 2020, COVID-19 became the center of legislative focus, which prevented any action on the bill in the Senate.

Another solution to pay for much of the liability was to get the Treasury Department to refund the Postal Service’s overcharged CSRS pension account. These overpayments date from when the Post Office Department became the U.S. Postal Service.

Treasury is responsible for pension benefits for the years any carriers worked for the Post Office Department, which existed until 1970, with the Postal Service picking up the tab for their years working after the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 created USPS. Unfortunately, OPM, which administers the CSRS, miscalculated the cost of pre-1970 pension benefits, not accounting for increases to letter carriers’ pre-1971 pensions due to pay increases after postal reorganization. Two independent studies found the CSRS postal account had been

overcharged to the tune of \$50 billion to \$75 billion.

Even though the pension surplus fix appeared in many pieces of legislation and was supported by a bipartisan majority of lawmakers, certain con-

“I know that NALC members will continue to make all of our voices heard with lawmakers to finally address this long-standing problem.”

gressional leaders refused to allow the plan to move forward in committee or to act on the pension overpayments, as they would have cost Treasury tens of billions of dollars in the budget.

A third idea, using Medicare to reduce the liability for retiree health, has slowly gained traction. For NALC, it made the most sense in the context of a bill that would protect service quality and city carrier jobs.

“We’ve been working on the pre-funding problem for 15 years now,” President Rolando said. “Repealing the pre-funding mandate and prospective Medicare integration have proven to be the most viable solution for the various stakeholders interested in finding a real solution that allows the Postal Service to innovate and grow in the years ahead. Taking full advantage of the Medicare taxes we have paid over the years to reduce the cost of health insurance for active and retired postal employees alike will save the Postal Service tens of billions of dollars over time, and repealing the pre-funding mandate will eliminate the main driver of the agency’s annual losses. I know that NALC members will continue to make all of our voices heard with lawmakers to finally address this long-standing problem.” **PR**



Carriers in the time of COVID-19

For new letter carriers, they've only known the job during the pandemic

We all know that working in a pandemic is not normal. We've cased and carried the mail as essential employees while taking precautions such as wearing masks, washing our hands frequently and disinfecting surfaces. We've avoided contact with postal customers and worked hard to keep up with a surge in package and election mail volume. All the while, we've worried about contracting a dangerous virus and sometimes cared for children schooled at home.

Unlike veteran letter carriers, though, those who started after COVID-19 arrived have never experienced the job without those factors. For them, learning how to navigate the pandemic is another part of learning how to carry the mail, on top of all the other skills they are mastering. For some, the Postal Service offered a new start after the pandemic took away jobs or businesses.

The Postal Record talked to some new carriers whose postal journey began during the pandemic and about how their jobs are going so far.

Restaurant cook finds a new start two blocks away

Like millions of restaurant workers, **Richard Allen** had no warning that a deadly virus would force him out of his job in March 2020. One day, he was doing fine as a cook at a restaurant in Detroit; the next day, he was on unemployment.

Allen stayed home and cared for his newborn daughter for a while, but the Detroit Branch 1 member needed to go back to work, and he knew the Post Office was a good place to look.

"I [had] worked at the Post Office before, as a mail handler," he said, referring to a stint as a seasonal employee from November 2019 to January 2020. His unexpected loss of the restaurant job turned into a new opportunity. "I was interested in seeing what being a carrier was like."

Allen found an opening at Detroit's College Park Post Office two blocks from the restaurant. He started training in November and just missed the main part of the Christmas rush—his

first day on the street was Dec. 26.

Working in close quarters with other people at the post office during the pandemic made the carrier anxious, but not for long. “I was a little bit nervous at first,” he said, but he soon realized that most of the day keeps him socially distant. “What we do as carriers is one of the most isolated jobs, when we’re out on the street. At the beginning of the day, everyone keeps their masks on.”

Allen has yet to experience the kind of personal interaction with his customers that most letter carriers have, and that some consider the best part of the job.

“I try to keep my distance as much as possible,” he said. “It’s probably not as personal as it is outside the pandemic.”

As a city carrier assistant (CCA) during a busy era for the Postal Service, Allen is working about 12 hours a day, six days a week. Nevertheless, now that Allen knows what carrying the mail is like compared to working as a mail handler, he’s happy and wants to stick with it as a career. “I prefer being a carrier,” he said. “I get to get some fresh air and walk around.”

Pandemic surprises former hotel worker seeking respect

Looking for a position where supervisors respected him more, **Dennis Kellum** left his job on the janitorial staff at an Embassy Suites hotel near Indianapolis to become a letter carrier in the nearby town of Fishers, IN. The Carmel, IN Branch 888 member



Richard Allen

started carrying the mail in early March of 2020, just as COVID-19 infections were reaching pandemic levels. Kellum had to learn the job and learn to stay safe from COVID-19 at a time when supervisors and trainers were themselves still learning about the virus.

“It’s a lot to take in,” he said, “but I never felt I was underprepared or in the dark.”

Despite the risk of working as an essential employee while learning a new job, Kellum said, his supervisors and fellow carriers have helped him make the best of the situation.

“For the most part, it’s been a smooth enough ride,” he said. “The thing I most appreciate is that, despite all the complications, [managers] understand it’s going to be a very different time.”

Several carriers in the Fishers Post Office have taken leave after contracting COVID-19. As a CCA, Kellum is working 10 hours a day, six days a week, but making up for absences of carriers on leave with COVID-19 infections has added to the pressure.

“It’s felt like peak season, but we’re making it happen somehow,” he said. “I’m just hoping that’s a hurdle we’re going to clear soon.”

For Kellum, anxiety about the possibility of infection was part of the job from the beginning, but the safeguards that managers set up in his station eased that feeling.

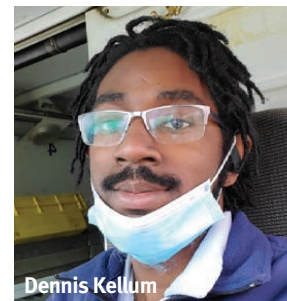
“They have been very much on top of strict COVID-19 restrictions,” he said. “I understand there are still going to be inherent risks, but I feel comfort and solace that they are doing all they can.”

Out on the street, “I’m avoiding people to the best of my ability,” Kellum said. The biggest challenge is going inside apartment buildings and businesses. “For the most part, I’m able to socially distance effectively.”

The danger of infection “always lingers in the back of my head,” he added, “but despite the danger, I’m still willing to put forth the effort and keep smiling.”

His role as an essential employee serving the community’s needs during the pandemic has given Kellum a boost.

“That’s what keeps me going—knowing that I’m doing something that helps the whole community,” he said.



Dennis Kellum

CCAs balance jobs, families and COVID concerns

Jamal Mosley picked up a satchel in February 2020 after quitting his job as a car salesman. The New City, NY Branch 5229 member wanted the steady pay and benefits that the Postal Service provides to support his newborn baby.

He quickly learned that working as a CCA involves long hours away from his family, but the pay is good. “When you get your paycheck,” he said, “it’s worth it.”

Mosley said his post office has taken the pandemic seriously and has tried to protect employees, including making masks and gloves available and putting hand sanitizer at every case. He credits NALC with staying on top of the issue of protection from infec-

Carriers in the time of COVID-19

tion and providing information: “The union has definitely been helpful. They’ve been keeping us informed.”

Nevertheless, working as a front-line employee with the constant threat of infection took its toll, even at home.

“I sometimes didn’t want to be around my baby” after getting home from the post office for fear of infecting her, he said. “I didn’t want to put her in harm’s way.”

Because preventing infection is now baked into the job every day, from wearing a mask to avoiding close contact with customers, Mosley is used to it. “I don’t know how to do my job,” he said, “without trying to protect myself.”



Jamal Mosley

One of Mosley’s co-workers in New City, **Rashad Johnson**, also has family at home to think about. Johnson is helping to support his family—a wife and two children in school—by working

as a carrier.

In fact, the Post Office has proven to be a lifeline for Johnson. The non-emergency medical transportation company he had helped build was just beginning to succeed when the pandemic wiped out business, because most of the customers he used to drive from place to place stayed home for safety reasons.

Suddenly jobless, Johnson scrambled for new work. “I knew unemployment wasn’t going to last forever,” he said. With the help of a neighbor who worked for the Postal Service, he applied to be a carrier and started as a CCA in May 2020.

“I actually like delivering mail,” he

said. “I get a good feeling. But it’s discouraging at times seeing other people working at home and having to leave my family.”

His two children have spent most of the pandemic at home, participating in school remotely. His wife can work from home some days, so between the two of them, they manage to care for their children during the school week.

Johnson also notices the effects of social distancing on the job when customers don’t want him to get too close. But he has taken to the job and says he will stick with it. “Once you get to know what you’re doing, it’s habitual—you go on autopilot,” he said.

Carrier loves her job despite a crazy year

“I was just looking for something different,” Lexington, KY Branch 361 CCA **Kelsey Harrison** said about switching from retail management to carrying the mail.

She found it.

Hamilton started her new job in mid-April 2020 when businesses were shutting down and people were sheltering in their homes due to COVID-19. Working as an essential employee didn’t bother Hamilton, though. Instead, it boosted her sense of purpose.

“I knew that I needed to be out there providing service to customers,” she said.

Learning the job in the middle of a pandemic came with extra complexities. “When I started, with all the COVID-19 restrictions, I didn’t receive any on-the-job training or shadow days,” Hamilton said. “But after doing



Kelsey Harrison

the same routes consistently, I was able to catch on how to assess the DPS and flats and know where to go.”

On the other hand, the COVID-19 precautions at her station made her comfortable with the risks. “They were making sure we had gloves and

face masks—we always wear our face masks,” she said. Her fellow carriers and other staff have kept up with wiping down vehicles and indoor surfaces as well. “You can see the cleaning taking place.”

Hamilton soon noticed that many customers were wary of close contact. “Last year, a lot of people would avoid coming to the mailbox.” But a few would come closer, even approaching her truck, and that gave her a chance to greet them—with caution. “I would just put the mask on and still be sociable, while respecting our social-distance guidelines.”

The unusual circumstances of her first year on the job—the pandemic, and the surge in packages and election mail that it caused—didn’t put her off. She’s looking forward to converting to a career carrier.

“I love this job,” she said. “I love providing service to customers. I love being outside all day. I love it at the end of the day when my truck is empty—that’s a good feeling.”

As COVID-19 slowly loses its grip, Hamilton is looking forward to even better times. “The regulars told me that last year was not a typical year,” she said. “I dealt with all kinds of things—the pandemic, the election—and now I’m starting to see how things are getting back to normal. It’s totally different from last year already.” **PR**

Three Generous Donations Recently Made to PERF



Linemen work to restore power after a tornado hit Palmetto, LA, on April 10, 2021.

Photo by Brad Bowie/The Acadiana Advocate

Stamps.com has donated \$475,000 to the Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF) as part of its special promotion that late-night comedian and host John Oliver launched last year on his show, "Last Week Tonight with John Oliver," to promote and support the Postal Service.

Oliver's show staff worked with Stamps.com to launch a line of "Last Week Tonight" branded stamps that were available last June. This generous donation will allow PERF to help about 235 postal workers and their families in times of need.

PERF also received a \$70,000 donation from Oh Boy Records in Nashville. The company was launched in 1981 by John Prine, an American country folk singer and songwriter who died on April 7, 2020, from COVID-19. Prior to launching his successful music career, Prine was a letter carrier and NALC Branch 11 member in Chicago from 1964 to 1969. His stint as a letter carrier was interrupted when he was

drafted into the Army in 1966. He served for two years as a mechanical engineer in West Germany before returning to Chicago and his mail route.

According to *Rolling Stone*, his mail route provided the time and space for Prine to reflect on the extraordinary characters and emotions that defined his music: "He often discussed the way that working as a postal carrier gave him the freedom and security to hone his craft as a songwriter. He was just one of countless hard-working Americans who have found a steady job with the USPS, serving a crucial function in our democracy, and building a life of dignity for themselves."

The singer/songwriter was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2019. In 2020, he won a Grammy for Lifetime Achievement. And this year, he won a Grammy posthumously for Best American Song and Performance for "I Remember Everything."

Prine never forgot the Postal Service,

and he made sure that PERF was a beneficiary of his good fortune. Oh Boy Records Director of Marketing Eileen Tilson and Director of Operations Jody Whelan, Prine's son, joined a March 12 Zoom meeting on which PERF presented them with a plaque and thanked them for the donation.

PERF was the recipient of another recent contribution as well. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy showed his support of the relief fund with a generous donation of \$76,000.

You can help your fellow postal employees—active and retired—whose homes have been destroyed or left uninhabitable by natural disasters, with a donation to PERF. Also, consider working with businesses in your community to educate them about PERF and ask for their support of this worthy effort.

The easiest and fastest way to donate is to send your check to PERF, P.O. Box 41220, Fredericksburg, VA 22404-1220. **PR**

Emergency Federal Employee Leave update

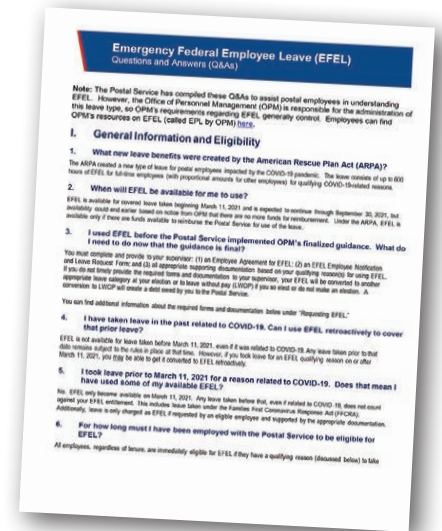
The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Postal Service have issued guidance implementing the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which was signed into law on March 11. (The full guidance is on the NALC website.) This law established an important new leave category called Emergency Federal Employees Leave (EFEL). Prior to OPM's issuing of 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. **PR**



A Q-and-A about the leave is available on nalc.org.

Online officers' training helping branches during pandemic

Since February, NALC has held four sessions of its Branch Officers' Training and one special session of a Preparing the LM-2 class virtually for 579 branch officers.

Before the pandemic, the training would be held over several days at a hotel in a location somewhere around the country. But with the pandemic making in-person sessions difficult, NALC has held the training using Webex meeting software. Moving the sessions online has allowed attendees to go through the training on their computer or mobile device from their home or branch hall.

Because of limitations, the training has been modified from the three and a half day in-person version to select subjects that are timely in assisting

branch officers in the performance of their fiduciary and administrative responsibilities. To allow for maximum branch participation, registration has been limited to two officers per branch per session and sign-up can be done only by branch presidents through the Members Only portal.

Veronica Gainey of Sacramento, CA Branch 133 had wanted to take the training last year when she became secretary-treasurer of the branch, but she didn't have the chance because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, although she was already preparing to retire, she attended the training with her branch president, which helped put the branch in a better position for the next person who serves as secretary-treasurer.

"This class was so informative," she said. She learned so much that she went back to her records from 2020 and redid them so they would be correct for the branch going forward. "I had to redo everything, but I made it easier for the next person coming in as far as labeling, what needed to be itemized, what needed to be on the LM-2. If you're doing anything involving taxes, you want to be sure it's being done properly."

Gainey appreciated the convenience of doing the training virtually, as opposed to traveling. "All you have got to do is plug it in and turn on a computer," she said.

Ken Mayfield, president of Oklahoma City Branch 458, also attended

one of the online sessions. Though he had previously attended the training in person about five years earlier in St. Louis, he wanted to go through it again. He liked the convenience, too.

“The advantage to me was the cost,” he said. “I liked being able to do a refresher online without a cost to the branch.”

The new financial secretary for Branch 458 took the course with Mayfield; it was his first time with the subject. While the financial secretary had a good experience, Mayfield highly recommended the course for experienced branch officers. “For me, for a refresher, I thought the online was perfect,” Mayfield said.

“I do like taking classes in person, but the way they did it, I think they did an excellent job in the way they presented everything,” Gainey said. “They gave us the opportunity to ask questions. They took the time to answer them. I thought it was put together very well.”

In addition to the regular Branch Officers’ Training topics, NALC also offered a special “Preparing the LM-2” session. While all branches that receive funds are required to file an LM report to the Department of Labor annually, many file an LM-3 or LM-4, which are less involved reports for branches with total annual receipts less than \$250,000 and \$10,000, respectively. But the LM-2 is a much more detailed, lengthier report that only NALC’s larger branches file.

“The normal LM-3 training class does not get into the extra details that this report requires,” NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine said, “nor would the vast majority of our branches, who file LM-3s or LM-4s, need the additional information that is required on an LM-2.”

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 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, where you work and which branch you are a member of.

The modified Branch Officers’ Training includes:

DOL Reporting—This session reviews the history of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) and how it affects the activities of the unions and union officers. Participants learn about each title of the LMRDA and the reporting requirements under the law.

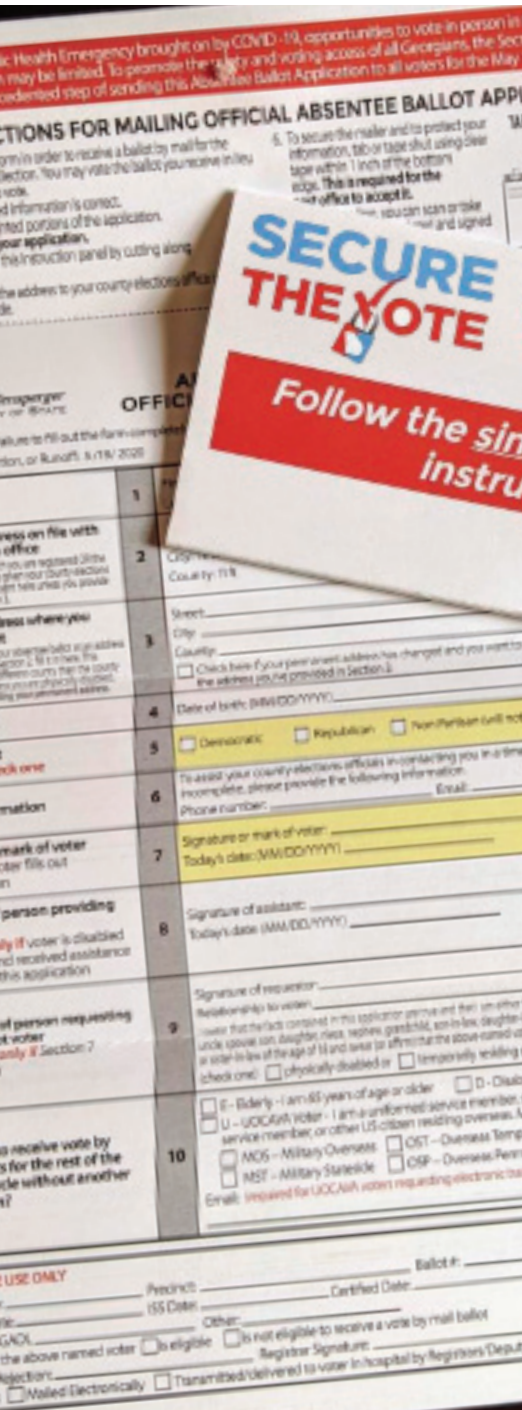
Preparing LM-3—This session covers completing the annual LM-3, which is required to be filed by branches with total annual receipts of at least \$10,000 but less than \$250,000. An LM-4 is filed by branches with annual financial receipts of less than \$10,000. Officers who file an LM-4 also would benefit from this session.

Preparing 990s—This session covers completing the required annual Internal Revenue Service filing.

Membership & Dues/You’ve just been elected...now what?—This session guides branch officers through membership issues that they deal with daily and discusses how to read a dues roster; it also focuses on helping officers learn more about branch operations.

“I highly recommend [the class] for when people become new officers,” Gainey said, because it helps them “know what you need to do properly.” **PR**

States seek to restrict or expand voting by mail



Since the 2020 elections, many states have seen bills introduced in their legislatures to either make voting by mail more restrictive or make it more accessible.

The best-known legislation is Georgia's SB 202, signed into law by Gov. Brian Kemp (R) on March 25. The law requires voters to provide a state identification number or photocopy of an identifying document with their absentee ballot application, bars election officials from automatically sending out ballot applications (making it easier to remove voters from the permanent early voting list), gives voters less time to apply for an absentee ballot, and sharply restricts the availability and hours of ballot drop boxes.

But Georgia's new law is far from unusual. New York University's Brennan Center for Justice compiled a list of about 360 bills with restrictive voting provisions in 47 states as of March 24, most of which include vote-by-mail restrictions by such measures as eliminating the automatic mailing of ballots to registered voters, eliminating or restricting no-excuse absentee balloting, or reducing the number or hours of access to drop boxes for returning absentee ballots.

Restrictive voting laws weren't the only bills moving forward in state legislatures. As of March 24, about 840 bills with expansive provisions had been introduced in 47 states. Fewer than half of those bills address vote-by-mail, by moving to make no-excuse absentee balloting permanent, extend automatically mailing out ballots, expanding the time of access and location of ballot drop boxes and make absentee voting easier for people with disabilities.

While far from a comprehensive list, the following are examples of bills

moving forward in state legislatures around the country.

Restrictive bills

- In Iowa, SF 413 would give voters less time to apply for absentee ballots, bar local officials from automatically sending out absentee ballot applications, limit election officials' discretion to provide ballot drop boxes, and restrict who can assist absentee voters in returning their ballots.
- In Arizona, four bills prohibit election officials from sending mail ballots to voters without a request, requiring further identification information on absentee ballots, and limiting the time that voters have to supply a signature for their mail ballots if they had forgotten to sign them.
- In New Hampshire, three bills would require more identification information at various points in the absentee voting process.
- In Texas, SB 7 seeks to limit mail voting by enacting comprehensive restrictions, including prohibitions on state or local election officials sending unsolicited mail ballot applications to voters and on the use of any unstaffed drop boxes.
- In Florida, SB 90 targets the state's absentee voting process. The bill would ban ballot drop boxes, limit assistance with ballot delivery to immediate family members, and shorten the length of time a person can stay on the absentee voter list.
- In Michigan, eight bills with different provisions would combine to establish a photo ID requirement for both in-person and mail

voting, make it harder to request a mail ballot by eliminating online requests and by barring election officials from automatically sending out applications, and limit the use of mail ballot drop boxes.

- In Wisconsin, SB 204 would prohibit election clerks from sending absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots to voters who did not request them, and create a felony offense for violation.

Expansive bills

- In Massachusetts, HB 73 extends no-excuse early voting and absentee voting through June 30, 2021. It also requires election administrators to grant reasonable vote-by-mail accommodations for disabled voters who are unable to vote by paper ballot.
- In Montana, SB 15 makes absentee voting easier for people with disabilities.
- In Virginia, under SB 1097, if an absentee ballot was not signed by

a witness, this would not render the ballot void during “any election held during a state of emergency related to a communicable disease of public health threat.” The state also is forming a work group to consider and evaluate alternatives to the witness signature requirement.

- Among New York’s 12 proposed bills are provisions to expand eligibility for absentee voting and absentee ballot drop boxes.
- In New Jersey, the combination of five bills would allow for absentee ballots with missing or illegible postmarks to be accepted up until 48 hours after Election Day and also would provide absentee voters with notice and an opportunity to cure ballot defects, such as forgotten signatures.
- Bills in six states—Connecticut, Indiana, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Rhode Island—would extend or create no-excuse absentee voting. All but

Indiana offered no-excuse absentee voting as a temporary measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the November 2020 election.

- Bills in 11 states would require that voters be notified of and given an opportunity to cure absentee ballot defects, in some cases even after Election Day.
- Bills in seven states would create or expand access to permanent absentee voting lists (voters on the lists would automatically receive an absentee ballot for every election without having to reapply).

Voting rights is an issue that will continue to make waves in state legislatures. “NALC has long stood in favor of allowing citizens to vote by mail,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “It’s a safe and convenient way to allow voters to cast their ballots, placing their trust in the Postal Service and their letter carrier to make sure their vote is delivered.” **PR**

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

Task force (continued)

- 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 CCA retention rates are up and running.

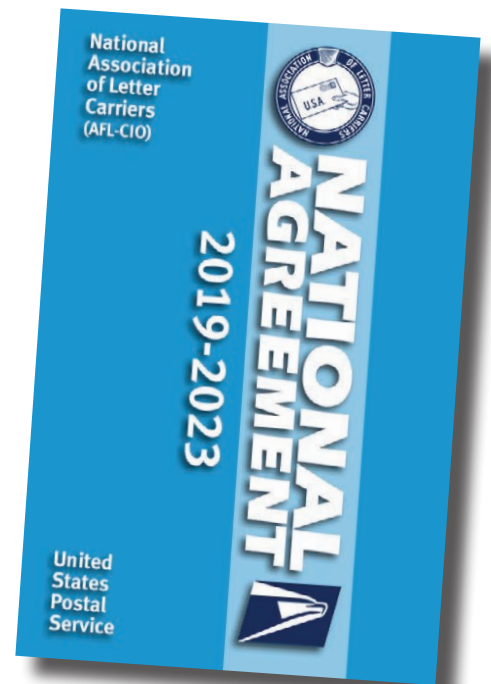
The route evaluation subcommittee meets on a weekly basis to jointly discuss the current route evaluation and adjustment process, as well as potential changes that may need to be made, and the exploration of the use of technology to improve operations, route evaluation, adjustment and optimization, delivery 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 Director of City Delivery Christopher Jackson's article on page 40.

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 part-time 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.

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. **PR**

Food drive update

After much consideration, NALC decided to cancel the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive for 2021 because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to having a traditional Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive the second Saturday in May 2022, just as we have done for nearly three decades.

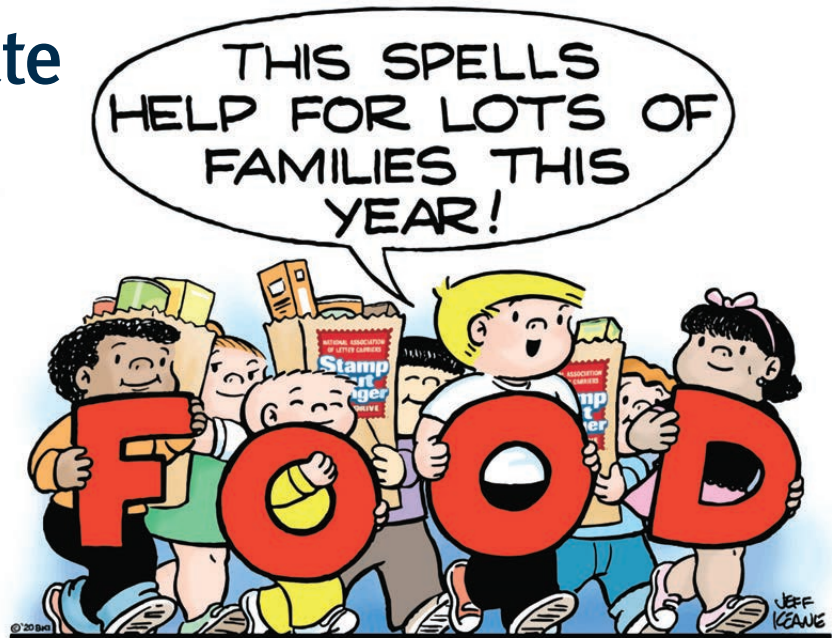
For now, though, our focus turns to NALC's ongoing Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive. Created in June 2020, this effort helps to fulfill the nutritional needs of the 1 in 8 Americans who face food insecurity in communities across the country—including millions of children, elderly and military veterans.

The same pandemic that has forced cancellation of the traditional food drive for both 2020 and 2021 also has increased the problem of hunger because of its economic impact, putting extra pressure on food banks.

"We could not simply stand by and do nothing, because as letter carriers in every neighborhood in the country six and seven days a week, we see the need," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Our goal is to do everything we can to fill the shelves of food pantries."

By visiting nalc.org/food, donors can find a food bank in their area to support with an online donation. The site links directly to donation pages on each food bank's website. The same list also provides branches with a convenient means of informing donors in their area about how to locate and donate online to their local food banks.

As with the traditional Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, donations stay in the communities of the donors. Any resident, whether in a big city or suburb, small town or rural area, can donate funds for a local food pantry



LETTER CARRIERS' DONOR DRIVE

to purchase food and replenish their stocks so local families can put food on their tables. Food banks make good use of cash donations—each dollar can provide up to three meals. The money also gives food pantries the flexibility to buy what they need the most.

Under the donor drive, Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson noted, NALC Headquarters matches every contribution from the branch's treasury to a local food bank. She asked that branches mail proof of such branch donations (copy of branch check and food bank receipt) to: Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, c/o NALC, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001.

"With the national online donor effort in place," Rolando said, "and the tools for branches to use available at nalc.org/food, every branch can help its local food banks restock their

shelves. And when it's safe to do so," he added, "we look forward to once again holding the largest one-day food drive in the United States. In 2022, letter carriers will be there to hold our traditional Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive and pick up bag upon bag of groceries from the generous customers on our routes."

NALC had considered trying to hold the door-to-door food drive this fall, but after consultation with the Postal Service, decided instead to aim for next May.

The annual spring effort comes at a critical point on food pantry calendars—holiday donations are largely depleted, while the free or reduced-cost meals from school cafeterias generally are not available to needy children over the summer break. The donor drive can help fill this summer's needs. **PR**

Protect your skin from the sun's rays

Letter carriers often spend hours in the sun while on our routes. We deal with the various hazards of the job, such as heat, cold, snow and ice, and aggressive dogs, but we can't forget another danger: skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the abnormal growth of genetically damaged skin cells. Most skin cancer is linked to sun exposure. The more exposure over your lifetime, the greater the risk of cancer. Frequent sunburn makes the skin damage worse, but even if you've rarely experienced sunburn, the cellular damage and the skin cancer that can come with it build up with long-term sun exposure. Every person who has spent years in the sun—even if he or she has been careful to use sunscreen and limit exposure to avoid burning—should be aware of the risk of skin cancer.

The link to sun exposure may be why skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, affecting about 1 in 5 people by age 70. Because the risk rises with more sun exposure, skin cancer is a greater concern as we age. While most skin cancers are easily treated and not life-threatening, if they aren't detected early, some types of skin cancer can be deadly—according to the Skin Cancer Foundation, someone dies of skin cancer in this country every 30 minutes.

“We think of sunshine as healthy, but working in the sun day after day is a health hazard for a letter carrier,” NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr. said. “Every carrier, at any age, should take steps to protect themselves from the sun's rays and know the signs of skin cancer to catch it early—and older carriers may want to get screened for skin cancer by a dermatologist on a regular basis.”

Types of skin cancer

There are three common types of skin cancer, each affecting a different type of cell in the skin.

Squamous cell cancer (or “carcinoma,” another word for cancerous growth) affects the outer layer of skin made up of “squamous” cells that eventually die and are shed from the body. Basal cells make up the layer below and can develop basal cell carcinoma.

Melanoma affects melanocytes, cells that produce a skin pigment called melanin, which is the body's natural sunscreen. Sun exposure causes these cells to produce additional melanin to protect skin layers below, causing a tan.

Basal cell cancer accounts for about 80 percent of skin cancers in this country, and squamous cell cancer about 20 percent. Melanoma is rare, accounting for less than 1 percent of skin cancer incidents. However, melanoma kills five times more people each year—more than 10,000 people die of melanomas annually, versus about 2,000 for the other two types.

Skin cancer strikes men more often than women, and fair-skinned people more often than those with dark skin. On the other hand, dark skin may make it harder to notice skin cancer and get early treatment, which may explain why Black Americans are less likely to survive when they contract skin cancer. Sun exposure is not the only factor—some skin cancers can appear on parts of the body rarely exposed to the sun.

Three steps to prevention

There are three steps to avoiding skin cancer.

Step One is minimizing sun exposure by wearing sunscreen and appropriate clothing whenever you

are outside in the sun, even in cold weather.

On exposed skin, use the right sunscreen. A “broad spectrum” sunscreen blocks both kinds of ultraviolet light rays (UVA and UVB) that cause the most damage to the skin. Use a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. SPF measures how much longer the skin is safe with sunscreen protection than without it—on a day when it would take half an hour for skin to burn, SPF 15 should give you nearly eight hours of safety. Be sure to use enough sunscreen for adequate coverage of the skin. Dermatologists suggest using at least 1 ounce of sunscreen—about enough to fill a shot glass—to cover exposed areas.

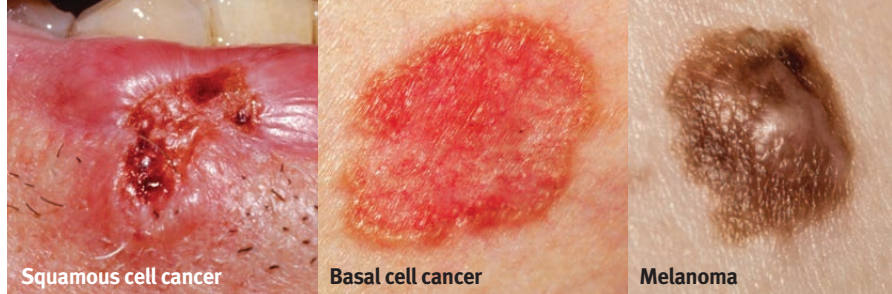
Sun conditions can change and sweat can wash away sunscreen, so bring a bottle of sunscreen with you on your route to reapply if necessary. Also, be sure your sunscreen has not expired. Check the expiration date, and if there is no date, don't use it if it is three years old or more. If you've stored the sunscreen in a hot place, such as an LLV, it may lose its effectiveness sooner.

Use sunscreen year-round, even on cloudy days. As the weather turns cooler, it may fool your skin into feeling safe, but the sun's ultraviolet radiation can still damage exposed skin.

Keep in mind that, as someone who receives large amounts of sun exposure on the job, a letter carrier needs to be careful about exposure at the beach or the park, too. Total exposure over a lifetime is the main risk factor for skin cancer.

Spot cancer early

Step Two is learning to spot the signs of skin cancer on your own skin, or with the help of a loved one.



Even if you have always been careful to protect yourself on sunny days, the risk of skin cancer increases as you grow older. Most skin cancer can be treated successfully if detected early enough, so learn the signs of skin cancer.

Melanocytes, those pigment-producing cells that can develop into melanoma, also often produce harmless, non-cancerous growths we know as moles. Pigment clustered in one area is a freckle. Neither of those is cancerous, but they can make discerning cancerous skin growths more difficult, and a mole can later develop into a melanoma, so it is important to check your skin regularly and know what to look for.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends that people practice monthly head-to-toe self-examination of their skin. Skin cancers found and removed early are almost always curable.

Most skin cancers are either found by people checking their own skin or are noticed by a loved one. With good lighting and a full-length mirror, check your whole body. Use a hand-held mirror or ask for help to see hard-to-reach spots. Check your whole body, not just sun-exposed areas, including underarms, scalp, groin and the soles of your feet.

Keep a keen eye out for melanoma, as it is the most dangerous and fastest-spreading skin cancer. It can become life-threatening in as little as six weeks and, if untreated, can spread to other parts of the body. Melanomas are usually flat with uneven borders and may have multiple dark colors. Use the ABCDE rule to look for melanoma:

- **A = Asymmetry.** Look for spots that are asymmetrical rather than round.

- **B = Border.** Look for spots with uneven borders.
- **C = Color.** Look for spots with an unusual or uneven color.
- **D = Diameter.** Look for spots that are larger than a quarter-inch—the width of a pencil eraser.
- **E = Evolving.** Look for any change in a mole or other spot on the skin. Any change in size, shape, color, elevation or other trait, or any new symptom such as bleeding, itching or crusting points to danger.

If you or someone in your family has had melanoma in the past, see a dermatologist, who is likely to recommend regular visits to monitor your skin, even if you are relatively young.

Basal cell carcinomas usually appear on skin areas that get the most sun, such as the face or neck, but they can show up anywhere. Look for:

- Flat, firm, pale or yellow areas, similar to a scar
- Raised reddish patches that might be itchy
- Small, pink or red, translucent, shiny, pearly bumps, which might have blue, brown or black areas
- Pink growths with raised edges and a lower area in their center, which might contain abnormal blood vessels spreading out like the spokes of a tire
- Open sores (which may have oozing or crusted areas) that don't heal, or that heal and then come back

Squamous cell carcinomas also tend to grow on areas that get sun, such as the face, ear, neck, lips or hands. But they can also show up anywhere. Look for:

- Rough or scaly red patches, which might crust or bleed
- Raised growths or lumps, sometimes with a lower area in the center
- Open sores (which may have oozing or crusted areas) that don't heal, or that heal and then come back
- Wart-like growths

See a dermatologist

Step Three is visiting a dermatologist for regular checkups and whenever you see something that concerns you.

If you or someone else notices anything unusual on your skin, including any new spots or a change in the shape, color or size of a spot, visit your doctor as soon as possible.

For more information, visit the Skin Cancer Foundation website at skincancer.org.

If you are diagnosed with skin cancer, you may qualify for workers' compensation. Skin cancer is not automatically covered; as with other injuries or illnesses, the worker must provide a doctor's medical report linking the skin cancer to exposure in the workplace. Workplace exposure does not have to be the sole cause, though—if the workplace exposure contributes "in any way" to the skin cancer, the injury can be considered compensable by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). The Federal Employees' Compensation Act includes a schedule award for skin cancer.

If you believe that you acquired skin cancer due to your performance of duties, reach out to the OWCP representative in your branch, or to your national business agent's office, to get the necessary guidance. **PR**

Opportunities to get involved start with you

Joining NALC allows you to become part of a group of hundreds of thousands of dedicated letter carriers, united to protect their jobs and their rights, and to promote the safety and welfare of the members. These common goals create a strength and solidarity that allow NALC to achieve great things for letter carriers.

However, for some members, all they can see of the union is what the shop steward does on the workroom floor. While enforcement of the contract is extremely important, it's not the only way members can participate in achieving our common goals.

NALC offers members a variety of additional activities and opportunities to get involved that they might not typically think about. Here are some of the ways carriers can actively participate with their branch, in and outside of the workplace.

If you like to write or are interested in communications, branches often are looking for writers and editors to help with the branch newsletter, or even to start one. If you're technologically savvy, many branches have started, or want to start, a website, blog or social media group, allowing you to put your skills to good use. Some branches have begun using virtual platforms, podcasts or video presentations to provide information to members—maybe your technical skills extend to cameras, lighting or audio equipment.

Many branches also promote fellowship and solidarity among branch members and their families by offering a variety of social activities. If you like to socialize, you could volunteer to help organize an activity such as a branch picnic, a trip to a baseball game or a holiday event. These group events offer members a fun, easy way

to interact with NALC brothers and sisters and to contribute.

Letter carriers are generous and dedicated to serving their communities beyond providing reliable, efficient and courteous mail delivery service. If you enjoy giving back to your community, you might consider participating when your branch engages in charitable activities such as raising funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). NALC embraced the MDA as its official charity in 1952, becoming the first national sponsor of the organization just two years after its founding. Members can participate in a variety of events to raise money for MDA, such as bow-lathons, satchel drives or Muscle Walks.

NALC's biggest charitable effort every year is the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, held annually on the second Saturday in May. The nationwide food drive typically collects more than 70 million pounds of food nationwide to help stock local pantries, shelters and church shelves, helping feed the tens of millions of Americans who lack sufficient food, including millions of elderly, children and military veterans. NALC partners with various organizations to carry out the nation's largest single-day food drive. Since its beginning in 1993, the food drive has collected more than 1.75 billion pounds of food.

Unfortunately, in 2021—for the second consecutive year—the pandemic forced the cancellation of our traditional food drive even as the need for assistance is more significant than ever, given the economic impact of the pandemic. Members still can participate in NALC's efforts to fight hunger by supporting the 2021 Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive, which provides members the opportunity to contribute

directly to a food bank in your community. Visit nalc.org/food for more information. If your branch has a food drive coordinator, he or she would likely appreciate any assistance you'd like to give; if your branch doesn't have one, you could take on that role and give back to your community.

In 2018, to provide support and relief to members affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes and wildfires, the union established the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation. The foundation was established to fill a need identified by many branches that were affected by natural disasters the previous year, including several hurricanes and tornadoes that ravaged the Gulf Coast. Branches wanted to know where they could send desperately needed supplies and money, but there wasn't a central location. NALC set up this foundation to make it easy for them to help others in need quickly and efficiently. The foundation has the capacity to accept donations and provide assistance. Additionally, basic supplies including uniforms, water and food will be available for those who need them in the future.

Another way carriers can serve their communities is by participating in Carrier Alert. Carrier Alert is a cooperative community service program that monitors the well-being of elderly or disabled mail patrons. As one of the few—and some days only—point of human contact for homebound patrons, letter carriers are particularly attuned to signs that could indicate an accident or illness. When a participating carrier notes something unusual involving a patron registered with Carrier Alert, he or she reports it to a postal supervisor or other designated individual,

who in turn contacts the sponsoring local agency. The agency checks on the person, and if something is wrong, contacts relatives, police or emergency services as appropriate. To find out if there is a Carrier Alert program in your community, contact your local NALC branch office or post office.

For more information on MDA, the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation or Carrier Alert, visit nalc.org/community-service.

If politics is your passion, there are opportunities to come face to face with your congressional representatives to tell them about the importance of issues that affect letter carriers and the Postal Service. Many branches have letter carrier congressional liaisons who communicate frequently with their senators and representatives throughout the year. Meanwhile, NALC state associations are crucial to our legislative efforts. Participation with your state association will provide you with training and information on local and statewide political efforts. Sometimes, branches will organize phone banking or text-messaging initiatives that allow letter carriers to reach out to voters to educate them on legislative activity that could have an impact on the Postal Service or the community.

Also, there may be opportunities to assist your branch as a Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) coordinator helping to educate other letter carriers about the LCPF and political activity on Capitol Hill involving the Postal Service. Learn more about NALC's legislative efforts by visiting nalc.org/government-affairs.

Military veterans constitute about one-fifth of the membership of NALC. These veterans traded their



military uniforms for letter carrier uniforms, and they continue to serve their communities and this great nation. In 2015, NALC created the NALC Veterans Group to provide members—active full-time and part-time letter carriers, as well as retired letter carriers—with relevant information, resources and a sense of camaraderie. In addition, veterans have a strong voice when they contact their senators and representatives about postal legislation.

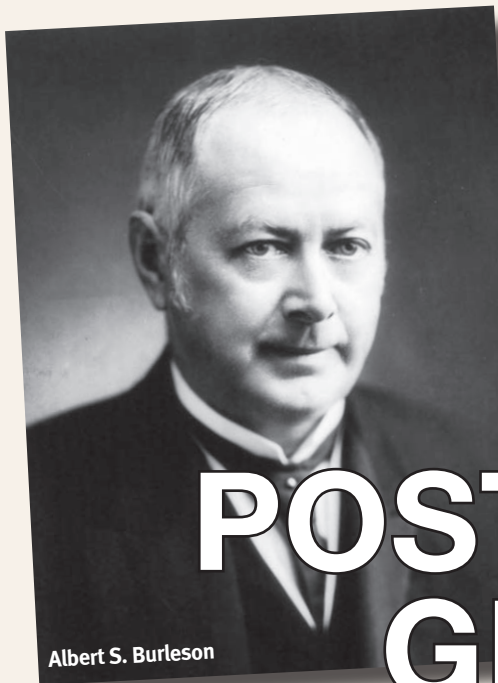
Some branches have set up dedicated positions for the purpose of assisting branch members with veteran-related issues. NALC members who fill these positions often are veterans themselves, as well as members of the NALC Veterans Group—and use information and resources from the group to assist their fellow branch members. If this type of work interests you, inquire with your branch representatives about how to get involved. If your branch doesn't currently have such a dedicated position, you could discuss the possibility of establishing one—and perhaps even serving in the role.

Engaging in community service, branch events and political activities, along with assisting veterans, are just some of the ways you and your family can get involved. All you need to do is ask.

Getting involved in NALC usually starts in one simple way: by attending your branch meetings. Monthly branch meetings can provide you with information about all of these activities and about the ways you can lend a hand. As it has with many things, the pandemic has forced us to alter the way we conduct business on the local, regional and national level. For some branches, this means changing the time and location of meetings or conducting the meetings virtually via an online platform. If you need details about your branch meetings, seek out your shop steward or call a branch officer.

For more about opportunities to get involved, please see the *NALC Letter Carrier Resource Guide* on the website at nalc.org/resourceguide as well as in the forthcoming July edition of *The Postal Record*.

NALC encourages you to get involved with the union in whatever way you choose. “For tens of thousands of letter carriers, participating in the NALC is simply a great way to help strengthen the one organization dedicated solely to protecting carriers’ interests in the workplace and in the halls of Congress,” NALC President Fredric Rolando said. “Find out how you can get involved.” **PR**



Albert S. Burleson



Will H. Hays

A tale of two POSTMASTERS GENERAL

For most of its existence until 1921, NALC had struggled with management at the Post Office Department. In fact, one of the first major actions of the union after it was formed in 1889 was to sue the Post Office to get it to comply with an eight-hour workday law (see the March edition of *The Postal Record*).

By 1913, relations had not improved and were about to get worse. Albert S. Burleson, appointed as postmaster general that year by President Woodrow Wilson, remains one of the most anti-union postmasters general in postal history. He immediately declared a new war on postal employees and their unions. His goal was to run the Department at a profit, and he chose to do this at the expense of the postal workforce.

From the moment he took office, Burleson opposed any pay increases for letter carriers, despite a dramatic rise in the cost of living once World War I began in 1914. By 1916, the U.S. dollar was worth half of what it had been in 1907—the year letter carriers had last received a pay increase. Incredibly, when Congress voted for a 10 percent pay increase for all federal employees in 1917—a year when the cost of living jumped 20.3 percent—Burleson succeeded in excluding postal employees from the raise.

Burleson refused to recognize or

meet with any representatives from NALC, and even called for the dissolution of all postal employee unions. In fact, he refused to grant leave without pay to the officers of the postal unions, forcing NALC President Edward Gainor to resign from the Post Office to continue performing his union duties.

At the time, the union was lobbying Congress to establish pensions for postal employees, something Burleson fervently opposed. He believed that when a worker's job performance declined due to old age, the worker should be demoted or fired—no matter how many years that employee had labored for the Department.

This cruelty was best demonstrated in 1915, when the Fairmont, WV, postmaster, complying with Burleson's strict instructions, fired an older letter carrier because he could no longer perform his job satisfactorily. Furious at the postmaster, the remaining 25 employees—letter carriers and postal clerks alike—decided to protest by resigning from their jobs at the same time. All 25 workers were then immediately arrested and thrown in jail for striking against the federal government.

The jailed workers were shocked at the government's reaction. They were not striking—they had simply quit their jobs. But the government persisted in prosecuting the case. Without money to pay for their

defense, the carriers and clerks threw themselves on the mercy of the court. In turn, the court imposed fines ranging from \$5 to \$500 on all but one of the employees—the 25th worker, a letter carrier by the name of W. H. Fisher, hanged himself in his cell the night before his trial.

In response to Burleson and the Fairmont action, NALC made a retire-



ment bill its main priority, lobbying Congress until May 22, 1920, when the Civil Service Retirement Act became law. For the first time, letter carriers received retirement benefits. The legislation provided for retirement at age 65 with annuities ranging from \$180 to \$720 per year. Carriers also registered impressive legislative gains on June 5, when a bill giving carriers their first sick leave benefits—10 days a year—and a salary bill increasing wages to a scale ranging from \$1,400 to \$1,800, a year were enacted.

They'd get more good news one year later. In 1921, the new president, Warren G. Harding, appointed a new postmaster general, Will Hays, to succeed the much-hated Burleson. Four days after taking office, Hays electrified postal employees with this proclamation:

Every effort shall be exercised to humanize the ... [Post Office Department]. Labor is not a commodity.... There are 300,000 employees. They have the brain[s] and they have the hand[s] to do the job well; and they shall have the heart to do it well.

Seven days later, on March 16, Hays invited Gainor and the leaders of other postal unions to meet for informal discussions. At the meeting, he announced an open-door policy to the leaders of the unions and invited them to see him whenever they had a problem. Letter carriers responded enthusiastically to Hays' proclamation and his positive attitude toward NALC, with the April 1921 issue of *The Postal Record* describing the outpouring of good feeling in an article titled "The Dawn of a New Day":

When one emerges from a dungeon into the sunlight, one is temporarily blinded and confused. Letter carriers

and other postal employees are in a similar situation.... The selection of Mr. Hays of the word 'humanize' in expressing the Department's attitude toward the men and women workers in the postal establishment, was happy.... Not in years has such a sentiment been expressed by a head of this Department. How strange and yet how sweet!

To improve the working conditions of postal employees, Hays sought to develop a closer relationship with representatives from the various postal employees' organizations. To this end, he established a National Welfare Council—later called the National Service Relations Council. NALC's national president and secretary both played an active role in the activities of the Council right from its inception in 1921. NALC Secretary Edward Cantwell served as the executive of the Council from its inauguration until his death in 1924.

On the national level, the National Service Relations Council discussed topics directly related to the welfare of city delivery letter carriers such as uniforms, the possibility of a Christmas holiday, working conditions within local post offices, cafeterias, credit unions and free physical examinations for workers. Local Welfare Councils also were established to focus on conditions within individual post of-

Opposite page: A cartoon about the need for pensions for letter carriers, which would allow them to retire
Below: A cartoon that appeared in *The Postal Record* about the new relationship with PMG Hays



fices, including such issues as drinking fountains, swingrooms, dust, sanitation and lighting.

Hays remained in office only one year, but his commitment to improving the working lives of letter carriers and his belief that improvement in conditions and morale would improve delivery service for the American people left a lasting legacy.

When Hays resigned, NALC continued its tradition of honoring friends by making Hays an honorary lifetime member of NALC. Pleased, yet uncomfortable with the term "honorary," Hays asked to become a regular dues-paying member instead. The *NALC Constitution* did not allow for anyone who had not earned that right by carrying the mail, but an exception was made for Will Hays—a member of NALC until his death in 1954.

For more about Postmasters General Burleson and Hays and the fight for pensions, read Carriers in a Common Cause, available at nalc.org. PR

Proud to Serve is a semi-regular compilation of heroic stories about letter carriers in their communities. If you know about a hero in your branch, contact us as soon as possible at 202-662-2489 or at postalrecord@nalc.org. We'll follow up with you to obtain news clippings, photos or other information.

Honoring heroic carriers

Heroism, like the mail, comes in many packages—think of police officers or firefighters. But for some citizens in need of assistance, their heroes come in the form of concerned letter carriers.

Letter carriers are members of nearly every community in this nation and know when something is wrong. Spotting fires and injuries, they often are the first to respond. The following stories document their heroism. For them, delivering for America is all in a day's work.

An 'angel' to the rescue

One Saturday morning in the fall of 2020, Galesburg, IL Branch 88 member **Dave Stephenson** had just pulled up to a duplex on his route when he realized that something was seriously wrong.

"I could smell gas as soon as I got close to the house," the eight-year carrier said. As he approached the building, firefighters also appeared on the scene—they had been called after one of the residents had backed into the gas meter with her car. "It had been dumping gas for about two hours" by the time emergency responders arrived, Stephenson said.

The carrier soon realized that the firefighters were having difficulty communicating the need to evacuate to one of the families who lived in the duplex. Stephenson knew that the family primarily spoke in French, so he volunteered to translate.

"I speak conversational French and Spanish," he said, "so I explained to them, in French, 'Come on—we need to get out.'"

As the family evacuated, the carrier realized that a car was parked in front of the other side of the duplex, indicating that a resident might be home. "You can't

really tell that it's a duplex" from the outside, Stephenson explained, so he told the firefighters how to find the other door.

After firefighters banged on the door, they found three young girls, all fast asleep—they had been having a sleepover and were unaware of the commotion outside. "They had really bad headaches" from their exposure to the natural gas, Stephenson said, "so the girls went to the hospital and got oxygen."

Stephenson stuck around the scene to translate and make sure that everyone was safe. He later heard that everyone had fully recovered from their exposure to the gas.

Family members of two of the girls wrote to the post office to praise Stephenson for his quick thinking. "We truly feel you were their angel who saved them from death," the letter said. "You are our whole family's hero." But the carrier deflects the "hero" label. "When you're in the moment, you just react, and then you go on with your day," he said.

"It's kind of a cool thing about being out in the public—you just try to react in a good way," Stephenson added. "It's all in a day's work for us."

Carrier helps initiate fire evacuation

After parking and walking to the first building on his route on April 5, Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **Ronnie Garrett** recalled, "I could see smoke coming out of the gutters and pouring out from under the roof."

The 21-year carrier and Marine veteran rushed toward the building, a three-story apartment complex; several residents had already evacuated and were calling 911. Garrett, however, wanted to make sure that all of his customers were safe, so he entered the building and began knocking on doors.

The carrier rushed through the complex, warning customers about the fire and urging everyone to get outside. One resident, Brian Mitchell, who had been unaware of the fire before Garrett's

alert, told local ABC affiliate WHAS-TV that "the mailman rushes up to pound on my door—tells me to get the heck out of the building."

By the time Garrett reached the third floor, "I was being choked by the smoke," he said, but was able to help everyone inside the building evacuate by the time firefighters arrived on the scene.

No residents were injured in the fire, although two cats died and there was significant property damage.

Mitchell praised Garrett and some of the other residents for their assistance in the evacuation effort, calling them "heroes." But the carrier shrugged off the praise.

"I just did what anyone else would do," he said.



Louisville, KY Branch 14 member **Ronnie Garrett** was instrumental in the evacuation of residents after an apartment fire. Above, a firefighter tackles the blaze at the building.

Eye on the elderly

In February, Salem, OR Branch 347 member **Laura Reitz** noticed that one of her customers had not been picking up his mail. “You get to know your customers,” the 32-year carrier explained, and she knew that this was unusual. After days went by without the mail being collected, the carrier asked his neighbors if they had seen him recently, but was unable to find anyone who had. She was especially concerned given that the man was elderly and lived alone. Going around the house, “I knocked on the doors and windows, but I didn’t see anything,” Reitz said. Finally, after the customer still had not been seen or heard from, his neighbors decided to call police for a welfare check, based on Reitz’s tip. When officers entered the house, they found that the man had

collapsed and had been unable to stand or call for help. He was taken to the hospital, where he was treated and reunited with relatives. The man’s brother later sent a letter to Reitz, telling her that the customer would not have been found alive without her intervention. While he informed her that the man had subsequently died, he thanked her for ensuring that his brother did not die alone. Reitz, who keeps the letter with her while on her route, said that while she had hoped the man would survive, “the most important part is that he didn’t pass alone.”

In the fall of 2020, Rochester, NY Branch 210 member **Mark La Due** noticed that there was a mail buildup in the mailbox of one of his elderly customers. However,



Mark La Due

the man had changed his habits over the past year—while in years past he had picked up his mail every day, recently “he was only getting the mail every three or four days,” La Due said. “But then it went [uncollected] over the weekend,” which was more unusual. The 23-year carrier knocked on the man’s door but received no response.

Looking for advice, La Due walked across the street to the man’s neighbor, a retired carrier himself. The neighbor hadn’t seen the man either. The next day, they decided to call 911 and ask for a wellness check. “The police ended up busting down the door,” La Due said, “and they found him in there—unconscious, but alive.” The man, who was hospitalized after his rescue, did recover, but has not returned to La Due’s route. One of the customer’s friends contacted the post office to thank La Due for his actions. “Mark La Due saved his life,” the friend wrote. “The family and I can’t properly express our gratitude for being a watchful eye.” The carrier, however, was modest about his role, saying, “I don’t think I did anything that anyone else wouldn’t have done.” **PR**

Carrier’s medical training saves co-worker’s life

“I got in my truck, ready to leave the [post] office” on Saturday, March 27, Lancaster, PA Branch 273 member **Billy O’Connell** recalled, when he looked up and saw a frightening scene. One of his co-workers was lying face down in the parking lot, apparently having a medical emergency.

The eight-year carrier jumped out of his truck and rushed over to her; their supervisor was already kneeling next to her and trying to revive her. O’Connell, who was a CPR instructor in his previous job, quickly took over.

“She wasn’t breathing, and she didn’t have a heartbeat,” he said, so he immediately started doing chest compressions. Despite his time as a teacher, “this was the first time I had to use [CPR]” in an emergency, O’Connell said. He also directed the supervisor to call 911.

By the time paramedics arrived, the woman was still unconscious without a heart rate. She was taken to the hospital and resuscitated; doctors later determined that she had had a heart attack. The carrier has since returned home, where she is still recovering.

Though O’Connell’s actions were praised by his supervisor as being crucial to his co-worker’s survival, the carrier was modest about his contribution. “I just responded, reacted and did what I needed to do to save her life,” he said.

Watching over child lost on neighborhood street

On April 13, Buffalo-Western New York Branch 3 member **Mariah Norris** was on her route when she noticed an unusual sight—a toddler, wandering alone outside. “I was getting all my mail ready when I saw her, in her diaper, running up and down the street looking very

lost,” the four-year carrier recalled.

Norris immediately went over to the child and picked her up, then wrapped one of her shirts around the girl. Looking around, she couldn’t see anyone outside searching for the child, so she called 911.

After hanging up with the emergency operator, the carrier and the toddler “just hung out,” Norris said. “We did ABCs and colors while she ate my lunch and had a good time.”

Officers arrived about half an hour later, and Norris and the child “hung out in a cop car” while police searched for the girl’s parents. When the parents were eventually located, they were unaware that the child had even left the house.

Norris said that despite the stress of the situation—“I could never be a cop”—she was delighted to have been able to help the young girl get back home. “I was just glad I could help,” she added.

Help on the way

In June of 2020, Fort Worth, TX Branch 226 member **Tiffany Lewis** was making deliveries when she noticed that one of her regular customers wasn't in her usual spot. "She's normally sitting outside," the six-year carrier explained, so she glanced around. At that moment, the woman came out of her house. "She stumbled down to the ground and grabbed her chest," Lewis recalled.



Tiffany Lewis

The customer was holding her phone, trying to call 911, but couldn't complete the action given her condition. Lewis grabbed the phone and connected her with an emergency operator. The carrier then stayed with the woman while she explained her symptoms, which seemed to indicate a heart attack. While waiting with the customer for the paramedics, Lewis realized that they would probably have difficulty finding the location, since the home is tucked away down a side street. She rushed out to the street and was able to flag down the ambulance as it drove by. The woman was taken to the hospital, but has since recovered and returned home. "I was so happy to see her," the carrier said, "and she said, 'I was so glad you were there!'" Lewis,

who previously worked as a police officer, said that while this was the first time she responded to a medical emergency as a letter carrier, she was glad that she could apply some of her former training in her current job. "I love helping people and the community," she added. "It comes naturally to me."

On Feb. 10, Concord, NH Branch 72 member **Geana Baum** was making deliveries when "I heard someone yelling," she recalled. "But I thought it was someone yelling for their dog." The four-year carrier had started to move on when she heard an even louder yell. This time, she could hear what the person was screaming: "She was yelling, 'Help! Help me!'" Baum said. After looking around, Baum finally located the woman, who was



Geana Baum

under a nearby garage overhang. "She was sitting on concrete steps with shorts on, a T-shirt and one sock," the carrier said. "And it was 20 degrees." The customer didn't know how long she had been trapped outside; due to a recent surgery, she was unable to stand on her own. Baum tried to pull her up, but she was unable to raise the woman by herself. Instead, she called 911, and stayed with the customer until paramedics arrived. Baum says that she has spoken to the woman since the incident, and that the customer moved her mailbox to make it easier to collect the mail. "I'm just glad I was there for her, and glad I heard her," Baum said. "But it's something anyone would have done." **PR**

Retired carrier rescued by former co-worker

"It was first thing in the morning on a very cold morning—probably 15 below [freezing]," Baraboo, WI Branch 507 member **Daniel Kaehne** recalled about his route on Feb. 17. "I had pulled up to start a park-and-loop when I heard someone hollering."

Assuming that the person was trying to call a dog, the 33-year carrier ignored the noise and went around to open the LLV. Then, he heard the noise again. This time, "I thought, 'Something's wrong,'" Kaehne said.

There was nobody outside walking, but the carrier kept looking across the street. Finally, Kaehne heard the noise a third time. "I heard Woody, plain as day, yelling 'Help!'"

Retired Branch 507 member **Gene Woods**, known as "Woody," had gone

outside earlier that morning, despite the icy conditions, to check on his furnace. While going down his porch steps, Woods had slipped and fallen, landing headfirst on the sidewalk.

The retired carrier was unable to stand and was in distress, given his head injury and the freezing temperature. He tried to call for his wife, but she was unable to hear him, and the shock had caused Woods to forget about the emergency call button around his neck.

Fortunately, his former colleague came to the rescue—Kaehne managed to locate Woods after peering around a snowbank, and immediately rushed over to help. Woods was in bad shape: "There was blood all over the snow," Kaehne said. "And when I rolled him over, there was blood on his face."

Moving Woods carefully, so as not to aggravate a potential spine or head

injury, Kaehne got the injured man to his feet and inside his house. Once inside, Kaehne told Woods's wife about the incident, and wrapped a paper towel around Woods's head to staunch the bleeding.

Given Woods's injuries and exposure to the cold, Kaehne called 911 and waited with the Woodses until paramedics arrived. "I called him that night, and he was already home," Kaehne said. "He was fine—just black and blue."

Woods, who later wrote a letter to the post office praising Kaehne for "surely [coming] to my rescue," has since made a full recovery.

Kaehne shrugged off the praise, saying that he had handled the situation as part of his job. "[Woods] is the fourth person I've rendered aid to," he said. "You just get a sense when you know your territory. I'm glad I happened to be there at the right time." **PR**

NALC HBP postpones health seminar

The NALC Health Benefit Plan has issued the following statement concerning the postponement of its annual fall health seminar: “After much consideration, the NALC Health Benefit Plan, with approval from NALC President Fredric Rolando, has decided to reschedule the upcoming October Health Benefit Plan seminar.

“We are working with the hotel to find alternate dates in the spring of 2022, and they have not yet been finalized. The Plan is using this opportunity to consider innovative revisions to the schedule of events and overall program. Although our primary goal is to keep our members safe and healthy, we also want to ensure that our health benefit representatives and other branch leaders have the best experience possible at the seminar and come away with the necessary tools

and information to assist their branch members.

“Even though we are still in the planning stages, we are excited at the prospect of being back among our members, and about having the opportunity to make improvements and present a new and improved Health Benefits Seminar. The previous duration, travel days and overall event experience could change. We will continue to keep you posted as everything unfolds.

“Although the seminar will not be held during the month of October, as originally planned, it remains our priority to make the 2022 Open Season a success. Over the coming months, the Plan will be assessing the most effective way to promote new benefits and how we can provide support and materials to branches before the official Open Season dates.” **PR**



Executive Council continues work remotely

The Executive Council is the governing body of NALC between national conventions and is responsible for determining the direction of the union. In accordance with Article 9, Section 11 of the *NALC Constitution*, the Council consists of the president, executive vice president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary-treasurer, director of city delivery, director of safety and health, director of life insurance, director of the Health Benefit Plan, director of retired members, the board of trustees and the national business agents.

Meetings of the Council provide an important opportunity for national officers and key staff members to focus on the important issues facing letter carriers. NALC leaders learn

about the latest developments from the field and tackle significant issues of national importance. Often, staff members in attendance will report on departmental activities. By meeting as a group, Executive Council members gain the perspective needed to make important decisions on behalf of the membership.

The following is a summary of the Council meeting held by video conference on April 15:

President Fredric Rolando discussed the Council’s decision to cancel the 2020 biennial convention—in particular, how reports from that convention would be distributed to the delegates, as well as the viability of holding a 2021 rap session and health benefit representatives seminar given

the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a discussion about implementation of certain provisions of the recently ratified National Agreement specific to city carrier assistant conversions and compensation, local memorandum of understanding negotiations, ongoing national training, state association and branch elections, and work being done by the City Delivery and Workplace Task Force. Other topics discussed included an update to legislative initiatives affecting letter carriers, the status of the Postal Service Board of Governors, the recent failed effort by labor to organize Amazon workers at a Bessemer, AL, facility, and a COVID-19 update that included impact and safety/mitigation efforts and assessments. **PR**

Letter carriers' USERRA rights

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) protects the job rights of individuals who, either voluntarily or involuntarily, leave employment positions to undertake military service or certain types of service in the National Disaster Medical System. USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating against past and present members of the uniformed services.

Letter carriers generally have questions about USERRA rights concerning military reservists and National Guard members who are called to active duty. However, USERRA regulations also address the rights of letter carriers who choose to enlist in the military.

This article offers NALC members who are also military members and/or veterans a basic understanding of the rights and benefits guaranteed under USERRA. The majority of the Postal Service regulations implementing USERRA are found in Section 77 of *Handbook EL-312*, Employment and Placement, which is available on the NALC website at nalc.org/workplace-issues/resources/usps-handbooks-and-manuals. For a more detailed explanation of the rules contained in *Handbook EL-312* and USERRA, members should review the *NALC Veterans Guide* available on the NALC website at nalc.org/veterans.

USERRA extends reemployment rights to employees who are absent from work to serve on active duty in the uniformed services for up to a total of five years (subject to certain exceptions). For purposes of applying these rights, "uniformed services" consist of the following military branches: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, their respective reserve components and the Army and Air National Guard; Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service; and any

other category of persons designated by the president of the United States as uniformed service in time of war or emergency.

The types of uniformed service protected under USERRA include active duty, active duty for training (including initial training), inactive duty training, full-time National Guard duty, or time needed to attend an examination to determine fitness for any of the above types of duty. These are protected whether the employee performs them voluntarily or involuntarily.

Typically, under USERRA, the cumulative length of absence from employment because of military service is limited to five years; however, there are some exceptions. A complete list of these exceptions is found in Section 771.21 of *Handbook EL-312*. This list is also available in the *NALC Veterans Guide*.

Rights while on military duty

Employees called to active duty in the reserves or National Guard are placed in a leave without pay (LWOP) status until their return. Employees enlisting in the military may be placed in an LWOP status for up to five years, or they may exercise a written option to resign with the intention of not returning to the Postal Service. The Postal Service must advise employees who choose to resign of their right to be restored to employment once the period of active duty ends. These restoration rights are not affected by the resignation.

Many of the National Agreement provisions afforded to city carriers remain in force while the employees are on LWOP for military service. Career letter carriers serving on active duty in the military remain a part of the bargaining unit and will continue to accrue seniority in accordance with Article 41, Section 1.B.1 of the National Agreement.

Full-time letter carriers are eligible



to bid for route assignments. Part-time flexible (PTF) letter carriers in a LWOP status while on active military duty will be promoted to full-time based on their seniority as opportunities arise. City carrier assistants (CCAs) will not have their conversion to career status delayed based on the absence for active military duty.

All letter carriers may file grievances or have grievances filed and processed on their behalf. Service members are entitled to the same rights and benefits available to employees on a non-military leave of absence. Furthermore, they are entitled to any non-seniority rights and benefits that became effective during their service time. These rights include, but are not limited to: the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance, flexible spending accounts, retirement (the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System) and the Thrift Savings Plan.

Employees who elect to resign from the Postal Service, rather than electing to be in an LWOP status during their military service, are no longer members of the bargaining unit. The employee relinquishes their bid as-

Letter carriers' USERRA rights (continued)

signment, which is then vacated and posted for bid under the provisions of Article 41, Section 1.A.1. They do not have bidding rights while on active military duty. In addition, letter carriers who were PTFs prior to resigning would not be promoted to full time, and CCAs would not be converted to career status. Prior to resigning from the Postal Service for active military service, letter carriers should speak to their shop steward or branch officer to ensure that they fully understand their rights under USERRA.

USERRA reemployment rights

To ensure entitlement to reemployment and benefits, employees must give their immediate supervisor reasonable notice, either orally or in writing, of the impending absence from work due to active service in the uniformed services. In some circumstances, military necessity prevents the employee from giving notification. In these cases, the employee's military command may provide this notice. No advanced notice is required if it is precluded by military necessity, or it is otherwise impossible or unreasonable to give notice.

Postal employees seeking reemployment must report for duty within certain timeframes based on the length of the military service.

For an absence due to military service of one to 30 days, the employee must report by the beginning of the first regular scheduled day of work following eight hours after return home from the military service. If an employee's return to work within this time frame is unreasonable or impossible, and they are not at fault for the delay, the employee must return to work as soon as possible.

If the military service time was 31 to 180 days, a written request for return to duty must be submitted no later

than 14 days after the employee's completion of the military service. If submission of written request for return to duty is impossible or unreasonable through no fault of the employee, it must be submitted as quickly as possible.

For military service exceeding 180 days, a written request for return to duty must be made within 90 days from the date of discharge.

Individuals who fail to request return to duty in writing within the specified time frames do not forfeit their rights automatically. However, they may be subject to discipline because of unexcused absences. A detailed explanation of the rights of military veterans in the discipline process is available in the *NALC Veterans Guide*.

Members of the uniformed services who are hospitalized or convalescing because of a service-connected disability incurred during active service are required to return to work once recovered. They are to report or apply for reemployment in accordance with the previously stated timeframes. Normally, the recovery period may not exceed two years; however, the two-year period may be extended for short durations to accommodate circumstances beyond the employee's control that prevented the employee from reasonably reporting or applying.

The seniority of city letter carriers who are reemployed following military service is governed by Article 41, Section 2.D.2 of the National Agreement. Under the rules in this section, letter carriers who enter the military shall not have their seniority broken or interrupted because of military service. Unlike members of the other postal bargaining units, reinstated letter carriers' uninterrupted seniority is restored even if they return to a different installation than their original.

USERRA prohibits discrimination

against an applicant or employee based on service in the uniformed services and prohibits acts of reprisal for exercising a right stipulated in its provisions or for seeking its enforcement. The application of USERRA regulations can be complex, and problems may arise. Letter carriers enlisting or called to active duty in the military should study their rights and discuss any questions with their local union representative or national business agent (NBA).

As previously stated, carriers who are in an LWOP status rather than separated for military service are still members of the bargaining unit and may be represented by the union concerning certain issues such as the failure of the Postal Service to honor bids. They should seek advice from their shop steward, branch officers or NBA if they need assistance. Additional assistance regarding USERRA is available from the U.S. Department of Labor's USERRA advisor, available online at webapps.dol.gov/elaws/vets/userra/userra.asp.

For more information on USERRA and other rights and benefits afforded NALC military veterans visit the NALC Veterans Page at nalc.org/veterans.

Join the NALC Veterans Group

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for their military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at nalc.org/veterans.



Living one note at a time

In sixth grade, “I picked up the trombone and thought, ‘This was it,’ ” Bradley Niblock said. “My parents will say I never put it down.”

A local musician recently had visited his school, given a presentation about the instrument and played some jazz tunes for the students. Though Niblock had played piano for a few years, there soon was an instrument tryout night, and that’s when he picked up the trombone for the first time. He never looked back.

It didn’t hurt that the trombone was used in all of the music for the

cartoons Niblock enjoyed watching, such as “Tom and Jerry” and “Looney Tunes.”

“My mom could play piano,” he said. “My dad could [only] play the radio, but they were so supportive.”

The Kansas City, MO Branch 30 member continued playing trombone throughout his school years, and he also was a member of the marching band in high school and then at Truman State University in Missouri, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in music.

Later, serving in the Marine Corps, Niblock played in military bands while stationed in Kanehoe Bay, HI. He played in numerous concerts and parades, as well as at special events such as airfield dedications. Niblock and his military bandmates also went to Sydney, Australia, to play.

After spending four years in the Marines, in 1997, Niblock and his wife moved back to Kansas City. He began with the Postal Service as a clerk the next year, before switching to the carrier craft in 2003. (He’s now also a steward and a CCA Academy instructor.)

The carrier soon auditioned and joined a local community symphony. “You learn about other openings” while participating, he says, and he tried out for the Kansas City Civic Orchestra. Niblock earned a spot playing his bass trombone.

The orchestra plays at the Kauffman Center for Performing Arts, as well as other venues such as large churches, at concerts that are free and open to the public. Some of Niblock’s co-workers have come to see him play from time to time.

Crowds can sometimes reach 800 or more at events in the community. “It’s really exciting,” Niblock said. “I like playing in front of a crowd like that. It’s a different crowd, [including] families. It’s not as formal as a professional symphony. It’s great exposure to music.”

Niblock loves helping people connect to music in person, through live concerts. That way, he says, “you can feel the music notes instead of it being played at you.”

The 80-plus-member orchestra tries to put on seven concerts per year. They play many classical pieces by composers including Brahms, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, though on occasion, they’ll also have pops concerts in which they play more modern music. They also usually play a few Christmas concerts each winter.

If Niblock has time in his schedule, he’ll try to squeeze in other concerts where possible, including with the local Lee Summit Orchestra. “I also



Bradley Niblock

Opposite page, top: Bradley Niblock (r) plays in the orchestra's trombone section.

play with them occasionally, if they need someone," he said. "I'll play wherever."

And practice makes perfect. "I play throughout the week, or else [I] won't make it through a concert," the carrier said. "It's a physical activity."

Practicing helps him play better, both mentally and physically, he says. "Sometimes it's tough with two kids, but I do what I can," he added.

The orchestra holds rehearsals every Tuesday night throughout the year, and performances are held on week-ends. Before a major concert, they have four to six dedicated rehearsals.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on the 2020 season. "Most of the season got canceled last year," the carrier said, "but what can you do?"

To keep playing, the members got creative, and "Civic in the City" was born—a series of outdoor recitals performed around town while maintaining appropriate safety measures. "We started breaking off in groups—wood-

winds, brass—and started playing in neighborhoods," said Niblock, who was excited to participate.

The orchestra has also held some virtual concerts, one of which featured the winner of a young artist competition, a talented high school freshman violinist.

And they performed their first pandemic-era in-person concert in April. "It was great" to be back, Niblock said. The musicians spread out at a community college hall and played pieces by Beethoven and Haydn, among other composers.

Niblock's absolute favorite piece is Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5. "I've been wanting to play that since college and I finally got to," he said. The carrier also enjoys playing pieces by Brahms, who he says "writes so well for trombone."

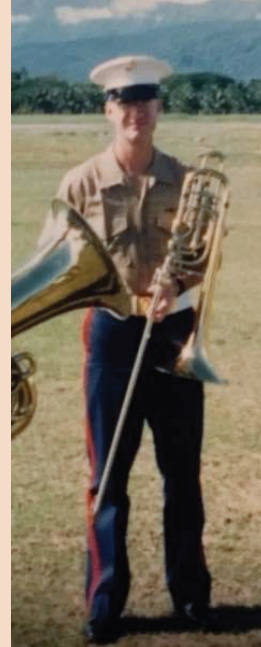
The carrier says that over decades of performing in front of large crowds—and even serving as a drum major of his high school marching band and occasionally conducting with his Marine

band—he's never gotten stage fright. "The big thing is to prepare," Niblock said. "Half is preparation, half is getting used to it."

He wants to play plenty more concerts once the pandemic ends. "I hope to keep playing around town," he said, adding that there are "plenty of opportunities in Kansas City."

One thing the carrier knows for sure is that he'll always be surrounded by music. "It's just always been in my life since I can remember," he said, both playing and listening to music. In addition, his wife is a music teacher, and one of his children plans to be a music major in college.

Niblock's favorite aspect of being part of the civic orchestra is community. "It sounds kind of corny," he said. "It's doing something you love, but you're also giving back." **PR**



What's happening on social media

Various news stories and interesting anecdotes that celebrate letter carriers and the mail have been flying around social media. We plan to collect the best ones in this space. If you come across a story you'd like us to consider featuring, send it to social@nalc.org.

Dancing Oregon letter carrier raises youngster's spirits

Over the past few months, you may have seen a dancing letter carrier taking over your social media feed.

While quarantining during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, 3-year-old

Avalina Whitlow would connect daily with her letter carrier, Portland, OR Branch 82 member **Ian Simon**. The two would share a dance through the living-room window, and the toddler's father, David, captured a montage on video to post online.

The video, appeared on major social media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, received millions of views and soon garnered attention from various media outlets, including the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), "Good Morning America," Britain's *The Daily Mail* and HuffPost Canada.

"Even the smallest gesture during these times, any kindness that



Avalina Whitlow and Ian Simon

someone can pay, means everything, because it's been a struggle for everybody," David Whitlow told PBS NewsHour in December. "Anybody that does something nice for someone else,



Social media (cont.)

it really means a lot. And it meant a lot to me and my family.

“A lot of positivity has come out of this video,” he added. “And so, I thought the world needed something to feel good about. And Ian was a huge part of that, obviously.... I am really glad that everybody else felt so happy when they watched it.”

Simon has received a lot of reaction since as well.

“I’m getting messages from people all over the world thanking me. It’s very inspiring,” he told the news program. “One lady started doing Meals on Wheels [which distributes meals to elderly residents and people with disabilities]. And her first week on her route, she started dancing the food up to the door. And a lot of the messages, I tear up. It’s just so heartwarming.”

Resourceful New Jersey carrier helps young football fan

When Princeton, NJ Branch 268 member **Mark Egan** was handed a letter from 9-year-old customer Rishik Pannala in December, he noticed that it didn’t have a mailing address on it. It was addressed to Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady.

Egan wanted to help. He and his postmaster found a potential address for the Super Bowl-winning team, and mailed the letter.

A few weeks later, the carrier delivered Pannala a missive from the Bucs, which thanked him for being a fan and included a signed photo of Brady.

The boy was thrilled, and Pannala’s father was grateful, too.

“My wife and I very much appreciate our mail carrier Mark’s kind gesture,” the father told local TV news stations. “It is efforts from people like Mark the mailman that remind

us of what a wonderful community we have and how fortunate we are to have Mark looking out for our family. To us, Mark and his postmaster are the real heroes who made it possible for a young kid to have a very special experience.”

Texas carrier delivers care package to customers with COVID-19

Houston single mom Lisette LeJeune was surprised to receive a care package from her letter carrier in December while she and her two sons, ages 14 and 3, were at home sick with COVID-19.

“I was really sick the first week, so it was really hard trying to take care of both of them,” LeJeune told ABC’s “Good Morning America.”

After opening the package that contained cans of chicken soup, orange juice, crackers and cookies, LeJeune discovered a note from her carrier, Mary, saying: “Get-well wishes... I hope you all are feeling better!”

Touched, LeJeune wanted to share the story.

“The sweetest thing happened this morning that made my entire year,” the customer wrote on Facebook. “I’ve been home in quarantine with COVID. I opened the door one day with my mask on and told my mail lady that we had COVID[-19] and I would put a bucket in front of the house so she could just drop it in without touching our mailbox as I get the mail out. This morning we received a care package from her.”

She told “GMA”: “I guess she saw the bucket was still there in front of my door two weeks later,” adding, “What made me emotional was just the thought of her getting the bag ready, in the morning before starting work or

the night before, just her having us in mind with her daily routine.... She’s a stranger to us, and that was the kindest part.”

In a statement to ABC News through a spokesperson for the Postal Service, Mary called the act “a small gesture of kindness.”

“The customer expressed concerns about my well-being with contacting the same mailbox as her while she was sick,” she said. “After a few days, I left a get-well gift at her doorstep because I appreciated her concern. I didn’t expect it to get so big, but I would have done the same for anybody.”

Longtime Ohio carrier receives special sendoff before retirement

To honor their longtime letter carrier’s retirement in March, customers on Cincinnati, OH Branch 43 member **Brett Wittwer’s** route got together and planned a surprise send-off for him, including balloons, decorated mailboxes, gift bags and a large banner with well wishes.

One neighborhood resident, Glenna Weber Stricklett, told “Good Morning America” that Wittwer is “always friendly” and would take great care when handling their packages.

“Like if it was a rainy day, and we had something that was kind of large, he would bring it to the door,” she said, since many in the area had mailboxes far from the front door.

Wittwer, who delivered mail for 35 years, was delighted to see the surprises waiting for him along his route.

“It was crazy,” Wittwer told the show. “It kind of brings a tear to your eye. I probably won’t see most of these people ever again. It’s kind of a strange feeling. I felt happy, but I felt sad.” **PR**

Bristol, Pennsylvania

This is official notice to all members of Branch 2572 that nominations are scheduled for the following offices: president, vice president, treasurer, recording secretary, sergeant-at-arms, two stewards and five trustees.

Nominations will be accepted at both September and October meetings, and by mail to P.O. Box 711, Morrisville, PA 19067. Nominations will be closed at the conclusion of the branch meeting on Oct. 5. Elections will be held and decided at the meeting on Nov. 2.

All offices are for a term of one year, from January 2022 through December 2022.

William Rittler, Rec. Sec., Br. 2572

California

In accordance with the dispensation granted by NALC President Fredric V. Rolando, the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC) will conduct the election of officers by holding a nomination meeting online and, if necessary, an election by secret mail ballot.

Acceptance of any nomination must be in writing on the official CSALC nomination form. The nomination form must be completed and received by July 10 by CSALC Secretary Mark Lesch. Mail completed nomination forms to: CSALC Secretary Mark Lesch, 14579 Golden Trails, Victorville, CA 92392-6147.

The nomination meeting will be held on July 18 at 1 p.m. PDT using the Webex web-conferencing software. Login information for the nomination meeting will be provided to all California branch presidents and all nominees and will posted on the CSALC website (csalc.org). Any delegate may nominate an eligible member for any of the following CSALC offices: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, director of education/organization, director of retirees and eight district officers. The district officer nominee must be a member of their district and will be elected by the delegates from that district.

No person may accept a nomination for more than one CSALC office. Self-nominations are allowed. If there is only one candidate for a CSALC office, that position shall be declared elected by consent.

If necessary, the election of officers by secret mail ballot shall include only duly elected delegates by and for their branches. Branches that have been unable to elect delegates to the 2021 CSALC convention due to the pandemic may authorize their delegates to the previous CSALC convention to participate in the nomination and election of CSALC officers. Election ballots will be mailed to the home addresses of the qualified delegates. Ballots will be mailed no later than Aug. 23. The deadline for returning completed ballots to the designated P.O. box (P.O. Box 4948, Ontario, CA 91761-0857) is Sept. 19 by 5 p.m. PDT. On Sept. 20, the election committee will retrieve the ballots and begin the count.

A branch may choose to vote unit rule for the entire membership, and

this decision must be made in writing and received by CSALC Secretary Mark Lesch by July 20.

The term of office shall be three years, commencing from the date of installation of officers. The date of installation of officers will be determined at a later date.

Mark Lesch, Sec., CSALC

Greater East Bay, California

This is official notice to the membership of Branch 1111 that nominations for the election of branch officers will be held at the regular monthly general meeting at 7 p.m. on Aug. 24 at the branch office located at 402 37th St., or virtually, based on CDC guidelines. The term of office is two years, beginning with the installation of officers at the Nov. 23 branch meeting.

Nominations will be held for the following branch offices: president, executive vice president, first vice president, second vice president, third vice president, fourth vice president, secretary-treasurer, assistant secretary-treasurer, insurance officer, three trustees, seven executive council members and a sergeant-at-arms.

All candidates for office must be present at the branch meeting when nominated and/or signify in writing their willingness to serve if elected. Nominations may also be made in writing, but must be received by the secretary-treasurer before nominations at the branch meeting on Aug. 24. All candidates/regular members must verify that they have not held, accepted or applied for (voluntarily or otherwise) a supervisory position in the Postal Service in the 24 months preceding nomination. Candidates may accept a nomination for only one office.

Nominations for delegates to the state and national conventions will also be held. The candidates elected as president and secretary-treasurer shall be compensation-eligible by virtue of their offices.

The election will be conducted by secret mail ballot. Ballots with instructions will be mailed to the address of record to all eligible members in good standing on or about Sept. 13. Write-in votes are not permitted. Eligible members who have not received a ballot must contact the branch office right away. Ballots are to be returned by close of business on Oct. 20. The results will be announced at the Oct. 26 general membership meeting.

Edward P. Fletcher, Pres., Br. 1111

Kentucky

This is an amended notice of election for the Kentucky State Association of Letter Carriers.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary to cancel the state convention. Although we have to cancel the convention, the state association must have an election of state officers and executive board for the next two-year term.

NALC President Rolando has given dispensation to implement alternative procedures for nomination and election of state officers.

Branches must send a list of all delegates to KYSALC Secretary Steve

Terry. The list of delegates must contain the branch delegate's full name, mailing address, phone number and email address. This list must be accurate and approved by each branch president. This list must be received by the state secretary by July 15. The state secretary will then send forms for submitting nominations. Nominations must be returned by July 30. Nominations can also be made by phone or email. Any nomination sent by email or phone not listed on a branch's record will not be accepted. The address, phone and email to where nominations can be sent will be included in the nomination letters sent to branches and delegates.

If the nominations result in two or more nominees for any position, there will be an election for that position. An election committee will then be appointed by State President Bob McNulty.

All branches must notify the state secretary of the decision to vote *en bloc* or to allow their branch delegates to vote individually by July 30. Branches that vote *en bloc* will be allowed per Article 5, Section 2 of the KYSALC Constitution: "The basis of representation and vote shall be one delegate and one vote for each Branch having twenty (20) members or less, and one additional delegate and vote for each additional twenty (20) or fraction thereof." Branches that allow delegates to vote individually will receive one vote per delegate. Each state officer will also be allowed one vote.

In accordance with Article 5, Section 5, the number of members for whom per capita tax was paid into this association, or who had withholding through Forms 1187 or 1189 for the term beginning Jan. 1, prior to the convention, shall determine the number of delegates and votes a branch is entitled.

The election committee will have the task of printing ballots and mailing those ballots to the branches or delegates voting individually by Aug. 10.

The ballots must be returned to the election committee by Sept. 1.

A member who is nominated for any position and is unopposed will be considered elected to that position. The elected officers and executive board members will assume office after ballots are counted. The results of the election will be sent to all branches and delegates that voted individually by the state secretary.

Steve Terry, Sec., KYSALC

New Haven, Connecticut

This is official notice to all members of Branch 19 that nominations for officers will take place at the regular monthly branch meeting scheduled for June 16 at 7:30 p.m. Nominations will be accepted via Zoom, by email at nbranch19@yahoo.com by 5 p.m. on June 16, or by mail to: Branch 19, NALC, 23 Brock St., Unit B2, North Haven, CT 06473, or Election Committee, P.O. Box 185374, Hamden, CT 06518 (received no later than June 16). Self-nominations can be made via all methods.

Nominations for the following branch officers will be made: presi-

dent, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, health benefits representative, director of retired members, three trustees and a sergeant-at-arms.

This is also official notice that nominations for delegates to the 2021 state convention shall be made.

Maryann DeRevere, Rec. Sec., Br. 19

Norman, Oklahoma

The process for electing officers and delegates of Branch 1491 will be held in May.

Barbara Semke, Sec., Br. 1491

Richardson, Texas

This is a notice to all members of Branch 4784 that there will be a vote on the bylaw changes that were read at the April 8 meeting. The vote will take place at the regular monthly meeting on Aug. 12. If you would like a copy of the proposed changes, mail your request to: P.O. Box 830314, Richardson, TX 75083-0314.

Freddie Jackson, Pres., Br. 4784

Toms River, New Jersey

This is to serve as official notice to all members of Branch 2128 in good standing that we will hold nominations for the election of officers at the regular branch meeting on Sept. 14 at the Toms River Elks Lodge, 600 Washington St., Toms River, at 6 p.m. Candidates must be present to accept nominations.

If a candidate seeking nomination is unable to be present at the meeting, he/she must signify in writing his/her desire to be placed in nomination for the office and a letter must be received by the branch secretary before the September meeting.

Nominations will be held for the following branch offices: president, first vice president, second vice president, recording/financial secretary, treasurer, sergeant-at-arms, Letter Carrier Political Fund organizer, three trustees, seven executive board members, health benefit representative and director of retirees.

Candidates may accept nominations for only one office. The terms of office will be three years, beginning Jan. 1, 2022. By virtue of their office, the president, first vice president and second vice president in the forthcoming election shall automatically be delegates to the national and state conventions that will take place during their terms in office.

The election will be conducted by secret ballot. Ballots will be mailed to the home address of eligible members. Ballots will be mailed back to the election committee and must be received by 3 p.m. on Nov. 9. The election committee will collect the ballots, bring them to the November union meeting on Nov. 9 and begin the tally. Write-in votes are not permitted.

Edward Sedillo, Sec., Br. 2128

Legislative activism: The time is now



**Brian
Renfroe**

You likely have read in this edition of *The Postal Record* or on the NALC website about the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076), a bipartisan bill that aims to provide financial and operational stability to the Postal Service. The bill was introduced by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY) on May 11. NALC appreciates the bipartisan effort to craft this bill that addresses the long-needed reform, and we are proud to support it.

While the bipartisan nature of this legislation is certainly a good sign, and we are pleased with how quickly the bill has garnered support from many members of both parties, this fact alone does not mean it is a cinch to become law. Political tensions in Washington, DC, are still quite high after the events of the last several months. The Postal Service remains a polarizing issue among the very politicians that will ultimately vote on the fate of this bill. This is where letter carriers come in.

“One of the greatest strengths of our union is the geographic and political diversity of our membership.... [postal issues are] not partisan, as evidenced by this bipartisan legislation.”

The membership of NALC has a long and proud history of legislative activism. The dedication and hard work by NALC members, when combined with our legislative and political structure, has allowed us to succeed in educating our elected representatives on our issues for many years.

In the last decade-plus, we have often been in the position of playing defense when legislative threats that would harm the Postal Service have been put on the table. We have played a lot of good defense on ill-conceived ideas for reforming the Postal Service; now it is time for some offense to help push this much-needed positive reform across the finish line.

The main issue that the Postal Service Reform Act of

2021 (H.R. 3076) would address is the mandate that USPS pre-fund health benefits for future retirees. I will not go into the details of it here, but this edition of *The Postal Record* includes a detailed explanation of not only what H.R. 3076 would do, but also the history of this pre-funding problem and why reform is needed.

Whether you are an experienced activist who needs a refresher or a newer volunteer, I strongly encourage you to read that piece. It will arm you with much of the information needed to successfully educate your elected representatives on the importance of voting for passage of this bill.

There are several tools available to you to assist. Of course, there are resources like this magazine and the website at nalc.org, as well as NALC’s various social media platforms.

The NALC Member App is the easiest way to receive up-to-the-minute notifications on actions that each NALC member can take to help advance our legislative efforts, as well as a wealth of other information. Information on how to download the app is included on the inside of the front cover of this magazine.

NALC’s legislative and political organizers have been working closely with each of our state associations to communicate our message to members of the House of Representatives. That message and ask is simple—they should support and vote for passage of the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076).

NALC does a lot of work with elected officials in Washington, DC, to gain support on our issues. However, having those elected officials hear from their constituents is as important, and sometimes more important, than what they hear from us in the nation’s capital.

One of the greatest strengths of our union is the geographic and political diversity of our membership. We are everywhere, and our members’ political views vary across the political spectrum. This issue is not partisan, as evidenced by this bipartisan legislation.

I encourage everyone to check the website, install the app and stay up to date with the latest on this important reform. Let each member of the House of Representatives hear from us with a clear message—support the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076).

We have the opportunity to get this important legislation to the desk of the president for his signature, and finally address the largest piece of the reform needed to stabilize the Postal Service, our jobs, and the service we provide to the American people.

Changes to expedited arbitration



**Lew
Drass**

There are three types of arbitration that make up our system for hearing cases at the regional level: expedited, regular and impasse arbitration. This month, I want to talk about the expedited arbitration process. Expedited and regular panel arbitration hearings are the same as far as how the hearing is conducted. There are other differences, however.

In expedited arbitration, there are no briefs permitted, so both parties have to orally close their case on the day of the hearing. Until this year, expedited arbitrators had 48 hours to issue a decision, as opposed to 30 days for regular arbitrators. Also, expedited decisions do not set precedent and cannot be cited in future cases. Regular panel

decisions do not set precedent either, but may be cited in future cases for persuasive value.

Additionally, expedited arbitrators never are permitted study days, whereas regular panel arbitrators are permitted up to two study days per hearing date.

I want to explain the contract language changes pertaining to the expedited arbitration process that were made in the 2019 National Agreement and in the Conditions of Appointment for expedited arbitrators, but first a bit of history.

We always have had an expedited arbitration process, but way back when, it was used only for letters of warning and suspensions of 14 days or less. That brought in plenty of business, because suspensions were served as “lost time” suspensions. In other words, you would serve your suspension off the clock first, then file a grievance to get your record cleared and your money back for the time you were forced off the clock by management.

On average, we had about a thousand expedited arbitration hearings a year nationwide back in those days. The reason for so many hearings each year was the money. Management in most cases was simply not willing to pay us for the money we lost from the time frame they kicked us out of work unless an expedited arbitrator ordered them to do so.

Things changed in the 2001 National Agreement. This is when we went to the “no time off” suspensions, where you still grieve to get your record cleared, but there is no loss of pay. This was quite a controversial issue at the time. There were many who believed that going to “no time off” suspensions would lead to a sharp increase in discipline being issued to letter carriers. That did not happen, and it became easier for the parties to resolve such discipline disputes short of arbitration because there was no money involved.

The end result of all this was that the expedited arbitration process was used less and less. We were down to fewer than 50

expedited arbitration hearings nationwide by 2010. That number has been pretty consistent each year since then.

The parties agreed in the 2011 National Agreement to use expedited arbitration for 12 contractual issues, but did not change anything else.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Re: Expedited Arbitration was continued in the 2016 National Agreement, with an additional 23 contractual issues added; once again, the parties did not change anything else.

I have never seen a downside to adding contractual issues to the expedited arbitration process, because of the language in Article 15.4.C.2 of the National Agreement that states:

If either party concludes that the issues involved are of such complexity or significance as to warrant reference to the Regular Arbitration Panel, that party shall notify the other party of such reference at least seven (7) days prior to the scheduled time for the expedited arbitration.

The MOU Re: Expedited Arbitration was continued again in the 2019 National Agreement, with 10 additional contractual issues added to the 35 already in the MOU. This time, the parties agreed to make some changes to the expedited arbitration process:

1. We changed the time frame for expedited arbitrators to render a decision from 48 hours to five calendar days. This will give expedited arbitrators time to study the contractual issues before them.
2. We changed the language in Article 15.4.C.4 of the National Agreement to say:

No decision by a member of the Expedited Panel in such a case shall be regarded as a precedent or be cited in any future proceeding **except to enforce its terms**, but otherwise will be a final and binding decision.

This change makes it crystal clear that expedited arbitration awards are enforceable.

3. We agreed to allow expedited arbitrators a study day for contract cases in their conditions of appointment. This change will allow advocates to submit citations to persuade and educate expedited arbitrators who hear cases regarding contractual issues.
4. We expanded the number of expedited arbitrators around the country from 38 to 60.

The hope is that the combination of these changes will make using the expedited arbitration process more attractive to both parties. The MOU Re: Expedited Arbitration allows the parties to agree to add other contractual issues to the expedited arbitration process.

The ultimate goal is to produce timely and fair decisions. Also, to go “back to the future” and choose regular panel arbitrators from the expedited arbitrator ranks when the need arises, as we used to do back in the days when we heard a lot of cases in expedited arbitration.

Important reminders



Nicole
Rhine

Whether it's filing reports with the Department of Labor and the Internal Revenue Service, or just relaying information to NALC Headquarters, certain tasks must be done by branch officers—and in a timely matter. So, here are some reminders designed to help ensure you get it all done.

Reporting to the Department of Labor—Any branch or state association that has a fiscal year end of Dec. 31 should have filed its labor-management (LM) report by March 31. Additionally, any branch or state association that has a fiscal year end of March 31 should file its LM report by June 29. If you are not sure what an LM form is, or which LM

form to file, please see my January column. The form is due within 90 days of the end of the organization's fiscal year.

Reporting to the Internal Revenue Service—Any branch or state association that has a fiscal year end of Dec. 31 should have filed its Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990N with the Internal Revenue Service by May 15. The form is due by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of the organization's fiscal year. In addition, the Internal Revenue Code requires branches with "unrelated business income" (UBI) of \$1,000 or more for the year to file Form 990-T, Exempt Organization Business Income Tax Return, and pay any tax due. Generally, UBI is income from a business that is unrelated to the branch's tax-exempt purposes. More information on the above is in my March column.

Branch mergers—Any branch proposing to merge should review Article 2, Section 3 of the *NALC Constitution*, which sets forth the requirements for affecting a merger of branches. Requests for mergers received at NALC Headquarters are often missing two requirements from both branches wishing to merge: 1) a resolution and 2) a statement of reason(s) for merging. To avoid having a request for a merger returned, please ensure that your branch includes all of the necessary documentation. More information can be found on the secretary-treasurer's page at nalc.org. The secretary-treasurer's page is under the "Union Administration" tab.

Service awards—Article 2, Section 5 of the *NALC Constitution* contains information on the years of service membership pins available. The branch secretary must notify my office in writing that a member will complete the nec-

essary years of service, and the pins will be sent to the branch. Should the branch be holding an award ceremony and thus require the pins by a certain date, please state so in the letter. Should the branch be awarding a 50-year pin and gold card, please allow four to six weeks for delivery, as gold cards are a special order and must be engraved by an outside union vendor.

Bonding—Every officer, agent, shop steward or other representative and employee of a branch or state association who handles funds or other property of the branch or state association must be bonded if the branch or state association has property and annual receipts exceeding \$5,000. Branch and state treasurers should ensure that officers and others handling funds are adequately bonded. Trustees should ensure during the constitutionally required audits that an adequate bond is in place. Please see my April column for more information on audits. For more information on bonding requirements, please refer to the *NALC Branch Officer's Guide to Finance and Administration*, which has a separate chapter on bonding requirements (Chapter 4). The guide can be purchased from the NALC Supply Department, and an electronic copy is available from the secretary-treasurer's page on the NALC website by clicking on the "Resources" link.

Rosters—Branch secretaries are reminded to review the biweekly roster and ensure that all dues being deducted are correct. If a change needs to be made, please notify the Membership Department in writing. In addition, members called to active military duty may have their dues suspended upon written request by the branch secretary. When the member returns from active duty military, please notify the Membership Department so that dues deductions may be resumed.

Per capita tax call—The six-month per capita tax call has been mailed out to branches. NALC bills branches semi-annually, in June and December, for the national and state per capita tax of their direct-paying members. For more information on the six-month per capita tax call, please refer to the *NALC Branch Officer's Guide to Finance and Administration*, which has a separate chapter on NALC dues (Chapter 2). Please see pages 2-12 and 2-13.

Officer information lists—Branches and state associations are reminded to provide the Membership Department with any changes to officers that occur. If you have not already done so, please immediately update the Membership Department via letter or a "Branch Information Record" card, which was included with the six-month per capita tax call. If you didn't receive one, call the Membership Department at 202-393-4695 to request one.

New innovations



**Paul
Barner**

Out of the ashes rises the phoenix. Well, it may not be that dramatic, but NALC has recently created some new and innovative platforms, partly due to challenges we've collectively endured during the COVID-19 pandemic. These new platforms, we hope, will provide opportunities that may not have otherwise existed.

NALC has for a long time operated a store selling NALC-branded merchandise from the first floor of the NALC Headquarters building. Branches and members alike routinely place orders through the NALC store for every-

thing from apparel and jewelry bearing the NALC logo to member publications. Oftentimes, these orders were placed over the phone or by mail. While those methods remain available, NALC has now expanded to an online store presence.

Branches and members can now order the same NALC apparel, memorabilia and publications through a link on the NALC website to the newly launched NALC virtual store. The site includes pictures of most items and incorporates a shopping cart method to use while making a purchase. On checkout, the shopper can select his or her preferred method of payment to complete the transaction. And, rest assured, all items will be shipped through the U.S. Mail. To visit the online store, go to nalc.org and click the link currently displayed as one of the banners on the NALC homepage. It also can be found under the "Member Benefits" tab.

Another recent development is the launch of the Virtual Meetings application. This platform was pre-viewed during the modified virtual branch officers' training held in late winter of 2020 and in early spring of this year. The Virtual Meetings application is designed for national, regional and state officers to set up virtual events through the Members Only portal on the NALC website. NALC regional offices and state presidents, secretaries and treasurers now have access to create and organize virtual events, set up registration processes for their respective members, and deliver meeting links securely through the Members Only portal.

After creating the event in the Members Only portal,

simply set up a virtual conference using platforms such as Zoom and Webex to generate a unique web address URL and paste it into the "Event URL" field identified in the event setup. Other information, such as the greeting, the maximum number of attendees and any important notes can be entered as well. PDFs can be uploaded for that meeting, in addition to itinerary topics to be discussed and addressed.

After a meeting has been generated, registrants or event organizers can add attendees by searching for the member's last name, adding people up to the maximum allocation per branch, state or event. The organizer of the event also can update or delete the meeting, or it can be copied for future meetings.

"Branches and members can now order the NALC apparel, memorabilia and publications through a link on the NALC website to the newly launched NALC virtual store."

Members assigned as attendees can access the meeting through the Members Only section of the NALC website on the scheduled date of the event, and also can view the associated documents and topics. Registrants can join the meeting by clicking the "Meetings" button in the Members Only portal, then selecting the specific meeting scheduled. A "Join" button will then appear, providing access to the Zoom or Webex platform from which they will attend and participate in the meeting. An instructional tutorial on the portal will provide a step-by-step explanation of the process.

Also available: National assigned assistants (NAAs) who are assigned to work on behalf of NALC are now able to view their NALC earnings statements by logging into the Members Only section of the NALC website. From the portal, you can link into the NALC Human Resources/payroll management platform.

As we reflect on some of the many hurdles presented during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, I urge everyone to take time to reflect on the historic event marked by the date of June 6, 1944—D-Day—and the tremendous sacrifices made on behalf of all humanity on the day that became the turning point of World War II.

NALC and USPS jointly explore new uses for technology



Christopher Jackson

The COVID-19 virus certainly has changed the way we do things in our everyday lives. For many people, the pandemic has created significant changes in the way we perform our jobs, purchase groceries and supplies, educate our children, and participate in activities with our friends and family. The ongoing pandemic has substantially limited our ability to have in-person interaction, and people around the world have been relying on technology more than ever to fill the gap. As an organization, NALC is not immune to these changes. The pandemic has forced us to alter the way we conduct business on the local, regional and national level.

From holding virtual branch meetings, training sessions and arbitration hearings to the cancellation of the 72nd national convention in 2020, the pandemic has affected the way we function as a labor union over the past year.

While the Postal Service and NALC often have discussed how we can leverage technology to benefit city carriers, the events of the past year have really brought this issue to the forefront. In recent months, the joint conversations revolving around technology have intensified and expanded to include specific approaches, ideas and goals. With the ratification of the 2019 National Agreement, NALC and USPS renewed a commitment to work together to modernize delivery methods and processes to ensure that the Postal Service remains the provider of choice for customers and to continue our joint objective of creating an improved work environment for all employees. This commitment, memorialized in the Memorandum of Understanding Re: City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force, identifies the parties' intent of jointly developing and testing new work methods and concepts that may include new or alternative uses for existing technology.

One piece of the MOU includes a route evaluation and adjustment task force to jointly explore the use of technology, data, advanced analytics and machine learning to improve operations, route evaluation, adjustment and optimization, delivery capabilities and visibility. As a part of this joint task force, two route evaluation and adjustment teams were selected to facilitate joint evaluation and adjustment of routes in a limited number of delivery units. The two teams will use the jointly agreed upon principles contained in the 2014-2015 City Delivery Route Alternate Adjustment Process to evaluate and adjust routes in the

chosen delivery units. As part of the evaluation and adjustment, they will review USPS data from a variety of computer programs and applications. Additionally, the team will review Mobile Delivery Device (MDD) information to determine if the GPS breadcrumb data obtained from the MDD could be useful in future route evaluations and adjustments. The teams will be tasked with evaluating existing technology, applying current data to route evaluation and adjustment, and providing suggestions and feedback to the software developers to improve technology for the future.

Over the years, city carriers often have expressed concerns about the possibility of inaccuracies in the route inspection and traditional PS Form 3999, Inspection of Letter Carrier Route, process. Reported events of data collection device failures, software data transfer issues and potential inspector bias have prompted the parties to consider whether development of a virtual 3999 process could be possible using the MDD breadcrumb data. To assess this possibility, the joint evaluation and adjustment teams are working closely with USPS engineering and technology departments to evaluate the current programs for necessary changes that could make virtual 3999s viable.

If successful, NALC hopes that using MDD data in conjunction with the joint adjustment process would eliminate the need for an in-person inspector to conduct a traditional PS Form 3999. Keep in mind, the use of MDD technology for this purpose would require a joint agreement of the parties, as well as modification of the contractually negotiated provisions of USPS handbooks and manuals. Use of MDD breadcrumb data is in the preliminary stages of development and might require significant improvements and/or revisions before it can be considered for permanent use as part of the route evaluation and adjustment process. For the foreseeable future, city carriers should expect to receive the traditional PS Form 3999.

At this time, there is no national-level agreement to conduct joint route evaluations and adjustments beyond this limited initiative. USPS may still conduct formal route counts and inspections pursuant to Chapter 9 of the *Handbook M-41*, City Carriers Duties and Responsibilities and Chapter 2 of the *Handbook M-39*, Management of Delivery Services. These include special inspections requested under the terms of Section 271.g of the *M-39*. Management may also implement minor route adjustments in accordance with Chapter 1 of the *M-39* if the route meets the criteria. As always, carriers should continue to perform their routes consistent with the *M-41*.

I encourage you to visit my City Delivery page at nalc.org for more information on the formal route evaluation and inspection process and updates on this initiative.

Hey, Boss: Why won't you honor the Joint Statement on Violence?



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

“It is not that the employer is always engaged in overt behavior that violates the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace; it is that they are constantly grinding and grinding on carriers.”—October 2011 *Postal Record*

Well, the situation has become worse since that was written. The above scenario seems subtle when compared to the inappropriate, aggressive behavior that has become more and more common on the workroom floor in our current environment.

No matter how much we hope for progress, it all depends on the top brass.

Does the leadership of USPS want to make the necessary changes to stop the vicious cycle, or do we have to constantly fight the abusers on the front line? Does upper management honor the commitments made in the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace (JSOV)? Why does upper management protect its abusive number-chasers after having promised that there would be no excuse for such behavior?

Management's actions speak much louder than the excuses we hear.

We all know that until upper management stops defending abusive managers, this madness will never end. The incoming supervisor wants to focus on numbers above anything else, especially since he or she knows that the predecessor earned the promotion by chasing those sacred numbers.

The JSOV (M-1242) is the strongest tool we have in our arsenal to address the inappropriate conduct of your supervisor/manager/postmaster. The JSOV was drafted by union and postal leadership following the tragic bloodshed in Royal Oak, MI, in 1991, which was preceded by a number of workplace events that led to the phrase “going postal.”

The following two commitments in the JSOV are key to bettering our workplace climate (some phrases have been bolded for emphasis):

...We openly acknowledge that in some places or units there is an unacceptable level of stress in the workplace; that there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of violence or any threats of violence by anyone at any level of the Postal

Service; and that **there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone.**

We also affirm that every employee at every level of the Postal Service should be treated at all times with dignity, respect, and fairness. The need for the USPS to serve the public efficiently and productively, and the need for all employees to be committed to giving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, does not justify actions that are abusive or intolerant. “Making the numbers” is not an excuse for the abuse of anyone, **Those who do not treat others with dignity and respect will not be rewarded or promoted. Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions....**

The commitments made in the JSOV are contractually enforceable. You need to breathe life into these commitments through your efforts, using the grievance procedure, labor-management meetings and/or safety committee meetings. Management often claims that assertions of a violation of the JSOV are not in fact safety issues.

Arbitrator Charles Rehmus, in a decision dated July 24, 1997 (C-17542), addressing the conduct of an officer in charge (OIC) in Yucaipa, CA, wrote the following:

...Here, Management argues, no safety related complaint was made to Management by any employee and hence the Union's use of [Article 14 2 c] was improper.

...The conjunction of safety concerns and undue levels of stress in Postal workplaces in these few sentences quoted from the Joint Statement is obvious. When a Union steward comes to a supervisor and complains that an OIC has threatened, bullied, and harassed Postal employees by words and actions, that is a complaint of a Safety and Health violation that can properly be raised as a Step 2 grievance under Article 14.2(c) of the National Agreement. The rejection of this argument in Management's Step 3 Answer to this grievance (Jt. Ex. 2, p.3)... is simply an example of “winks and nods, or skepticism” as the framers of the Joint Statement feared that some of the Service's 700,000 employees might take it.

The commitments made in the JSOV were the right ones. Management at every level needs to step up. Doing so would make the necessary difference.

Keep an eye on each other, and take note of what is happening. Your observations are key to making the changes we need. Don't look the other way. Care for your colleagues as you would have them care for you.

Working after retirement



Dan Toth

While many letter carriers who retire may never look back, there are those who consider returning to the workforce. Whether they are making a financial choice, looking for a way to stay busy, following a passion or a mixture of many reasons, some retired letter carriers decide to return to punch the clock a few more times.

If you're retired but considering going back to work for the federal government, you need to be aware of the effect that will have on your salary and your annuity. In general, if you become reemployed with the federal government while collecting a Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or

Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuity, your wages will be offset by the amount of your annuity.

As a reemployed annuitant with the federal government, your salary will be offset, dollar for dollar, by the amount of your annuity. This reduction to your salary will often be substantial. Such a reduction may be prohibitive, and prevents many from returning to the federal government.

To compute the offset, divide your gross yearly annuity by 2,080 hours. The result is the offset per hour, which you can multiply by 80 hours to see how much would be deducted from your salary each pay period for a full-time employee:

- Gross monthly annuity x 12/2080 hours = Hourly rate of annuity
- Hourly rate of annuity x hours of basic pay = Amount of offset for the pay period

In essence, you are waiving the value of your annuity when you return to a federal job for as long as you were employed. It makes more sense to reemploy with the federal government if you are making a substantial salary when compared to your annuity. This situation wouldn't generally apply to retired letter carriers without a specialized skill or security clearances.

However, there is an exception.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may allow the offset to be waived in exceptional situations when requested by the hiring agency.

As we've seen in the last few years, the Postal Service has hired holiday carrier assistants, with a focus on hiring annuitants. OPM has allowed USPS to hire annuitants to fill these temporary positions without being

subject to the offset. This exemption must be requested by the Postal Service and approved by OPM. The exemption allows annuitants to work for the Postal Service for a limited time without a reduction to their salaries. Please note that this exemption does not apply to the normal 360-day term city carrier assistant position.

That said, there still may be other benefits to becoming a federally reemployed annuitant. If you are reemployed for more than one year of continuous full-time service (or one year equivalent of part-time work), you may be eligible for a supplemental annuity (not to be confused with the special annuity supplement). A supplemental annuity is calculated differently for CSRS and FERS employees, but the calculation is similar to the general formulas used in each system. FERS employees can multiply each year of reemployment by 1 percent, and then multiply by the average salary during reemployment.

If you are re-employed for five years of actual continuous full-time service (or part-time equivalent), you may elect to have your annuity redetermined in lieu of a supplemental annuity. The redetermination is calculated using the general formulas for each retirement system. Any unused sick leave from your original annuity is combined with any unused sick leave from your reemployment and used in the annuity calculation.

Annuitants who find employment outside of the federal government are not subject to the same offsets described above, but they should be mindful of earning limits for both the FERS special annuity supplement and Social Security that may result in different offsets. The special annuity supplement and the Social Security earnings limit is \$18,960 for 2021. Previous retirement columns have addressed the earnings limit for the special annuity supplement and Social Security—see the September 2019 and July 2017 issues of *The Postal Record*, respectively.

Those on FERS or CSRS disability retirement should also be aware that if you are reemployed in federal service in a position equivalent to the position you held at retirement, or if you exceed the earnings limitation of 80 percent of the current rate of basic pay for the position from which you retired, OPM will find you recovered from your disability and will stop your annuity payments. After age 60, there is no restriction on the amount of income you can earn while receiving disability retirement.

There are many reasons to find employment after becoming an annuitant from the Postal Service and just as many factors to consider before reemployment. Understanding the pros and cons of reemployment can help you plan your retirement and decide how to make the most of it.

Unclaimed property



**James W.
“Jim” Yates**

Each year, the Mutual Benefit Association (MBA) has the obligation of reporting unclaimed property to each state’s treasury department. Unclaimed property is money belonging to policyholders who never cashed their checks from MBA. MBA, like all insurance companies, makes several attempts to contact policyholders about these funds that are due to them before remitting them to the various state treasury departments. Most of our outstanding checks are dividend payments that are often small amounts, but some can be for several hundred dollars.

In addition to uncashed dividend checks, MBA matches death records provided by one of our vendors against our active policy files. This provides us notice of when one of our policyholders has died, but it does not always help us find the beneficiary to whom the insurance proceeds should be paid. These insurance proceeds are often several thousand dollars, and would best be remitted to the beneficiary whom the policyholder has designated, rather than remitted to the state.

As director of MBA, I have a legal and fiduciary responsibility to pay our policyholders, or their beneficiaries, the funds that are due and to minimize the amount of these funds that we are required to remit to state treasury departments. In this article, I will highlight some of the actions that MBA takes to minimize its unclaimed property obligation and inform you of some of the things that you can do to minimize the risk of funds that are due to you being turned over to the state. It is important to note that not only does MBA perform its unclaimed property due diligence, but all insurance companies, banks and other financial institutions may be making similar attempts to contact their policyholders/payees about unclaimed property.

What does MBA do to find policyholders or beneficiaries who have unclaimed funds? We send several letters to the policyholder, informing them of checks that have not cleared and of how to receive a replacement check for the money that they are due. We have traditionally had good luck with this method, but we do not always have a current address for the policyholder. In addition, when we have life insurance benefit payments, we use internet search software to locate the beneficiary we have on file or possible relatives of the beneficiary. This

method works well; however, it does not always result in finding the payee.

Things you should do:

- Cash any checks within 90 days of date they were issued or return them to MBA for reissue.
- Maintain contact with your financial institutions and inform them of any address changes or changes in ownership. Banks also have an unclaimed property obligation and will remit property to the state because of inactivity in an account. In addition, unpaid fees on safe-deposit boxes may lead to box contents being turned over to the state.
- Check statements and correspondence from MBA or other financial institutions that may require a response and respond accordingly.
- Maintain copies of important documents and make sure that family members know where they are kept.
- Periodically review your beneficiary designation for important papers. This is extremely important, as we are required to pay the beneficiary on file with MBA even if those individuals listed aren’t important in your life today. We have paid more than one benefit payment to a divorced spouse because the policyholder’s benefit designation was not up to date. (See my April *Postal Record* article for more information about beneficiaries.)

In addition to those items listed above, I also suggest that you check your state’s unclaimed property website. Most states’ websites are easy to navigate and normally have a location where you can search for unclaimed property that has been turned over to the state. You can periodically do an internet search of the states where you have lived to see whether there have been any funds remitted to the state that belong to you or a close family member.

Each state has procedures to claim unclaimed property that has been turned over to the state. It is often easier to do those little things that will ensure that your hard-earned money isn’t misplaced than to take the steps necessary to recover this money from a state’s treasury department.

For information regarding any of the MBA products, please call the MBA office at 800-424-5184, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Eastern time, or call 202-638-4318, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. You also can visit our website at nalc.org/mba.

Please note: Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MBA phone lines are open only on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Eastern time.

Health care fraud



**Stephanie
Stewart**

According to the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association (NHCAA), the financial loss due to health care fraud is in the tens of billions of dollars each year. The NHCAA also reports that a conservative estimate is 3 percent of total health care expenditures, while other government agencies place the loss at as high as 10 percent of annual outlay, which could also result in billions of dollars in financial loss.

So how does this affect you? Fraud increases the cost of health care for everyone and increases your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program premiums.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan has a dedicated department, the Special

Investigation Unit, which focuses solely on investigating fraud waste and abuse and recovering plan funds. Over the last two years, the department has actively investigated and worked on approximately 1,000 cases per year. Each dollar recovered saves our members money.

Health care fraud is an intentional act, and can be committed by dishonest medical providers, patients/members of the Plan, or an individual who does not have any connection to the member but has intent to receive unauthorized benefits. Examples of fraud include: falsifying a claim to obtain FEHB benefits, trying to obtain or obtaining service or coverage for yourself or for someone else who is not eligible for coverage, or enrolling in the Plan when you are no longer eligible.

So, how can we work together to protect the finances of your health plan?

- Never give your plan identification number to people you do not know or over the phone except for your health care provider, authorized health benefits plan or Office of Personnel Management (OPM) representative.
- Let only the appropriate medical professionals review your medical records or recommend services.
- Avoid using health care providers who say that an item or service is not usually covered, but they know how to bill your insurance to get it paid.
- Carefully review each explanation of benefits statement you receive from the Plan. Although we understand that this can be an intimidating task, it is necessary to review the charges submitted.
- Periodically review your claim history for accuracy to ensure that you have not been billed for services you did not receive. Your review and confirmation are the

only way the Plan has to verify you received the service submitted for payment.

- Never ask your physician to make false entries on certificates, bills or records in order to get the Plan to pay for an item or service.
- Ensure that only eligible family members are listed on your policy. Examples to review:
 - A former spouse after a divorce decree or annulment is final, even if a court order stipulates that you must carry their insurance, is no longer eligible.
 - Children age 26 or over (unless they are disabled and incapable of self-support prior to age 26) are not eligible as dependents on your policy

If you have any questions about the eligibility of a dependent, check with your personnel office if you are employed, with your retirement office (such as OPM) if you are retired, or with the National Finance Center if you are enrolled under Temporary Continuation of Coverage.

Sometimes premiums are not paid, or other situations apply that result in a cancellation or termination of the policy. If this happens, you should discontinue using benefits, as you are no longer eligible for coverage. If your enrollment mistakenly remains active and benefits are paid, you will be responsible for refunding the Plan.

Fraud or intentional misrepresentation of material fact are prohibited under the Plan. Violators may be prosecuted or have other action taken against them.

What should you do if you suspect fraud, waste or abuse, such as charges by a provider for services you did not receive, double billing for the same service, or a belief that the provider misrepresented any information? First, call the provider and ask for an explanation. This could just be an error. If the provider does not resolve the matter, call the Plan at 703-729-4677 or 888-636-6252, and explain the situation so we can investigate the issue.

You also can report allegations directly to the Office of the Inspector General, which investigates all allegations of fraud, waste and abuse in the FEHB Program. The options for reporting are:

- Contacting the Health Care Fraud Hotline at 877-499-7295
- Completing an online complaint form at opm.gov/our-inspector-general/hotline-to-report-fraud-waste-or-abuse/complaint-form
- Writing to the United States Office of Personnel Management Office of the Inspector General Fraud Hotline, 1900 E St. NW, Room 6400, Washington, DC 20415-1100

This is your Health Benefit Plan, and I encourage you to remain vigilant in the fight against health care fraud.

Contract Administration Unit

Brian Renfroe, Executive Vice President
Lew Drass, Vice President
Christopher Jackson, Director of City Delivery
Manuel L. Peralta Jr., Director of Safety and Health
Dan Toth, Director of Retired Members
Jim Yates, Director of Life Insurance

Annual leave in lieu of holiday pay

Full-time letter carriers and part-time regular letter carriers receive holiday pay for 10 holidays per year: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. These employees receive holiday pay at the employee's base hourly straight-time rate for the number of hours equal to their regular daily work schedule, not to exceed eight hours.

City carrier assistants (CCAs) receive holiday pay for six holidays per year: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. CCAs in offices designated as having 200 workyears receive eight hours pay, while those in POSTPlan offices receive four hours. All other CCAs receive six hours of holiday pay. A POSTPlan office is any post office with a designation below Level 18, and currently there are only 23 CCAs employed in such offices throughout the country.

Holiday pay should not be confused with holiday-worked pay or Christmas-worked pay. Holiday pay is payable in addition to compensation for hours actually worked on a designated holiday. When full-time or part-time regular letter carriers or CCAs work their holiday (whether it's the actual holiday or their designated holiday, because their scheduled non-work day falls on a day observed as a holiday), they receive normal compensation for all of the hours they work, plus the additional holiday pay described above.

For example: A full-time regular letter carrier is scheduled to work on his or her holiday and on that day works 10 hours. The pay for that day will equal eight hours at his or her base hourly straight-time rate for the first eight hours worked, plus two hours at 1.5 times the base hourly straight-time rate for the two hours of overtime worked, plus an additional eight hours at his or her base hourly straight-time rate for the eight hours of holiday pay due.

Beginning with the upcoming 2021 Independence Day holiday, full-time or part-time regular letter carriers and CCAs have another option when they work their holiday. These employees who work their holiday now can, at their option, elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight hours of annual leave in lieu of receiving the holiday pay described above. Employees who do not work their holiday or designated holiday may not exchange holiday pay for annual leave. This new benefit was negotiated during the latest round of collective bargaining between NALC and USPS and was subsequently included in the recently ratified 2019-2023 National Agreement.

Using the same example above of full-time regular

letter carriers who work 10 hours on their holiday but now exercise their option to receive annual leave in lieu of holiday pay, they still would receive pay for that day equal to eight hours at their base hourly straight-time rate for the first eight hours they worked, plus two hours at 1.5 times their base hourly straight-time rate for the two hours of overtime. But instead of receiving the additional eight hours of pay at their base hourly straight-time rate for the eight hours of holiday pay, they would have their annual leave balance credited with an additional eight hours of annual leave.

“This new benefit was negotiated during the latest round of collective bargaining between NALC and USPS and was subsequently included in the recently ratified 2019-2023 National Agreement.”

Parts of Article 11, Sections 3, 4 and 8 have been modified to reflect this new benefit, and now read as follows (new language is bolded):

Section 3. Payment

A. An employee shall receive holiday pay at the employee's base hourly straight time rate for a number of hours equal to the employee's regular daily working schedule, not to exceed eight (8) hours. **Effective with the 2021 Independence Day holiday, employees who work their holiday, at their option, may elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight (8) hours of annual leave in lieu of holiday leave pay.**

Section 4. Holiday Work

A. An employee required to work on a holiday other than Christmas shall be paid the base hourly straight time rate for each hour worked up to eight (8) hours. **Effective with the 2021 Independence Day holiday, employees who work their holiday, at their option, may elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight (8) hours of annual leave or receive** the holiday pay to which the employee is entitled as above described.

B. An employee required to work on Christmas shall be paid one and one-half (1 1/2) times the base hourly straight time rate for each hour worked. **Effective with the 2021 Independence Day holiday, employees who work their holi-**

(continued on next page)

Annual leave (continued)

day, at their option, may elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight (8) hours of annual leave or receive the holiday pay to which the employee is entitled as above described.

C. Deferred holiday leave credited in accordance with Section 4.A or 4.B, above, will be subject to all applicable rules for requesting and scheduling annual leave and shall be combined with annual leave and counted as annual leave for the purposes of annual leave carryover.

Section 8. City Carrier Assistant Holidays

C. Payment

CCAs shall receive holiday pay at the employee's base hourly straight time rate. The number of hours of holiday leave pay for a CCA will be determined by the size of the office in which he/she works:

- 200 Workyear offices 8 hours
- POSTPlan offices 4 hours
- All other offices 6 hours

Effective with the 2021 Independence Day holiday, CCAs who work on a holiday may, at their option, elect to have their annual leave balance credited with 4, 6, or 8 hours (as applicable) of annual leave in lieu of receiving holiday pay.

Annual leave earned and received by working a holiday is subject to all applicable rules for requesting and scheduling annual leave. This leave is added to the employee's annual leave balance and is counted for purposes of annual leave carryover.

Letter carriers who wish to exercise their option to receive annual leave instead of holiday pay must submit, to their supervisor, a completed PS Form 3971 (see below for example form) indicating such by filling in or checking the "Holiday/AL Lv Exch" box in the "Type of Absence" section. Letter carriers who have any issues receiving this new benefit should immediately contact a local NALC branch representative.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE®				Request for or Notification of Absence				SCHEDULED	UNSCHEDULED	PP	Year
Employee's Name (Print last, first, MI.)		Employee ID	Date Submitted (MM/DD/YYYY)	No. of Hours Requested							
Carrier, Ima L.		01234567	07/02/2021	8							
Installation (For postmaster's leave, show city, state, and ZIP Code)			N/S Day	Pay Loc. No.	D/A Code	From: Date	Hour				
Anytown, Georgia, 00001-9999				999	134	07/04	0750				
Time of Call or Request	Scheduled Reporting Time	If Needed, Employee Can Be Reached At:		Thru: Date	Hour						
0750	0750	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not call		07/04	1600						
Type of Absence	Documentation (For official use only)		Revised Schedule for (Date)		Approved in Advance						
<input type="checkbox"/> Annual	<input type="checkbox"/> FMLA Requested (Certification review - HRSSC)				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Holiday/AL Lv Exch	<input type="checkbox"/> For COP Leave (CA1 on file)		Begin Work						Sat	01	
<input type="checkbox"/> Carrier 701 Route	<input type="checkbox"/> For Advanced Sick Leave (PS 1221 on file)		Lunch Out		Lunch In				Sun	02	
<input type="checkbox"/> LWOP (See reverse)	<input type="checkbox"/> For Military Leave (Orders reviewed)		End Work						Mon	03	
<input type="checkbox"/> Sick (See reverse)	<input type="checkbox"/> For Court Leave (Summons reviewed)		Total Hours						Tue	04	
<input type="checkbox"/> Late	<input type="checkbox"/> For Higher Level (PS 1723 on file)								Wed	05	
<input type="checkbox"/> COP (See reverse)	<input type="checkbox"/> Scheme Training Testing Qualifying (Memo on file)								Thur	06	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other									Fri	07	
Remarks (Do not enter medical information. See Privacy Act Statement on reverse of this form.)											
Annual Leave Credit in lieu of Holiday Pay											
I understand that the annual leave authorized in excess of the amount available to me during the leave year will be charged to LWOP.											
Employee's Signature and Date			Signature of Person Recording Absence and Date			Signature of Supervisor and Date Notified			Sun	09	
Ima Carrier 7/2/21									Mon	10	
Official Action on Application (Return copy of signed request to employee.)											
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved			Do not check an FMLA box until you verify the FMLA designation. <input type="checkbox"/> FMLA Designation is PENDING <input type="checkbox"/> FMLA Protected <input type="checkbox"/> Not FMLA Protected			Signature of Supervisor and Date			Tue	11	
<input type="checkbox"/> Disapproved (Give reason below)									<input type="checkbox"/> Continued on reverse		
									Thur	13	
									Fri	14	

2021 snapshot of MDA support



Christina Vela Davidson


NALC has raised more than \$70,000 so far in 2021, thanks to the 65 branches that have gotten us off to a great start! Let us get back to that pre-pandemic \$1.3 million annual goal; for assistance, see a few of the ways listed below.

Our current top 10

NALC Branch	2021 Donations
Branch 38	\$21,000
Branch 358	\$4,835
Branch 14	\$3,727
Branch 1374	\$3,000
Branch 36	\$2,957
Branch 1197	\$2,950
Branch 134	\$2,500
Branch 115	\$1,894
Branch 4683	\$1,600
Branch 127	\$1,464

a virtual yoga or workout class, do a dance on social media, or make any movements of your choice.

Register your branch at Muscle Walk Registration and compete against other branches for recognition. Follow the Muscle Walk registration instructions at mda.donordrive.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.event&eventID=1152l to be sure that your branch gets credit for all dollars raised.

Planning an upcoming fundraising event to benefit MDA?

Reach out to MDA to share your plans about the type of event, date, venue and goals.

MDA will share resources to support your event, including marketing materials, templates and timelines.

Hosting a golf tournament? MDA has an extensive toolkit to support all aspects of your tournament.

Important note: Due to the pandemic, best practices and policies for events have changed regarding event expenses, contracts and day-of-event support. Get MDA involved in the early event planning stages to ensure that your event follows the new guidelines.

Mark your calendars—MDA ‘Deliver the Cure’ Branch Challenge starts July 1

That is right: July marks our next Branch Challenge, and we want all branches to participate. Take these steps today:


- 1. Register your branch:** Be sure your branch is registered at mda.donordrive.com/event/nalc2021.
- 2. Fundraise:** Customize your branch page, send emails, and start a Facebook fundraiser.
- 3. Track your activity:** Once you are registered, download the MDA Fundraising App and track your physical activity while you raise money for MDA.
 - a. Download the MDA Fundraising App.
 - b. Log in.
 - c. Click “Get Active” and connect to your Apple Health/Google Fit.
 - d. Ask donors to support you/your NALC branch as you support MDA by walking your route, doing an activity, etc.
- 4. Recognition:** We will recognize the top fundraising branches weekly and share updates on MDA’s mission and what your fundraising is making possible!


Register your branch for the Virtual Muscle Walk

This year, MDA is continuing fundraising efforts through our MDA Virtual Muscle Walk, taking place on Saturday, Aug. 7. Team up with MDA to raise lifesaving funds and awareness. Go out and run or walk a 5K, take

Resources

- **New mailing address for offline donations:** Please be sure you use the allocation form below, and mail any offline gifts to: Muscular Dystrophy Association Inc., Attn: NALC, P.O. Box 7410354, Chicago, IL 60674-0354.
- **NALC/MDA contact information:** Call 312-392-1100 or email nalc@mdausa.org.





Muscular Dystrophy Association

NALC MDA Donation Allocation Form

NALC Branch Number _____

State Association _____

Auxiliary _____

MDA District/City _____

MDA Contact/Staff _____

MDA Event Name/Event Type _____

MDA Event Date _____ Donation Amount _____

Donor Name _____

Please fill out and mail along with your MDA donation check to:

MDA
 Attn: NALC
 161 N. Clark Suite 3550
 Chicago, IL 60601

Creating your emergency preparedness kit



Assistant to the President for Community Services
Christina Vela Davidson

Disasters and emergencies can happen at any time. A disaster could be a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, tornado, flood or earthquake. Or it could be man-made, such as a bioterrorist attack or chemical spill. You should know the risks and danger signs of different types of disasters.

You also should have a disaster plan. Preparing for a disaster can reduce the fear, anxiety and loss caused by disasters. Be ready to evacuate your home if necessary, and know how to treat basic medical problems. Make sure you have the insurance you need, including special types like flood/flood content insurance.

Below is information that will help you build a disaster supply kit. Once you have planned for the safety of you, your family and your possessions, you will have peace of mind and be able to help others. Every family is different, and each will have its own needs and concerns. As you prepare your kit, consider any unique needs, including mobility, disability, special needs and other medical needs for your family.

Preparations for natural and man-made disasters are similar in some ways. Make sure your emergency kit is stocked with the items on the checklist below, and develop plans for communication, records, each family member and your pets. Defining your risk will help you develop an appropriate plan.

After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having sufficient food, water and other supplies to last for at least 72 hours. To assemble a disaster kit, store your items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as plastic bins or a duffel bag.

A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

- Water—one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food—at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered/hand-crank radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association weather radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First-aid kit
- Face mask
- Hand sanitizer
- Extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, paper towels, garbage bags and plastic ties
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener
- Local maps

- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery

You may also want to add these additional emergency supplies to your kit, based on your individual needs:

- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription medications, such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication or antacids
- Glasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records saved electronically or in a waterproof container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate, and sturdy shoes
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper to disinfect water
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups and plates, and plastic utensils
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

You should maintain your kit by storing it in a cool, dry place. You will also want to make sure that your boxed food is in a tightly closed plastic or metal container. Remember to replace expired items as needed. As disasters come and go, you may want to re-think and update your kit, per your family's needs.

I suggest that everyone follow weather and emergency alerts to find tools and information to help get your home, family and business ready to deal with disasters:

- Get emergency information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's mobile app, including weather warnings for up to five locations, as well as disaster, aid and shelter information.
- Sign up for National Weather Service alerts to receive SMS text and email alerts, and see its suggested weather apps to stay informed.
- Receive emergency alerts by enabling your smartphone with the Wireless Emergency Alert public safety system. This includes automatic emergency alerts for severe weather, disasters and national emergencies.
- Find government information and services to help you or a family member deal with a disaster or crisis while traveling or living outside the United States.

No matter what kind of disaster you experience, it may cause emotional distress. After a disaster, recovery can take time. Stay connected to your family and friends during this period.

Brothers and sisters, thank you for allowing me to serve you!

Had COVID-19? Don't use EFEL—file a claim



Assistant to the President
for Workers' Compensation
Kevin Card

As I write this, more than 15,000 letter carriers have tested positive for COVID-19. A small fraction of that number has filed workers' compensation claims. The small number of claims may be due to the fact that most people suffered light symptoms, used the coronavirus leave and then returned to work. And while many feel just fine today, very little is known of the long-term effects of a COVID-19 infection.

As I wrote in my April *Postal Record* column, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) gave presumptive exposure to federal and postal employees who tested positive for COVID-19 and had contact of any duration with co-workers and the general public while on duty.

In response to the ARPA, the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) released new guidance for federal and postal employees who may have contracted COVID-19 in the workplace.

Any COVID-19 claim filed that was accepted for COVID-19 prior to March 12 is not affected by the ARPA, as OWCP benefits had already been extended. COVID-19 claims accepted on or before March 11 (the date of enactment) are not ARPA cases and have been processed through normal OWCP procedures.

OWCP has been reviewing all COVID-19 claims previously denied based on a lack of work exposure or a lack of medical evidence establishing causal relationship to determine if the claim can now be accepted under the ARPA. The review happens automatically; you do not need to request a review.

If OWCP determines that the case can now be accepted under the ARPA, the case will be reopened and the case will be accepted. If this occurs, you will be notified. Thus far, more than 400 previously denied cases have been accepted.

No action is being taken based on the ARPA on COVID-19 cases that already are administratively closed. The claimant remains eligible for Continuation of Pay (COP) if a CA-1 was timely filed, and medical bills for basic treatment incurred for COVID-19, to include any testing, are still payable up to \$1,500.

The long-term effects of COVID-19 are unknown. If you tested positive for COVID-19, suffered symptoms and missed some work, you should consider filing a claim. OWCP has streamlined the COVID-19 claims processing, making it easier to file a claim and get it accepted.

COVID-19 claims should be filed via the Employees' Compensation and Management Portal (ECOMP). The form filing process in ECOMP has been updated to assist claimants with filing claims for COVID-19 on a CA-1. The CA-1 for COVID-19 claims has been modified and the claimant now is provided with specific instructions to supplement the routine claim filing questions.

OWCP considers COVID-19 to be a traumatic injury since it is contracted during a single workday or shift. Since the precise time of transmission may not always be known due to the nature of the virus, OWCP considers the date of injury to be the last day worked prior to the medical evidence establishing the COVID-19 diagnosis.

You must have worked within 21 days prior to becoming symptomatic or testing positive for the virus. Existing medical literature suggests that the incubation period of COVID-19 is between two and 14 days; however, the use of 21 days acknowledges a potential delay in seeking professional medical evaluation and treatment.

To establish a diagnosis of COVID-19, you must submit a positive polymerase chain reaction COVID-19 test result (better known as a PCR test), or a positive antibody or antigen COVID-19 test result, together with contemporaneous medical evidence that you had documented symptoms of and/or were treated for COVID-19 by a physician (a notice to quarantine is not sufficient if there was no evidence of illness).

If no positive laboratory test is available, a COVID-19 diagnosis from a physician with a medical opinion supporting the diagnosis and an explanation as to why a positive test result is not available will suffice.

In certain rare instances, a physician may provide an opinion with supporting factual and medical background as to why you were diagnosed with COVID-19, even if you have a negative or series of negative COVID-19 test results. Medical reports from nurses or physician assistants are acceptable if a licensed physician cosigns the report.

Getting a COVID-19 claim accepted under the ARPA is not difficult. In addition to the medical evidence, you need a short explanation that you physically interacted with at least one other person at work or on the route.

The interaction does not have to be direct physical contact, nor is there a specified time for such interaction—any duration qualifies. General office contact and interaction is sufficient. This includes but is not limited to interaction in shared workspaces such as the workroom floor, break areas and common restrooms.

The bottom line is that an accepted claim for COVID-19 will provide long-term benefits for you and your family. If you've been infected, file a claim.

Monthly CSRS annuity payments for letter carriers who retire on Sept. 1, 2021

The table below provides monthly basic annuity, survivor reduction and reduced annuity amount estimates for letter carriers covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) who plan to take optional retirement on Sept. 1, 2021. Estimates are computed by using the given high-3 aver-

ages, which are based on the basic pay earned by full-time Step 0 carriers and vary by length of postal/federal/military service.

Reduced annuity amounts reflect the difference between the given basic annuity and survivor reduction figures.

Years of Service ²	CC Grade 1 / High-3 Average ¹ : \$65,556			CC Grade 2 / High-3 Average ¹ : \$66,929		
	Basic Annuity	Max. Survivor Deduction ³	Max. Survivor Reduced Annuity ⁴	Basic Annuity	Max. Survivor Deduction ³	Max. Survivor Reduced Annuity ⁴
20	\$1,980	\$176	\$1,805	\$2,022	\$180	\$1,842
21	2,090	186	1,903	2,133	191	1,943
22	2,199	197	2,001	2,245	202	2,043
23	2,308	208	2,100	2,356	213	2,143
24	2,417	219	2,198	2,468	224	2,244
25	2,527	230	2,296	2,580	235	2,344
26	2,636	241	2,395	2,691	247	2,444
27	2,745	252	2,493	2,803	258	2,545
28	2,854	263	2,591	2,914	269	2,645
29	2,964	274	2,690	3,026	280	2,746
30	3,073	285	2,788	3,137	291	2,846
31	3,182	296	2,886	3,249	302	2,946
32	3,291	307	2,985	3,360	314	3,047
33	3,401	318	3,083	3,472	325	3,147
34	3,510	328	3,181	3,583	336	3,248
35	3,619	339	3,280	3,695	347	3,348
36	3,729	350	3,378	3,807	358	3,448
37	3,838	361	3,477	3,918	369	3,549
38	3,947	372	3,575	4,030	380	3,649
39	4,056	383	3,673	4,141	392	3,750
40	4,166	394	3,772	4,253	403	3,850
41	4,275	405	3,870	4,364	414	3,950
41+11 months & over ⁵	4,370	415	3,956	4,462	424	4,038

1. High-3 averages for both grades (formerly levels) are for carriers who have worked full-time on a continuous basis between Sept. 1, 2018, and Aug. 31, 2021, at Step 0 (formerly Step 12).

2. Years of service includes any unused sick leave.

3. The reduction for a survivor's annuity is the amount necessary to provide maximum benefits (55% of basic annuity) to a surviving spouse.

4. If covered by the NALC Health Benefit Plan, a further deduction of either \$491.06 per month if for self plus one (code 323), \$430.49 if for self and family (code 322), or \$205.47 if for self only (code 321) will be made. In addition, premiums for any coverage under the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program will reduce the net annuity further.

5. Under CSRS rules, the maximum allowable yearly annuity cannot exceed 80 percent of an annuitant's high-three average. This limit is reached when an annuitant's years of service amount to 41 years and 11 months. Individuals with more than 41 years and 11 months of service will not get a higher annuity based on additional service, but may get slightly more than 80 percent of their high-three average on the basis of unused sick leave accumulated under CSRS.

Monthly FERS annuity payments for letter carriers who retire on Sept. 1, 2021

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) covers federal and postal employees hired on or after Jan. 1, 1984. FERS employees earn retirement benefits from three sources: the FERS Basic Annuity, Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan.

An additional Special Annuity Supplement is paid to FERS annuitants who retire at Minimum Retirement Age (MRA) plus 30 years or more, or at age 60 plus 20 years or more. It is approximately calculated by taking an individual's Social Security age 62 benefit estimate, multiplied by the number of years of

FERS coverage, divided by 40. It is payable to age 62 and then ends. Social Security benefits are payable beginning at age 62.

The table below provides monthly basic annuity, survivor deduction and net annuity amount estimates for letter carriers who plan to take optional retirement on Sept. 1, 2021. Estimates are computed by using the given high-3 averages, which are based on the basic pay earned by full-time Step O carriers and vary by length of postal/military/federal service. Reduced annuity amounts reflect the difference between the given basic annuity and survivor reduction figures.

Years of Service ²	CC Grade 1 / High-3 Average ¹ : \$65,556			CC Grade 2 / High-3 Average ¹ : \$66,929		
	Basic Annuity	Max. Survivor Deduction ³	Max. Survivor Reduced Annuity ⁴	Basic Annuity	Max. Survivor Deduction ³	Max. Survivor Reduced Annuity ⁴
20	\$1,093	\$109	\$983	\$1,115	\$112	\$1,004
21	1,147	115	1,033	1,171	117	1,054
22	1,202	120	1,082	1,227	123	1,104
23	1,256	126	1,131	1,283	128	1,155
24	1,311	131	1,180	1,339	134	1,205
25	1,366	137	1,229	1,394	139	1,255
26	1,420	142	1,278	1,450	145	1,305
27	1,475	148	1,328	1,506	151	1,355
28	1,530	153	1,377	1,562	156	1,406
29	1,584	158	1,426	1,617	162	1,456
30	1,639	164	1,475	1,673	167	1,506
31	1,694	169	1,524	1,729	173	1,556
32	1,748	175	1,573	1,785	178	1,606
33	1,803	180	1,623	1,841	184	1,656
34	1,857	186	1,672	1,896	190	1,707
35	1,912	191	1,721	1,952	195	1,757
36	1,967	197	1,770	2,008	201	1,807
37	2,021	202	1,819	2,064	206	1,857
38	2,076	208	1,868	2,119	212	1,907
39	2,131	213	1,918	2,175	218	1,958
40	2,185	219	1,967	2,231	223	2,008
Each additional year ⁵	54.63	5.46	49.17	55.77	5.58	50.20

1. High-three averages for both grades (formerly levels) are for carriers who have worked full-time on a continuous basis between Sept. 1, 2018, and Aug. 31, 2021, at Step O (formerly Step 12).

2. Years of service includes any unused sick leave.

3. The reduction for survivor's annuity is the amount necessary to provide maximum benefits (50% of basic annuity) to a surviving spouse.

4. If covered by the NALC Health Benefit Plan, a further deduction of either \$491.06 per month if for self plus one (code 323), \$430.49 if for self and family (code 322), or \$205.47 if for self only (code 321) will be made. In addition, premiums for any coverage under the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program will reduce the net annuity further.

5. Under FERS rules, there is no maximum allowable yearly annuity. However, given the FERS formula of 1% per year, it is highly unlikely that any FERS employee will ever exceed the 80% maximum limit under CSRS.

6. FERS employees who retire at age 62 or later with at least 20 years of service receive an additional 10% - their annuities are calculated at 1.1% times years of service times high-three average salary.

State Summaries

Arizona

In the Arizona House Government and Elections Committee, I testified on March 17 for SB 1003 (early voting signature time frame elimination), on March 24 for SB 1713 (early ballot driver's license), and on March 25 for SB 1530 (early ballots and undeliverable). You can witness House archive footage for yourself on azleg.org, especially March 24 on SB 1713, when I was given *one* minute for testimony, and was witnessed by AZ3-TV/CBS 5 affiliate reporter Dennis Welch, who wrote and televised "Arizona GOP, Democrats clash in committee over changing voter laws."

I want to thank those true leaders in the Arizona House Government and Elections Committee—Reps. Athena Salman (D-26), Kelli Butler (D-28), Raquel Teran (D-30), Charlene Fernandez (D-4), Jennifer Pawlick (D-17) and Stephanie Stahl Hamilton (D-10)—for the articulate fight of our right to vote.

As always, thanks to: Joe Murphy, the Arizona AFL-CIO political director, for having me prepped and woke, our sidekick Joel Edman of the Arizona Advocacy Network for being the fighter he is; Joe Cuccinotto, APWU Local #93 president and No. 1 *paisan*; and Veronica Martinez of the Arizona AFL-CIO for being E.D. A special shout-out to my brother, Rep. Richard Andrade (29th) for his USPS legislation HCM 2002 (urging independence pre-funding), and dear Rep. Andrea Dalessandro (2nd) for her USPS legislation HCM 2005 (restoration of the Cherrybell mail-processing center)—you'll always be senator to me.

On April 22, I was introduced by No. 1 Arizona State Sen. Rebecca Rios (27th) on the floor of the Arizona State Capitol as her guest, representing the 5,000 men and women who deliver "the ballots!" and oppose SB 1485 (purging PEVL). Thank God—it failed that day 14-16. Thank you, Sen. Rios, for unlocking those Senate doors, unsealing those Gallery gates, for this humble letter carrier and showing America, Arizona politics!

In unity—

Jeff Clark

California

So what do you think of our union's legislative program? I know some of you—actually, most of you, since a majority of you don't contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF)—don't think much of it, or it's not important. Or maybe that the only important thing the union does is file grievances. If any of the above applies to you, *wake the hell up!*

If applying the National Agreement on the workroom floor is all you care about, guess what? Article 43 states that any part of the contract can "be rendered or declared invalid by reason of any existing or subsequently enacted legislation or by a court of competent jurisdiction." You know what that means? If Congress passes legislation that says, for instance, that we don't get yearly raises or cost-of-living adjustments, then guess what? *We don't get them!* Same goes for "official time," that archaic term for Article 17 provisions granting stewards the right to investigate/process grievances on the

clock. If Congress did away with that, guess what? Your steward would have to do that on his or her own time, or the union would have to pay for that. If you think that isn't important, ask any carrier who worked in 1970. Not only did carriers not have due process, but many of them were on welfare.

Politics is part of your letter carrier existence, whether you like it or not. Now, does that mean you have to participate in every precinct walk or phone bank being held? No. But you can support letter carrier friendly politicians by donating \$5 per pay period to the LCPF. Or, if you're a retiree, you can donate through your annuity.

Every workplace right or benefit can be done away with by the stroke of a pen.

Eric Ellis

Florida

The 2021 Florida legislative session has ended, and with it came some unwarranted changes to vote-by-mail.

The Republicans passed an election bill, which brings in new voting restrictions. Although all 67 county supervisors of elections, when surveyed by the Republican-led House Public Integrity and Elections Committee, emphatically stated that there was no need for this bill, it passed along party lines in both chambers—with the exception of one Republican senator who voted against it.

This bill limits the use of drop boxes and limits who can collect and drop off ballots. It limits someone dropping off more than two ballots. The bill requires voters to request a vote-by-mail ballot for each election. No longer will the return envelopes have a place to checkmark to receive a ballot for the next election. The bill also empowers partisan observers during ballot counting process. The request for a vote-by-mail ballot requires the voter to provide identification by entering their driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number.

As stated in my last article, the 2021 state convention is scheduled for Aug. 12-14 in Orlando at the Hilton Orlando Buena Vista Palace Disney Springs. Due to our concern for the safety of our members and their families, we had to decide whether to go ahead and conduct the convention in person or to conduct it by Webex.

President Friedman set up a meeting on April 13 of the state board of officers, along with the hotel management and staff, to check the facilities and discuss the safety protocols. After a thorough review of the ballroom to be used for the general session, the locations for training and a Friday night dinner, we concluded that the hotel could meet all the safety protocols. Based upon this meeting, the executive board voted to have the convention as scheduled.

O.D. Elliott

Kentucky

While the Kentucky State Association of Letter Carriers decided to cancel our June state convention in Bowling Green due to continual danger from the coronavirus pandemic, the nomination and possible election of officers and executive board will continue.

Alternate procedures for nominations that have been approved by President Rolando will be used. Elections, where necessary, will be done using secure mail-in paper ballots. An election committee will be appointed by me as branch president, and all past Department of Labor (DOL) procedures will be followed. We will closely parallel the current timeline for state elections in even-numbered years.

KYSALC Secretary Steve Terry will continue to communicate with branch presidents and their delegates, and national officers if needed for guidance. This assures that we comply with DOL and NALC rules and procedures. Branch elected delegates should contact branch presidents, and look to their U.S. mailboxes for when they will receive nomination forms for KYSALC officers and executive board.

In contested races with more than one nominee, there will be an election. Same for if there are more than seven nominees for the executive board.

Sometime in the near future, when it's safe, KYSALC can meet, and we can share camaraderie in person. Thanks to President Rolando and all NALC officers and staff for safely navigating us through this awful pandemic.

Bob McNulty

Michigan

Greetings, brothers and sisters. Spring has arrived and with it the warmer weather.

As I write this, Michigan branches are voting for state officers; good luck to all candidates.

We are also in the midst of local negotiations, and all branches are working hard to get the best language in these agreements. It isn't an easy task, as it seems some postal districts are set on making it as difficult as possible. But, as always, the NALC pushes forward and gets it done. By the time you read this, negotiations will be closed and we will be into the impasse stage for items we couldn't reach a mutual decision on.

We are still lobbying hard with our congressional representatives to get them on board with several bills that will protect our jobs.

We are still battling the pandemic, so I encourage everybody to continue to take all precautions to be safe.

As the summer months arrive, the kids and dogs will be out, so be alert out there. I hope everybody has a safe summer!

Tom Minshall

Texas

As I wrote in my summary in May, H.R. 695/S. 145/USPS Fairness Act has 260 co-sponsors in the House and eight in the Senate. The Texas State Association is committed to work with every member of the Texas congressional delegation to support these bills that help relieve USPS of the burden of pre-funding. As an association in Texas, we are more than 17,000 members. I believe we will make the difference when we come together and move as one. Your state association board is working hard with our letter carrier congressional liaisons to make this happen, but you can help, too! This is our pri-

mary focus.

Along with the pre-funding legislation, continue to press your representatives to support the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act. Who does not support better wages, benefits and working conditions? Our brothers and sisters before us fought for the right to bargain. The middle class built America, and uplifting working people can move the country forward and upward. Everyone should have a choice and the

ability to form a union—wouldn't you agree?

Something to look out for is the final compromised bill from Texas SB 7 and HB 6. Both bills were voted out of their respective conferences. Why is this important? Voting rights! SB 7 restricts early voting rules and schedules to do away with extended hours and ban drive-through voting.

Lastly, the Texas State Association nominations for all officers concluded on May 31.

Branches have the option for delegates to vote individually or vote unit rule. Branches that elect to vote unit rule must submit their unit rule form no later than June 30. Mail them to: TSALC Election Commissioners, P.O. Box 182281, Arlington, TX 76096-2281.

The best of luck to all candidates, and congratulations to those elected by acclamation.

Carlos Rodriguez Jr.

Honor Roll

NALC recognizes its brothers and sisters for their long-term membership

NALC members who have completed 50 years of membership in NALC are awarded a Life Membership Gold Card that entitles them to all privileges of membership in NALC without payment of dues. To receive a gold card and 50-year lapel pin, the branch secretary must write to the NALC secretary-treasurer and request the award for the member. This is in accordance with Article 2, Section 5 (a) of the *NALC Constitution*.



Additionally, the national secretary-treasurer's office handles

branch requests for lapel pins. Accordingly, the secretary-treasurer's office can only provide suitable lapel pins "when receiving proper notification by the Branch Secretary" in the year when a member is to complete the following number of years as a member: 25 years, 30 years, 35 years, 40 years, 45 years, 50 years, 55 years, 60 years and 65 years. Special plaques are available for members who complete 70 years and 75 years. This is also per Article 2 of the *NALC Constitution*.



All requests must come from the branch secretary. Longtime members are encouraged to inform their branches when they reach a longevity benchmark.

Below is a list of those NALC members who have received an award in the past month:

75-year pins

Paul R. Trzeciak Sr. Baltimore, MD Br. 176

70-year pins

Melvin S. Marshalek Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Thomas M. O'Rourke Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Roosevelt J. Harris Jr. St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 James E. Kluempers St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Francis M. Wurst Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Sebastian J. Hirsch Milwaukee, WI Br. 2

65-year pins

Edward A. Holmes Jr. Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 David R. Malat Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Leonard Roberts Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Anthony R. D'Angelo Worcester, MA Br. 12
 George B. Gilleland Springfield, MO Br. 203
 Howard M. Foxwell Jr. South Jersey, NJ Br. 908
 Phillip W. O'Neal Charlotte, NC Br. 545
 Roger F. Hottenstein Fostoria, OH Br. 279
 Gary A. Negespach Portland, OR Br. 82
 Robert E. Fatzinger Allentown, PA Br. 274

60-year pins

Alray L. Buchholz Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Eugene R. Emerick Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Thomas J. Raia Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Albert J. Rogers Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Thomas R. Storz Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Thomas J. Hickman Central Florida Br. 1091
 Elmer E. Peel Sr. Moline, IL Br. 318
 Robert A. Peter Rockford, IL Br. 245
 Norman F. Siebert Southern IL Mgd. Br. 1197
 Andrew H. Calvert Baltimore, MD Br. 176

James O. Cope Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Joseph J. Digiiovine Jr. Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Steven J. Rodetsky Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Michael E. Rosenblit Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Frederick J. Schell Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 John H. Slater Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 James J. Stack Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Charles R. Barry Worcester, MA Br. 12
 Roger Haroyan Worcester, MA Br. 12
 Anthony F. Locantore Worcester, MA Br. 12
 Columbus C. Batt St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Earl H. Buescher Jr. St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 John H. Haake St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Anthony F. Jakuboski St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 David M. Knight St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Howard J. Neels St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Raymond E. Schlereth St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 Bobby J. Whitaker St. Louis, MO Br. 343
 George Danscuk Westfield, NJ Br. 1492
 John Davids Westfield, NJ Br. 1492
 John J. Diaz Westfield, NJ Br. 1492
 Alan J. Nahalka Westfield, NJ Br. 1492
 William C. Dietz Albany, NY Br. 29
 Ray A. Didier Brooklyn, NY Br. 41
 John L. Pellegrini Lima, OH Br. 105
 Claude L. Hall Portland, OR Br. 82
 Harold D. McGann Portland, OR Br. 82
 Ralph V. Siedelman Portland, OR Br. 82
 Al R. Bonaccorsi Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 T. A. Broderick Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Joseph Chuly Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Edward J. Gannis Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 E. J. Krepley Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Thomas C. Morgan Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Walter W. Murray Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Thomas L. Schaffer Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84
 Edward F. Westwood Pittsburgh, PA Br. 84

William E. Trivett Bristol, TN Br. 807
 Paul H. Engel Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Thomas T. Fendryk Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Nick T. Germano Jr. Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Walter H. Jacquet Jr. Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Russell A. Kaczmarek Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Stanley R. Klosowski Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Robert J. Leskover Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Robert L. Livesey Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 James R. Millard Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 James A. Mueller Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Ronald S. Porst Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Norman M. Schroeder Milwaukee, WI Br. 2
 Leon J. Schutta Jr. Milwaukee, WI Br. 2

55-year pins

Mary E. Halford Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Ronald E. Pankratz Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Albert L. Salasberry Arizona Mgd. Br. 1902
 Arthur M. Goldfarb Sun City, AZ Br. 6156
 Edward D. Rocha Sun City, AZ Br. 6156
 Robert L. Cowell Central California Br. 231
 Victor F. Horg Jr. Central California Br. 231
 Roy S. Kludas Central California Br. 231
 Raymond B. Duron San Diego, CA Br. 70
 Joseph G. Quarles San Diego, CA Br. 70
 George B. Burt Rockford, IL Br. 245
 Ronald B. Wennerdahl Rockford, IL Br. 245
 Curtis E. Lyerla Southern IL Mgd. Br. 1197
 Ronald D. Richardson Southern IL Mgd. Br. 1197
 Norman F. Siebert Southern IL Mgd. Br. 1197
 William H. Airey Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Ralph D. Barth Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Marshall D. Biddle Jr. Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Frank J. Davis Jr. Baltimore, MD Br. 176
 Frederick E. Deaver Baltimore, MD Br. 176

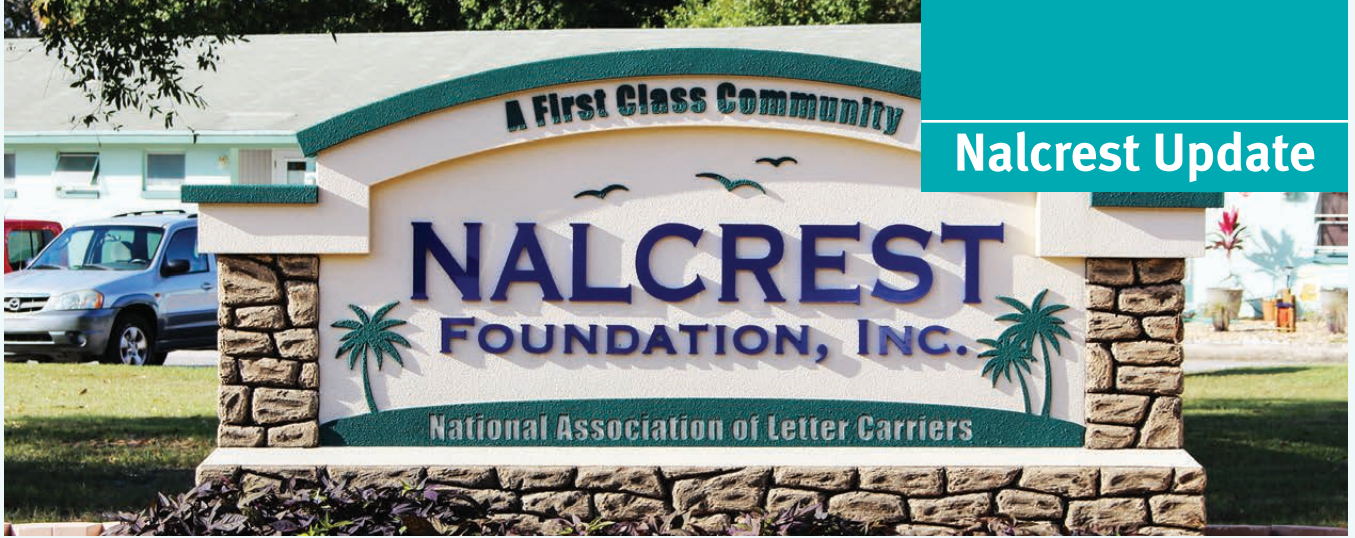
Honor Roll

Below is a list of those NALC members who have received an award in the past month:

Charles F. Focht	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Larry E. Glispay	Central California	Br. 231	Gene A. Hacker	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Roland E. Gilland	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Terry L. Bales	San Diego, CA	Br. 70	Claude E. Jackson	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
James A. Laufert	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Stephen Harobin Jr.	San Diego, CA	Br. 70	William A. James	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Charles P. McConville	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Steve C. Packer	Tri-Valley, CA	Br. 2902	Joseph M. Koncz	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Angelo M. Persiani Jr.	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Donald P. Economu	Lancaster, CA	Br. 4430	Larry W. Lefler	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Stanley L. Ray	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Gary G. Green	Lancaster, CA	Br. 4430	Lawrence C. Martin	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
George F. Ryan	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Vito M. Mazzeo	Lancaster, CA	Br. 4430	Clifton W. Massie	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Reginald R. Small	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Henry Thompson Jr.	Lancaster, CA	Br. 4430	Kenneth J. Meyer	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
John C. Strausbaugh	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Lawrence R. Pfifer	Montrose, CO	Br. 1517	Robert W. Miller Jr.	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Raymond J. Willard	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Sheppard L. Goldberg	South Florida	Br. 1071	Robert E. Murphy	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Donald R. Berthel	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Curtis M. Williams	South Florida	Br. 1071	Michael J. Rhodes	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Richard F. Evanowski	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	James S. O'Connor	Moline, IL	Br. 318	Theodore L. Spiro	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Paul T. Farrell	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	James C. Sundeen	Moline, IL	Br. 318	Edmond C. Tappin	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
William F. Kelishek	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Robert T. Albano	Oak Brook, IL	Br. 825	Barry L. Thompson	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Anthony F. Locantore	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Curtis E. Lyerla	Southern IL Mgd.	Br. 1197	Rufus L. Tillman Jr.	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Francis X. Rushford	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Ronald D. Richardson	Southern IL Mgd.	Br. 1197	Clementine W. Tucker	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
James M. Smith	New Jersey Mgd.	Br. 38	Norman F. Siebert	Southern IL Mgd.	Br. 1197	Michael E. Vassonei	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Robert G. Andre	Westfield, NJ	Br. 1492	William E. Burke	Topeka, KS	Br. 10	Richard L. Verbeck	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Richard A. Conlin	Westfield, NJ	Br. 1492	Robert J. Freudenberg	Northern Kentucky	Br. 374	Robert A. Vonderhaar	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
James A. Jeffries Jr.	Westchester Mgd., NY	Br. 693	Edgar W. Watson	Northern Kentucky	Br. 374	Philip L. Weitkemper	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
William E. Keating	Westchester Mgd., NY	Br. 693	Vernon L. Wayson	Northern Kentucky	Br. 374	Michael D. Woods	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343
Leonard W. Vanderlip	Westchester Mgd., NY	Br. 693	Jackie R. Brouillette	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Robert C. Conner	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Cecil R. Fullerton	Akron, OH	Br. 148	Marion A. Cooley	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Robert G. Crocker	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Paul J. Merlo	Akron, OH	Br. 148	Kenneth J. Edwards	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Gary L. Greenwood	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Peter J. Filiaggi	Elyria, OH	Br. 196	Charles R. Erwin	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Arwin D. Grinnell	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Dennis J. Alexander	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Robert B. James	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	John A. Hornick	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
David W. Mason	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Clifford J. Lucas	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Jimmy D. Howerton	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Jack S. Naganuma	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Raymond C. Paul Jr.	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Rex B. Jones	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Gary K. Peterson	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Frank D. Ryder	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Kenneth W. King	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
James D. Schramm	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Gerald M. Smith	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Edward N. Schumaker	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Gary B. Weis	Portland, OR	Br. 82	Thomas W. Smith	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Harold D. Summerlin	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Robert J. Benz	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Bascom W. Smith Jr.	Alexandria, LA	Br. 932	Gary A. Vickers	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Richard F. Boss	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Eldon A. Akerley	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Gale L. Wade	Southwest Missouri	Br. 366
Anthony J. Canavan	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Charles C. Alexander	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	James E. Haas	Springfield, MO	Br. 203
Leonard C. Cichowski	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Gary O. Berman	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	John R. McGaughy	Springfield, MO	Br. 203
E. B. Clark Jr.	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Robert L. Cassel	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Leo L. Nelson	Springfield, MO	Br. 203
Edward L. Cygnarowicz	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Philip L. Cox	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Ray N. Smith	Springfield, MO	Br. 203
C. A. Dedes Jr.	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Donald W. Edgar	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Frank L. Seboria	Somerville, NJ	Br. 768
Tom B. Kaylor	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Gerald D. Eldridge	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Allan J. Nies	Westfield, NJ	Br. 1492
John C. Kreuzer	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Mack Flood	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Thomas R. Smargiassi Jr.	Westfield, NJ	Br. 1492
R. J. Molinaro	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Charles E. Greever	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Pauline R. Clifton	Artesia, NM	Br. 3703
Joseph Nagy	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Edward J. Hollenshade Jr.	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	M. L. Molyneaux	Artesia, NM	Br. 3703
R. E. Nolla	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	James L. Jiggetts Sr.	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Curtis R. Teel	Artesia, NM	Br. 3703
Paul Pribik	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	Berkeley L. Knight	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Ronald A. Priestner	Albany, NY	Br. 29
Raymond C. Schnupp	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	James E. MacNamara	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	John P. Walsh	Albany, NY	Br. 29
C. F. Talarico	Pittsburgh, PA	Br. 84	George E. Merritt	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Frank C. Arena	Brooklyn, NY	Br. 41
Elton S. Werkheiser Jr.	Allentown, PA	Br. 274	Edward Oliver	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	John P. Tanico	Brooklyn, NY	Br. 41
William E. Trivett	Bristol, TN	Br. 807	Edwin E. Rust Jr.	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Howard E. Seaman	Long Island Mgd., NY	Br. 6000
Robert C. Cypher	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	William H. Snowden	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Richard W. Straub	Long Island Mgd., NY	Br. 6000
Robert M. Faelak	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Delfield F. Yoes Jr.	Baltimore, MD	Br. 176	Bruce O. Buschini	Westchester Mgd., NY	Br. 693
Jerome C. Clayter	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Santo Colucci	Western MA	Br. 46	Ronald Rowan	Akron, OH	Br. 148
Marvin B. Fry	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Elliott N. Levin	Western MA	Br. 46	Robert L. McVey	Elyria, OH	Br. 196
Lawrence C. Kowalski	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Dominic N. Mastroianni Jr.	Western MA	Br. 46	Michael A. Pileski	Elyria, OH	Br. 196
Robert J. Maule	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Richard G. Thivierge	Western MA	Br. 46	Donald R. Davis	Portland, OR	Br. 82
Gary C. Sneider	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Phillip J. Cannell	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Melvin L. Fessler	Portland, OR	Br. 82
Alan R. Tank	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2	Lawrence H. Foisy	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Robert C. Franquist	Portland, OR	Br. 82
Allen B. Hilpertshouser	Sheboygan, WI	Br. 102	Robert C. Guenther	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Daniel O. Larson	Portland, OR	Br. 82
			Warner R. Hill	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Rex R. Miner	Portland, OR	Br. 82
			Paul E. Jaworski	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	James S. Nielsen	Portland, OR	Br. 82
			Donald J. Leblanc	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	David W. Smith	Portland, OR	Br. 82
			Vincent J. Lombardozzi	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Paul D. Swick	Portland, OR	Br. 82
			James A. Monroe	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	John J. Mulasits	Allentown, PA	Br. 274
			Donald R. Parker	Worcester, MA	Br. 12	Norman E. Knickrehm	Mitchell, SD	Br. 498
			Mary E. Wells	Ballwin, MO	Br. 5050	William E. Trivett	Bristol, TN	Br. 807
			Kennis H. Boclair	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343	Glen C. McKell	Salt Lake City, UT	Br. 111
			Eric W. Boyd	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343	Terry F. Bryan	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2
			Kenneth T. Brodtrick	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343	Thomas G. McGinnis	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2
			Percy S. Childs Jr.	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343	Laird D. Schalla	Milwaukee, WI	Br. 2
			Samuel R. Cox	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343			
			Vincent J. Galli	St. Louis, MO	Br. 343			

50-year pins and gold cards

Harold L. Brown	Arizona Mgd.	Br. 1902
Peter L. Razo	Arizona Mgd.	Br. 1902
Leighanne E. Ridge	Arizona Mgd.	Br. 1902
Frank W. Russell	Arizona Mgd.	Br. 1902
Jimmy D. Viers	Arizona Mgd.	Br. 1902
David J. Corona	Central California	Br. 231
Benny M. Flores	Central California	Br. 231
R. K. Freeman	Central California	Br. 231



From the Trustees

May flowers are certainly on display with the fragrance of summer throughout Nalcrest. As you enter the parking area, you view the lagoons, boat docks and water features. The floral beauty of the rose garden is a lovely way to start your day. Touring the property, individual apartment displays show the uniqueness of residents' relationship with nature. When you get to the pool/spa area and the Vincent R. Sombrotto sports complex, the flora and fauna is a tropical sight to see.

Many COVID-19 restrictions for outdoor gatherings have been lifted or modified to comply with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

Nalcrest houses a fully staffed county paramedic and fire station on property, which has a new neighbor structure. It is the latest innovation to maintain the rapid technology demand. It is the Wi-Fi tower that provides Wi-Fi service to all 500 apartments and other venues at *no cost* to yearly residents and guests who rent our guests apartments.

Questions about Nalcrest? Call the office Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Join us on our Facebook page, "Nalcrest Foundation Inc.," or go to nalc.org/nalcrest. Currently there are more than 200 retired NALC members on the

waiting list to live at Nalcrest.

Wishing all fathers a happy day on their special day, and I hope that Memorial Day was rewarding for all.

Matty Rose

Apply to live at Nalcrest

For an application to live at Nalcrest, visit nalc.org/nalcrest, or call 863-696-1121.

Nalcrest Trustees

NALC President Fredric Rolando

NALC Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine

NALC Director of Retired Members Dan Toth

NALC Trustee Mike Gill

Nalcrest Trustees President Matty Rose

Nalcrest Trustees Vice President Tom Young

Nalcrest Trustees Vice President Don Southern



Nalcrest's Wi-Fi tower

Hartford, Connecticut

It is good to see the new postal vehicles by Oshkosh Defense, which will begin delivery in 2023. They replace the aging LLV Grumman we have had for years. They will be electric and gasoline engines, with perhaps some hybrid gas-electric vehicles in the future. Time will tell. Obviously it is great that they have air conditioning, for it can get hot in Florida, Arizona, Nevada and in Connecticut as well. Transfers and retirees from Connecticut tell me Florida, Nevada and Arizona summers take some getting used to when the carriers deliver mail or retire to those states.

It is good to see part-time flexible positions return to the carrier craft in the new contract. Many carriers told me of their concerns for the lack of benefits, etc., for the city carrier assistant positions. Our carriers delivered many millions of mail-in ballots in the last presidential, federal and state elections in November 2020. Good work, carriers, for such a fine job. How-

ever, there are still federal and state lawsuits in Arizona, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Michigan in the courts there.

With the hot humid summer weather approaching, I hope the mask-wearing rule can be eased for carriers outside away from customers when working in stifling humidity and heat this summer.

Dogs can get irritable in this weather, mainly the dogs with thicker fur. I had a patron who had their shaggy sheepdog sheared like a sheep in those stifling months. The dog looked hysterical with its thick coat of fur sheared off. It did *not* look like the same dog.

It is good to see our local letter carriers delivering many more parcel post in great numbers than ever. Whenever I order an item online, I *insist* that the company use the U.S. Postal Service for delivery of my orders.

Have a glorious summer.

Ed Mulrenan, Branch 86

Paterson, New Jersey

In reading the March edition of *The Postal Record*, specifically Director of City Deliver Christopher Jackson's article, "Vehicle news and updates," the United States Postal Service stands to purchase approximately 3,392 Mercedes Metris right-hand vehicles in 2020, with an additional 3,700 Metris vehicles in 2021.

Why Mercedes Metris? Better questions to be answered would be: Are these vehicles made or manufactured in the United States by unionized worker—specifically the United Auto Workers? Or why is the USPS not choosing American-based companies and products?

Our commitment to this union is broad-based, which is why we should concentrate on choosing companies that support union workers in order to protect and preserve a middle class in this country.

Joseph Murone, Branch 120

Branch Items

Albany, New York

Congratulations to John “PeeWee” Walsh and Ron Priester on receiving their gold cards honoring them for 50 years of NALC membership. PeeWee is a past president of the branch and was an RAA for many years. I worked with PeeWee for many years, and he got me started as a branch officer, appointing me to sergeant-at-arms in 1998. Ron is also a past president in Ravena prior to its merging with Albany. These are two of the nicest people I know, and it is a pleasure to have them as friends. Congratulations to the Captain, Bill Dietz, on achieving 60 years in our union. It was a pleasure and always quite humorous to work with Bill downtown. Thanks to you all for your service, and again, congratulations to you all!

Congratulations to Ron Sonnekalb on being converted to PTF in Latham. Congratulations to Geovanni Williams and Shawn Marano on being converted to full-time regular in Albany City. Good luck as you begin your career.

Our branch offers our thoughts and prayers to the family of our departed brother, Ed O’Brien, who recently passed away. Ed was a 73-year member of our branch. He was always a joy to talk with at our retiree branch and he will be missed. Rest in peace, brother.

Jay Jackson, Branch 29

Anchorage, Alaska

Each week, I receive the FLASH Report from management. This report is like a report card on how each unit within the district is performing for the week, quarter and year-to-date (YTD). I was reviewing one of the line items labeled “Hours Per Route,” which provides the average amount of hours worked by each route. With more than half of the fiscal year gone, some of the units have an “Hours Per Route” average of more than 11 hours, with one unit at 11.75 hours. Well, management will say that those numbers include the month of December, so that’s not representative. The hours per route at the end of November were 13.60 hours. Yes, that’s correct, the routes were running longer than the current average. The hours-per-route average at the end of December was 13.50 hours. It had actually decreased by a small amount.

One factor of why routes are running so long is the terrible job that Operations Support has done with route inspections and adjustments. I’ve written before about how incompetent the Alaska District Operations Support group is, and now its own FLASH Report proves this. Nearly every route inspection and adjustment in the last two years has been grieved. Most impasses to arbitration from the Step B team are due to the incompetent route inspections and adjustments. We have file cabinets overflowing with cases waiting to be heard. And I’m sure it won’t take an arbitrator 11 hours to figure out what we already know. Postal math is not based on facts, and that will be shown at the hearing. While carriers are held accountable each and every day, what are the chances the Operation Support managers will be held accountable for this tremendous waste of money? I’m sure you already know the answer.

Jim Raymond, Branch 4319

Boston, Massachusetts

As of May 7, the Boston District has had more than 1,260 positive cases of COVID-19 since Oct. 1, 2020. Prior to Oct. 1, there were 256 positive cases, for a total of 1,516 since the pandemic began. The weekly average is about 20 cases per week, and there are days that we have no reported new cases. Management has stopped providing the union with a running total of cases, so these numbers could be a little off.

Management has decided to start up route inspections in this branch starting May 8, even though all COVID-19 MOUs are still in effect until June 4 (except the eight hours of CCA sick leave). Management has given ultimatums on a co-op agreement without any negotiations, a “my way or the highway” approach, which was presented to the carrier of Brookline, MA, and they voted 95 percent to refuse this co-op and to go under inspection rather than let management pick away at their routes. Good job; I’m not a fan of how co-ops are done in Boston. I am still in total disagreement that this has to be done now under these conditions and should wait until the fall. We also have numerous 204-b’s who are trying to come back to the craft by improperly bidding on the district’s bid sheet or calling me for instructions on how to return as



Brooklyn, NY Br. 41 honored John Tanico with a 50-year gold card. Pictured (l to r) are Branch Secretary-Treasurer Edwin Pinero, Branch President John A. Cruz, Tanico and Branch Executive Vice President Luther McCoy.

a craft employee.

There have been no conversions in the branch since March 27 and we have about 75 UARs in the district at this time. Staffing is still an issue at just about every branch due to COVID-19 issues, management’s inability to hire and maintain CCAs and carriers retiring in larger than usual numbers every month. Speaking of retirements, congratulations go out to Judy Barineau, Thomas Costigan, Judith “Judy” Duncanson, Deborah Hannon, Anthony Matthews, Michael Paine, Leo Romero and Anthony “Tony” Scrivano. Enjoy your well-deserved retirements!

Jerry McCarthy, Branch 34

Camden, New Jersey Merged

Our branch recently had a fundraiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. We had an online popcorn sale and it was a huge suc-

cess. We usually hold an annual bowlathon to raise money for MDA, but of course, due to the pandemic, we had to forgo this event last year.

Thanks to the tenacity and drive of our chaplain and director of welfare, Karen Dickerson, we didn’t miss a beat. Not only were we able to engage our members and hold a fun and competitive event, we were also able to increase our contribution to MDA.

This was a four-day sale, and we were able to keep track of everyone’s sales, which gave the sale a friendly competitive edge. I didn’t sell the most popcorn; that distinction went to Julie Thompson, our safety and compensation director. All I know is, we raised a lot of money for MDA and I sold more popcorn than my vice president. It was a win-win!

I am once again sending out a message of safety and well wishes to one of Camden’s shop stewards, Anthony Guddo. It seems like I was welcoming him home just last month. Anthony is in the military reserves and has once again been deployed. He said that someone has to be the last one over there to make sure all the lights are turned off when the rest of the military personnel leave.

So, once again, Anthony, keep your head down and return home safe and sound. Your brothers and sisters are here thinking about you, and your family is waiting for your safe return.

Chuck Goushian, Branch 540

Carmel, Indiana

Our wonderful postmaster in Carmel has decided to retire and didn’t even come out and make a rare appearance on the workroom floor and tell me. After our six-year toxic relationship, I thought he would come up and give me a big hug and say thanks for the memories. He was great at one thing, and that was losing grievances and putting money in pockets of letter carriers. He made stops along his journey in Anderson and Lafayette, with Carmel being his final resting spot before he departed the Postal Service.

He was the reason for many grievances and payments to the union, where we bought things in his honor and named them after him. I know in Anderson they bought a laptop and named it “The Hammer” after him and his favorite saying. In our branch, he paid so many compensatory remedies to the branch, we would say our meal provided at every union meeting was sometimes in his honor after we would get the checks. Let’s just say he had a different interpretation on several provisions in the contract than NALC did.

I heard him tell numerous carriers they needed to be at work and needed to have a backup plan for their backup plan in cases of child care issues or other issues preventing them from being at work. The irony is, he is spending several weeks on sick leave before his actual retirement date. So once again, he subscribes to the theory, “Do as I say and not as I do.” He boldly told me over and over that he would fire me and that he had lawyers coming for me. Well, they can find me still at work every day. Thanks for the memories.

Knowledge is power!

Ronnie Roush, Branch 888

Charlotte, North Carolina

We here at Branch 545 would like to honor and wish all of the fathers in our branch and around the country a happy Father's Day. We all know the sacrifices that you make and all the time spent away from your families just to provide them a good life. Thank you for the energy and dedication you put into being a good role model for your children and the community, for it does not go unnoticed. We appreciate you for getting up early every morning to see your kids off to school and finding the strength after a long day at work to spend some quality time with your kids when you get home. We hope all you dads get some much-needed rest and relaxation this Father's Day, for we all know that you truly earn it each and every single day.

The union leadership would like to let everyone know that we have officially started back with our in-person union meetings. We had our first meeting in April, and it was wonderful being able to see everyone again in person and not have to look at each other through a computer screen. We are holding our meetings the third Tuesday of every month for anyone who is interested in attending, and we are continuing to work within the parameters established by our local government leaders in regard to COVID-19. We look forward to seeing all of our members who are able to make it out.

Justin Fraley, Branch 545

East Lansing, Michigan

Like to get back to "normal" pre-COVID-19 mail carrying anytime soon? With vaccination rates falling sharply as half of Republicans refuse to get the shot, it looks like we'll be stuck with COVID-19 for a long time. Biden's appeals to science, morality, patriotism, self-preservation and duty have fallen on deaf ears; Republicans care about none of these.

So what appeal might work with these Fox News-bred contrarians? How about a nice, juicy conspiracy theory? Maybe it's time to "let slip" the notion that this anti-vaccine response by Republicans was the sneaky liberal plan all along. Suppose liberals had only pretended to want conservatives to vaccinate, knowing full well that Trump followers would react in knee-jerk opposition?

The conservative response is likely to be something like this:

"Diabolical! There's no other word to describe what liberals have done. By their unwavering support for the COVID-19 vaccine, they've managed to convince conservatives that it's a bad thing. And I'm certain that was their intent all along. It's the old reverse-psychology ruse. Clever, I'll admit, but I'm on to them. And, the more they prattle on about getting vaccinated for 'the good of humanity' and 'helping others,' the more they knew Trump followers would reject the vaccine. They've politicized vaccination! And why? It's a diabolical scheme to gain power by systematically reducing the conservative voting population. It's obvious now that the vaccine works and they want to keep the benefit to themselves. I wouldn't be surprised if a new, deadlier 'variant' appears once their voting population is all safely vaccinated while half of

us remain unprotected. A coincidence? I think not! Likely as not, a new outbreak will 'occur' during the next election. They know Trump followers especially will be sitting ducks for infection at our maskless mass rallies. Yes, it's truly diabolical!"

Mark Woodbury, Branch 2555

Emerald Coast, Florida

As we are entering the summer, I look back on what we as carriers have gone through since the pandemic, election cycle and the Christmas season. It has been a living hell. We survived it



Flushing, NY Br. 294 Branch Director of Retirees Clara Sarmiento (l) and Branch President Tony Paolillo (r) presented a 50-year gold card to Hubert Henkel.

all, and we accomplished our mission of making sure the mail was delivered. We had to deal with heavy volumes, lack of vehicles, bang outs and mood changes, but we hung in there.

I have seen CCAs come and go. Those who have stayed have been very productive and have helped tremendously. We have been forced to train them differently due to COVID-19 guidelines where we cannot be in the same truck with them. In my area, there are *no* walking routes, which makes it difficult for us to see what they are doing, but we are getting there.

Due to all of the pressure we are facing, it has had a barrier on attitudes. We are all under a lot of pressure, but it not a reason to be disrespectful to your fellow carriers, or management, for that fact. I hear a lot of griping about what some are having to do, while other are doing much less. I hate to say this, but that is not our concern. Management must do its job; we are not going to do it for them. We will put paper on them for not doing theirs, believe that. We as a team will get through this. We need more employees, not fewer; we need more vehicles for the CCAs to assist us. How about we work as a team and not as a divided group? It will get better, I hope.

The branch wants to send our condolences to Lee Ward's family on Lee's passing.

Percy Smith Jr., Branch 4559

Fargo-West Fargo, North Dakota

While home having to quarantine, I learned that yet again there was a discussion regarding the importance of the union. It has been said that I advise carriers to slow down.

Understand that I am not suggesting we "screw" the Postal Service by working slower than necessary. When you "run" a route, misdeliveries increase, safety issues become more of a problem and customer service is negatively affected. A few years ago, I defended a carrier who twisted their ankle on the job. Management used "working in haste" as the reason for discipline. They want you to work in haste until you get injured while working in haste.

For those who question the union, consider donating the back pay you will receive soon from the newly negotiated contract. When you go to the doctor, take the difference between what you pay and what the average person pays and donate it. Take a day or two of annual leave and volunteer your time. Benefits, contractual pay and the amount of leave are all things your union has fought hard for you to receive. Management did not just decide to give you excellent health coverage, an actual living wage or a fair amount of leave. When you speak negatively about the union, you are speaking personally to the trainers, stewards, union officials and union members who put in a lot of time and work hard for you.

We hope to return to our annual picnic this summer. Watch your mail for a postcard regarding the time and place, as it is still undetermined. Monthly meetings are back on at the Biltmore. Congratulations to Tim Haugrud on converting to regular. Our thoughts are with Dennis Zimdars with the recent passing of his significant other, Kathy.

Brian Prisinzano, Branch 205

Fresno, California

More than 42,000 postal employee injuries are reported each year. More than \$1 billion is paid out in OWCP claims a year. Hot weather is approaching. Heat stroke and heat exhaustion will be on the rise. Avoid these by working at a safe pace; it does not matter if your supervisor does not like you taking longer. In the past, some letter carriers have been ordered to complete the route after reporting they are feeling sick out in the heat. Management tells you to drink plenty of fluids. That alone will not always stop heat stroke or heat exhaustion. They tell you from an air conditioned office or car. They do not care. I know by experience. Feeling light-headed or nauseated are clear signs that not all is well with you. Some letter carriers in the past have died on routes in the heat. Some in management are more likely to get mad that a route is down, rather than be concerned about the employee. You can provide good mail delivery service and work safely at the same time. So what if management gets mad because you take longer in severe heat? It's your well-being over their hours.

By the way, if you do suffer from heat stroke on the route, you can file an OWCP claim. Notify your shop steward or union office. Heat stroke often takes more than one day to recover from. It can have long-lasting effects on your body. Sitting behind a desk is not the same as walking with a heavy satchel on your shoulder for six-plus hours in extreme heat. But it is up to you to place your well-being before management's hours. It's not like you are enjoying the heat.

Jesse Dominguez, Branch 231

Branch Items

Garden Grove, California

It is with great sadness that we inform you that our brother in service, George Heim, passed away after a long battle with cancer.

George was first certified as a Branch 1100 shop steward in 1986 and was a wonderful advocate for the union. While he retired from the Postal Service in 2012, he continued to passionately protect the rights of letter carriers till the end.



George Heim

Brother George will always remain in all our hearts; we will all miss a remarkable human being. Join us in keeping our thoughts and prayers with his family.

Keisha Lewis, Branch 1100

Greensboro, North Carolina

Robert "Bob" Way passed away on Sunday, April 25, in Greensboro at the age of 83. Born and raised in Pottstown, PA, Bob had a lifetime of hard work and many varied experiences from working at a dairy farm in his youth to Army helicopter crew chief to long years as a letter carrier in his wife's hometown of Greensboro, where they raised their two children.

Though he never sought the limelight, Bob was an invaluable member of Branch 630. For example: As one of many southern NALC branches that was "whites only," Bob submitted the application of the first African American carrier in Greensboro to be accepted into the branch, effectively ending its racial exclusion. When I was branch president, Bob was the only shop steward in any station or zone to have 100 percent membership. Clearly, this reflected the deep respect in which he was held by his fellow carriers, for he considered them all to be deserving of respect and dignity, and fought for workplace justice. Finally, approaching retirement, Bob envisioned volunteering regularly to assist me at our branch union hall. Unfortunately, we were unable to make that happen. Instead, branch leadership moved in the direction of having all union work paid and the volunteer spirit at the heart of unionism was weakened.

Our branch meetings have always begun with a moment of silence or prayer. In recent years, after a sectarian Christian prayer is expressed, I am given the floor to encourage all other non-Christian members like me to fully participate in our membership meeting and our union. At Bob Way's memorial service, both speakers, his daughter and his wife's Baptist minister, shared that Bob was of Jewish heritage. Bob Way certainly gave us a fine example to follow.

In unity—

Richard A. Koritz, Branch 630

Hagerstown, Maryland

Ever since the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush on Dec. 20, 2006, the Postal Service has been hamstrung into making payments for employees it has not even hired yet. The bill compelled the USPS to pay in advance for retiree health benefits of all of its

employees for at least 50 years. Or put another way, the bill fabricated a debt that did not exist. After being hammered by the Great Recession, the internet, and now a worldwide pandemic, this invented obligation alone is still responsible for 75 percent of the \$160.9 billion in debt the Postal Service carries.

The good news is that there is now bipartisan support in a bill to eliminate this obligation. We have never been closer to the repeal of this requirement as we are now. The USPS Fairness Act repeals the requirement that the USPS annually prepay future retirement health benefits. In the House, it is known as H.R. 695 and has enough co-sponsors to pass. In the Senate, it is known as S. 145 and at the writing of this article only has 10 co-sponsors. Please take a few minutes and call the congressional switchboard at 202-224-3121. You will be connected with your senators' offices, where you can let your senators know how important this bill is to the future of the Postal Service.

Due to the pandemic, Branch 443 again had to cancel its annual bowlathon that benefits the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In its place, we ran a donor drive that helped us to raise just more than \$5,100. I would like to thank John Russell and James Gelwicks for their efforts in this drive. I would also like to give a special thanks to APWU Local 2574 for its generous contribution to our drive.

Larry Wellborn, Branch 443



Hagerstown, MD Br. 443 presented past branch president Dave Ward with a 50-year gold card. Pictured (l to r): Region 13 RAA Tonya Detrick, Ward and past branch presidents Julie Mitchell and Ronda Sisk.

East Hartford, Connecticut

Following a terrible tragedy in Branch 86's history in August 2019, the need to fill our secretary-treasurer position became a necessity even while emotions were still running deep. Michael Mezzanotte was, at the time, our steward in Enfield, CT, along with being an instructor at the Carrier Academy in Chicopee, MA. Mike stepped right up and offered to fill the vacancy. I appointed him, and President Rolando put him into the week-long Branch Officers Training set to begin about a week out. During the first few months of his tenure, NALC Secretary-Treasurer Rhine and her staff patiently guided him through the fiduciary minefield, and former Branch 86 Secretary-Treasurer Susan Ugone also assisted Mike.

Recently, because of family and personal considerations, Mike has asked to have someone

else assume the secretary-treasurer position. He is still a steward in Enfield, and he still trains at the academy. Mike honored himself with his stellar performance as our secretary-treasurer with his attention to detail and his unflappable personality! He was great with the numbers and great with computers, both in the office and out in the field, keeping our stewards' computers up and running. I know everyone joins me in wishing the very best to a good union man and a better friend!

David Rooks from our Bristol office has agreed to take on the secretary-treasurer position for the balance of this term. Dave has jumped right in, putting in long hours to set up the office and learn all of the particulars. Also from the Bristol Post Office, Paul Norton has accepted the director of city delivery position, replacing Rooks, and he also has been busy with our monthly steward trainings.

Finally, our steward elections have been completed, and we can thank Paul Norton and Bristol's Roger Carrier for going office to office to get this done.

Michael L. Willadsen, Branch 86

Kansas City, Missouri

Unfortunately, PMG NoJoy was not replaced within President Biden's first 100 days. Yet, if change in the Postal Service is normally immediate, erratic and chaotic, political change takes a minute or two, depending on who's calling the shots. Though I'm extremely optimistic, it seems the psychological high I was cruising on from last year's victory is beginning to dim. Deep down inside, I thought all carriers would take advantage of the push we got from the public to create a stronger, more vibrant union. Still, too many haven't realized what it means to wear postal blue or represent NALC.

The Goose Hill community, East St. Louis, IL Branch 319, served by "Roscoe" was the epitome of mutual dignity and respect. It serves as the standard of my actions today. So, it saddens me to hear from our customers about shoddy service. It seems as though a career with the USPS is now in the same category as Manpower or any other temp service. Over the past year, carriers have successfully accomplished what management has attempted to do for so long... pit carrier against carrier. Just as there seems to be a slush fund for Article 8 grievances, management seems to be willing to overlook one problem to create another by overworking those who actually accept the responsibility of being an NALC letter carrier. Hopefully, the fresh batch of CCAs will not only grasp the importance of what they are doing, but be both accountable and responsible to their assigned unit and the local branch.

Big Brother will always play a role in the USPS. However, what NALC does or doesn't do to be viable is only what matters. We are NALC; NALC is us. United we stand, divided we beg. In solidarity.

Calvin Davis, Branch 30

Knoxville, Tennessee

Hello, brothers and sisters.

The next couple of years are going to be very trying for the Postal Service, NALC and all unions, particularly with a party that wants to



NALC President Fredric Rolando (l) was welcomed to the Hartford, CT Branch 86 union office in Enfield by Branch Secretary-Treasurer Michael Mezzanotte.

be as obstructive as much as it can be. To compound the issue, we have a postmaster general whose views are in contravention of what we believe in. So, the best thing we can do is to write to our members of Congress and let our voices be heard; united we stand, divided we fall.

The NALC Legislative Department has a method in place to make it easier for you to contact your congressional representatives. Go to nalc.org and become a member by creating an account at the “Members Only” icon in the upper right-hand corner. Afterward, click on the “Government Affairs” icon. Click the “Contact Congress” section on the lower right side of the screen. You will come to a “Legislator Look Up” section. Enter your ZIP code, and the names of your senators and House representative will pop up. Along the right side is the part on contacting your congressional representatives. If you are already enrolled, you can enter the requested information and send messages to your elected representative. Easy peasy! If this is your first time, then you can create an account and send your message. After sending your message, your email record will be deleted to ensure your privacy.

On another issue, all Tennessee state delegates will have to be enrolled as members in order to register at this year’s virtual state convention (June 13). As President Rolando has said, “We need to remain focused on the long-term objective of making our case before Congress and the Biden administration.” Let us focus on making them understand our goals.

Tony Rodriguez, Branch 419

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Management has lost its humanity. Apparently, it is unforgivable for carriers to suffer from medical ailments. Local station management has come to believe that it is OK to deny time off for medical appointments, treatments and surgeries. Heaven forbid a personal emergency arise during work hours. We rarely hear, “Go take care of your family; don’t worry, we’ll cover this.” Instead, we are told “you can’t

leave until you finish your route, there’s no one to carry it and your overtime.” The mail must be delivered, and numbers will be met at all costs.

Too many managers, supervisors and 204-b’s are concerned with one thing, and it’s not their employees. Every decision is based on how our performance affects their numbers. They are convinced our sole purpose is to “steal” time and lie to get out of work.

Twenty-nine years ago, in 1992, the Postal Service and affiliated unions signed the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. It reaffirms the basic right of all employees to a safe and humane working environment. The document ends stating: “Our intention is to make the workroom floor a safer, more harmonious, as well as a more productive workplace. We pledge our efforts to these objectives.”

Management has lost its way. Too many managers are allowed to harass, intimidate, threaten and bully. They justify their actions because “feelings aren’t contractual.” They are wrong. The JSOV is a part of our contract. It specifically addresses the feelings caused by unacceptable stress, harassment and intimidation.

Management’s deplorable behavior has resulted in an unprecedented number of dignity, respect and JSOV grievances. It’s time to revive and give teeth to the JSOV. This can only change if we stand up for what is right and stand up for each other. We are Branch 9 strong.

In solidarity—

JoAnn Gilbaugh, Branch 9

New Orleans, Louisiana

It’s been a while since we have all been able to walk about as if things were back to normal. Hopefully, everyone is getting vaccinated so we can reach herd immunity. We need to vaccinate 75 percent of the population to reach herd immunity. Come on, America, let’s get immunized! This pandemic has taken a toll on the population. Joblessness, homelessness, sicknesses, and many people facing hunger. Let’s keep hope alive!

We in the Postal Service have our dilemma, too. How do we get back to service standards pre-DeJoy era? Mail being slowed, loss of equipment, mail sorting equipment removed from many post offices, not to mention the \$5 billion burden put on the Postal Service.

Congrats to the CCAs on having an avenue for becoming career carriers by attaining PTF status in time.

I’ve been in too many meetings over Zoom. Now, finally, we can have upcoming meetings in person. Looking forward to it, but also with social distancing and masking up. Although many have been vaccinated, there are still variants of COVID-19 out there. Let’s be careful and follow the CDC recommendations. Let’s be safe, America.

In keeping in tune with the world’s current events, accountability for George Perry Floyd’s murder at the hands of Derek Chauvin. The federal Justice Department bringing charges of violating Mr. Floyd’s civil rights against all four officers on that eventful day. I’ll just say “accountability” for now; hopefully, justice won’t be too far behind. We all just keep the faith and

persevere with prayer and supplication as we patiently await better days.

Let us strengthen one another through our meeting attendance. We also have an upcoming state convention next month, July 13 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Hope to see you there in the Capital City.

Continue to give LCPFI!

Yours in unionism—

Marshall Wayne Smith, Branch 124

Norristown, Pennsylvania

So I went to a get an oil change at one of those quick oil change places, \$19.95 and done in 20 minutes. Went to the counter and no one was in the waiting room, figured I’d be out in no time. The person at the counter said that the price went up to \$39.95 and it would take an hour. I looked around and said, “No one is here; why will it take so long?”

He said the big boss said that it was better to have less people doing more work and charge more. In his mind, this was great. This was just showing how out of touch he was with customer service. This is fictional, but would you go to this oil place? This is what our new PMG is doing—slowing down the speed of the mail and trying to charge more for it. It’s the total opposite of customer service, and asking carriers to do Customer Connect trying to sell a bad product. We as carriers are salesman when we do our jobs in the most professional way; we are selling the product. But we can only deliver what we get from the truck, which gets it from the plant, which gets it from another truck that drove from the airport or another plant. It’s a chain that should be strong and in unison with the gears of productivity. The PMG is taking shots at that chain and trying break it. Hopefully, we can get someone in place who cares about our customers.

And moving on, I have to give a shout-out to Joe Burke and Jim Bergstresser on their retirements. Joe was famous for his love of T-6’s and rookies. Not enough room for what he would say. Enjoy it, guys—ya deserve it!

Joel Stimmler, Branch 542

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

On Sunday, April 11, Branch 157 hosted a COVID-19 immunization clinic. It was an extraordinarily successful event thanks to our partners at the Philadelphia Central Labor Council (AFL-CIO), Rite Aid and the NAACP. Overall, through our associates, we were able to vaccinate more than 350 postal employees.

Several weeks before the clinic, I spoke with the local president of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), Nick Casselli; the Eastern Region vice president of the Mail Handlers, John Gibson; and Chuck Camp, president of the APWU Local 7048. We agreed to work side by side in our efforts to obtain the vaccine. Eventually, I was able to acquire the shots, and offered it not only to letter carriers, but to our brothers and sisters in the other crafts.

I would like to thank the following volunteers who played a vital role in helping us keep our

Branch Items

members safe: Joyce Rodgers, Branch 157 Auxiliary; Nancy Rollins, vice president, APWU Local 89; Denise Dedaro, administrative assistant, Branch 157; Nick Casselli and John Gibson. I want to give a special thanks to the following



Philadelphia, PA Br. 157 hosted a COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

Branch 157 members who assisted to make the event a success: Marge McCann, Mary Brooke, Jim O'Malley, Joe Adamski, Clay Smith, Steve Keppler, Joe Slusarczyk and Tom Filipone. We could not have done it without you. Thank you!

In following the science and recommendations from city and state health officials, it was necessary to stop all meetings usually held at the branch. Our last general membership meeting was on March 19, 2020. Since then, shop stewards' meetings continued, but were virtual. It appears Philadelphia will be easing COVID-19 occupancy restrictions soon. If so, we will resume all meetings in June. Any such decision will be shared with the members in advance.

Brothers and sisters, stay healthy, stay safe and get vaccinated!

Joe Rodgers, Branch 157

Phoenix, Arizona

Mark your union calendars for the biggest, best, Arizona State Association of Letter Carriers convention at the Hilton Phoenix Resort at the Peak, 7677 N. 16 St., Phoenix, 800-947-9784, \$139 daily, three days before and after convention. Thursday, Oct. 28, hospitality night; Friday, Oct. 29, opening ceremony; Saturday, Oct. 30. Check the ASALC website, asalc.org, for the upcoming agenda.

The Arizona legislative session is extended until June; I want everyone to call 877-405-6303 to be connected to your state representative and 877-586-4895 to your Arizona state senator. Please ask them to *vote no* on the vote-by-mail bills SB 1713 (early ballot driver's license), and SB 1485 (purge PEVL), as well as any other voter suppression bills with numbers and language at press time! As I testified, this is not a Republican, Democratic or independent cause; this is everyone protecting everyone.

Once again, the unfair vote-by-mail Arizona bills may change after press time; if they pass, you all have to call Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey at 602-542-4331. Please ask him to veto! God willing.

Jeff Clark, Branch 576

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I had the opportunity to sit in on the Washington-Greene County Labor Council Zoom meet-

ing last month and had a very interesting take-away. In attendance was Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Frank Snyder. Beforehand, we discussed the unionization votes of both Amazon in Alabama and a local charter school in which my sister was a part of the drive.

Amazon employees overwhelmingly chose to continue defecating in bags and leaving them in vehicles while the school vote was the exact opposite. Both had excessive anti-union expenditures and deployed right-to-work-style tactics. Why the difference? The obvious answer is North versus South, I guess.

But it's also about support to offset the anti-union effort, right? My sister's group had worked closely with the PSEA, NEA and the NLRB. The latter was involved on behalf of Amazon employees, but I doubt that the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) carries the clout of the educational unions. The company brand was simply *bigger* and more visible... not unlike USPS.

The Postal Service released its Q1 2021 financials and, as earnestly as they tried to negatively spin them, the numbers were *very* encouraging—all while dealing with absences due to generous COVID-related stimulus leave and the added cost of supplying PPE to employees. So, what's the takeaway?

Secretary-Treasurer Snyder made an extremely poignant point during that Zoom call: "Just because your employer isn't advertising how many anti-union dollars they're spending doesn't mean that they aren't doing so," and he's spot on. USPS's currency is headlines, and it spends them each quarter as dimly as possible, if not in between. Do your job. Earn your wage. Take your breaks. Management wouldn't have offered this contract if the financial situation was dire. Give effort, but don't give the sweat of your brow for free because that's how you fight anti-union currency.

John Conger II, Branch 84

Plainfield, New Jersey

Two longtime letter carrier officers working in the Plainfield Post Office are gone. Sadly, trustee, former steward and friend Joe Curham passed away suddenly. He will be sorely missed. Longtime secretary, former vice president and friend Edward Gaub has retired and moved out of state. Thus ended a Gaub in the office from the 1940s, first father and former branch president Edward Gaub, and then two sons, Ed and Gene—nine decades of Gaubs.

Ed became an official almost as soon as he began his career; a longhaired surfer from a Florida university took a position in 1974 and stayed on until the term ended this year. Smart, a route protector, a letter carrier for more than 45 years, a proper voter, defender of letter carrier, a management handler, trouble enough to get disciplined, a stand-in for me, a family man and a friend. Best of all, he is staying involved.

Retired former shop steward and MBA rep Darryl Hueston is on the long road to recovering from his illness. Please keep him in your thoughts.

The year of COVID-19 has altered many ways the union has functioned, but we have survived and strengthened. Some members have had no

choice but to stay out or work limited hours to take care of health and family. Those who were available or came back are putting in long hours to get the mail delivered. Either way is a hardship, but we are an essential service to the public, every day, 365 days of the year.

The new contract, hard work by the Rolando administration, has given the union many ways to advance our issues with cooperation if management wants it, also with the Democrats in charge, the USPS office has the money for improvement. Vote responsibly; our future depends on it.

Michael Breslin, Branch 396

Portland, Oregon

I recently lost one of my favorite customers. His name was Harry, and he was a retired letter carrier. He had worked out of my office (he had the airport route), but he was gone before I arrived, so I never worked with him. I knew him strictly as my customer. I was always happy to see him out in the yard, and I always loved chatting with him. I could tell him the truth about how my day was going, and he knew what I was talking about. Harry was very pro-union, and he always had an anecdote for me from his years on the job. He was supportive and always a joy to spend a few minutes of my day with.

Everyone who worked with Harry has a story or two about him. Many are humorous, but some of them aren't good. Descriptions of him seem to range from "he was a character" to an array of four-letter words. How could my delightful Harry have bad reviews from his co-workers? Maybe because he was kind of a different guy in his retirement. I found him to be intelligent, thoughtful, funny and a great storyteller, while most of his fellow carriers remember him for putting his wet socks in the microwave in the break room.

I guess my point is that everyone deserves a second chance, and sometimes people change. In the end, Harry wanted more years to spend in his sun-drenched garden, but cancer robbed him of that pleasure. He was a mailman to the very end, and that is something we will all take with us. Having been a letter carrier will be part of what defines us, and we can all be proud of that. Use your time well! Dear Harry Miersma, rest in peace.

Suzanne Miller, Branch 82

Providence, Rhode Island

Well, the writing of this article comes at a difficult time for me in particular as I'm nearing the last few days of my quarantine, as coronavirus has finally run through my house. My wife tested positive first, and it was only a matter of days before I started having symptoms and tested positive myself. I don't know what's worse, having the symptoms of this virus and the fatigue that comes from it, or having two kids under the age of 3 stuck in the house for weeks and having little opportunity for real rest. I can now sympathize a lot more with people who've had to deal with this exact situation over the past year.

Thanks to the safety measures in place at my station, to my knowledge no one else showed any symptoms or was required to quarantine. Goes to show how important simple things like physical distancing, mask-wearing and personal hygiene can be. Though it's been kind of nice to have a couple of weeks away from work, albeit not feeling well, I'm looking forward to getting back to seeing my co-workers and customers and back in the routine. Hopefully, as the vaccination process ramps up, we will be back to our monthly meetings in person soon, and I can bring you more specifics on the happenings of Branch 15.

Anthony Turcotte, Branch 15

Racine, Wisconsin

Willie Nelson turned 88, still smoking weed and making music. Meanwhile, Santa's little misfit carriers can't seem to "stop the clock" on business closed, forwarded mail, hold mail and such, by postal proclamation herein known better as "STC." You better believe district scan watchers have got their eyes on this stuff. If the clock hasn't been stopped for some reason, nobody goes home. All hands on deck. Pencils are breaking, hair being pulled out, coffee splashed around while the ergonomic chairs are crashing into each other. So for crying out loud, stop the clock!

Used to be a time when stopping the clock meant writing "Business Closed" or "Customer Hold" on the parcel. Guess what? The Postal Service survived. Technology is great and necessary in today's modern world. Sometimes that technology can be an unmerciful and remorseless competitor to an otherwise fairly simple job.

Our station manager congratulated us for doing our part getting our (management's) numbers under control. 4-Mile Station has long been a sore spot for the district. There is a long lineage of station managers who use 4-Mile as a stepping stone to other greatness or to wait it out until retirement.

We're not praying for a miracle around here. We never really asked to get bailed out. We just want to be left out of the drama. We simply accept our dubious status in the district, and have come to terms with this reality. #occupyingthebottom does have some perks. We're not vain. Nobody expects anything of us. We can only go up. When the "we did something right" needle does budge in an upward trajectory, it's a joyous cause for celebration. That is, until we fail to stop the clock (STC). Then right back to Square One. Been there; done that.

Chris Paige, Branch 436

Rockville, Maryland

We were informed on April 1 of the horrible news of the passing of Vivian Walker after a long bout with an illness. Just three weeks before, Vivian called me and told me that she was going to retire in two years and asked if she could work for our branch by writing contentions for our grievances. I was excited about this, because her writing skills were superb. She was doing well and her voice sounded strong. Then,

a week later, we talked and she told me she wasn't feeling well. On April 1, we received the devastating news of her passing.

Vivian was currently working as a union advocate for the Dispute Resolution Process. Before that, she was an alternate steward, then a regular steward and then a chief shop steward at Twinbrook Station and at the same time a steward at our Potomac unit. She started at the USPS in February of 1996 and had a route out of the Potomac office.

Vivian was a very special union representative. She was always cheerful and kind, and wanted to help carriers in any way that she could. She knew the contract as well as anyone and took great pleasure in winning grievances for letter carriers.

Vivian is survived by her two daughters, granddaughter and her husband. We all loved Vivian and will miss her dearly.

In the struggle—

Kenneth Lerch, Branch 3825

St. Louis, Missouri

As we transition from the pleasant temperatures of the spring into the harsher conditions of the summer heat, it's important to remember some fundamental precautions to take to deal with heat exposure and heat stroke.

Every year, dozens of workers die and thousands more become ill while working in extreme heat and humidity. There are a range of heat illnesses that can affect anyone, regardless of age or physical condition.

Under OSHA law, employers are responsible for providing workplaces free of known safety hazards. This includes protecting workers from extreme heat. An employer with workers exposed to higher temperatures should establish a complete heat illness prevention program and should encourage all of their employees to observe these fundamental guidelines.

First: Drink plenty of water. Soft drinks and coffee are considered diuretics and as such can have dehydrating effects on the body. Ditch the colas and coffee and stick with water.

Second: Rest. While you are entitled to a 10-minute break on the street, in severe conditions, this may not be adequate. If you feel nauseous or lightheaded, get out of the heat immediately.

Third: Shade. Seek shelter under a tree, or even better, an air-conditioned building. If you need help, call your office for assistance or have someone do it for you.

Veteran carriers need to look out for the new employees. Encourage them to take it easy and build up their tolerance to working in the heat. A cool, damp towel draped around the neck can substantially lower your body temperature. Walk in the shade of the trees if possible to reduce direct exposure to the sun.

While OSHA guidelines will help you, don't expect your boss to care about you. Water, rest and shade are your friends. Take care of yourself.

Tom Schulte, Branch 343

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Things are trending toward "normal" in the Twin Cities from where we have been the for the last year: The Twins are having a rough first month, the Wild are gearing up to break fans' hearts after looking a little too good during the season, and we have been promised a Minnesota state fair in August. Hopefully, things will stick on this track.

While there may not have been a food drive this year, both the Branch 28 picnic (Aug. 1) and the retirees' dinner (Sept. 19) are a full "go" for later this summer, so get these dates on your calendar. General membership meetings (third Thursday of the month) also look to be about ready for in-person attendance, though there will still be a remote Zoom option for the foreseeable future.

Brothers and sisters, get out there and enjoy this summer. It has been a long time coming. Just remember to stay safe on the roads. Plenty of folks haven't been out delivering through this whole pandemic like we have, and it seems like quite a few of them have forgotten how to drive.

COLA: Cost-of-living adjustment

- ▶ Following the release of the April consumer price index (CPI), the fourth cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) under the 2019-2023 National Agreement is projected to be **\$915 annually**. This COLA is based on the change in the CPI from the base index month to July 2021, with the previous three COLAs subtracted. The previous three COLAs will be paid retroactively to their contractual effective dates.
- ▶ The 2022 projected COLAs for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement

System (FERS), which are based on the CPI's increase between the third quarter of 2020 and third quarter of 2021, is **3.1 percent** and will be finalized with the publication of the September 2021 CPI in October 2021.

- ▶ The 2022 projected COLA under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) is **2.8 percent** following the release of the April CPI. This COLA is based on the change in the CPI between December 2020 and December 2021.

Visit nalc.org for the latest updates.

Branch Items

Even though the pavement may be dry, probably best to treat other drivers like it is the first day of snow for a while.

I look forward to seeing you all in person again.

Colin Walker, Branch 28

San Antonio, Texas

Greetings from the Alamo City. The ice storm that swept through the country in February crippled Texas, causing scores of letter carriers to miss work. By any logical definition, including that found in *ELM* 519.2, the storm was a community disaster. Dispatch trucks were unable to navigate the icy roads, so many offices had no mail. Unsurprisingly, management at the highest levels adopted a strategy of refusing to pay administrative leave for absences caused by the storm. Grievances have poured into the Step B office in San Antonio protesting management's irrational blanket denial of administrative leave. Also unsurprisingly, management's Step B reps are goose-stepping right along, resolving only those grievances the union agrees do not show a violation (the ones with no carrier statements). In all other cases, they say that since the office was open, no administrative leave is payable and it isn't the Postal Service's problem these carriers chose to live where they did. Disgraceful.

There is, however, a silver lining! The cases that contain meaningful contentions from the Formal A manager reveal a superhuman effort to identify work the carriers could have done if they had reported. Things like cleaning a warehouse in another office or cleaning cases in their own offices, or sitting in the break room for hours on end to make eight hours. Unsettling as it is that all this "cleaning" apparently isn't being done normally, it warms the heart to know this same work will certainly be available for limited and light-duty carriers when the need arises. Hopefully the stewards in those offices kept those contentions, on the off chance management forgets and claims no work is available for those employees. They wouldn't do that though, would they?

How to submit items

Branch presidents or their designated

scribes may submit Branch Items to *The Postal Record* by mail at 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144; email at postalrecord@nalc.org; or fax at 202-737-1540. The deadline is the 10th of the preceding month, or if it falls on a weekend or holiday, 9 a.m. E.T. the first business day after. For the July issue, the deadline is Thursday, June 10. The *NALC Constitution* limits items to 300 words. Photos should be in color; photos sent by email should be at least 150 dpi resolution. Please identify every person in the photo. *The Postal Record* reserves the right not to print every photo received. Hard-copy photos will not be returned.

Summer is approaching, so hydrate and take all necessary comfort breaks!

Jim Ruetze, Branch 421

Seattle, Washington

"I'm here to get rid of the dead wood." Arrogance and incompetence—always a dangerous combination, and is most always what walks through the door when a new manager comes on board. This particular "new" manager evidently thought that hubris and intimidation were his ticket to going places.

So this particular clown had landed in our station looking to throw his weight around, and admittedly, he did have a pretty good start on the rest of us. I assumed that by "dead wood" he meant non-productive personnel; those people who weren't carrying their weight, as it were. But for an employee who carried at most a clipboard and packet of pencils, he had little to nothing to grouse about. And if he was looking to find anyone in particular, all he really needed was a mirror and he could have easily discovered the biggest snag in the office.

Here's a tip for anyone searching for non-workers in any installation, it's pretty easy—just look for those umbilically attached to their stat sheets. Arrogance—it's practically a requisite for passing the postal management exam. You can almost hear the panel mulling things over, "There's something missing. They're lacking that certain *je ne sais quoi*." "Arrogance?" "That's it! This person will never succeed without being cocksure, even when they're dead wrong."

Don Nokes, Branch 79

Silver Spring, Maryland

I have always found it difficult to justify the existence of the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), except for the obvious comedic purpose of its sarcastic acronym. Why does the Postal Service fund a redundant operation like this? Is it fair that our employer pays what corporations like UPS, FedEx, Amazon and others get for free? If UPS suspects or discovers contraband, who do they call? If a FedEx employee is accosted or robbed, who handles it? The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security and local law enforcement are all valid choices, depending on the circumstance. We also have access to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

When I contacted the OIG and USPIS concerning fraudulent and illegal insurance scam mailings being sent to employees at their work locations, the agencies pointed their fingers at each other. These mailings obviously have current participation from a postal insider providing unauthorized updated access to the employee database. Is USPIS actually concerned with protecting us?

Worse still is the newly outed USPIS iCOP (Internet Covert Operations Program), which is being used to track (spy on) social media. The revelation of this secret program is an outright embarrassment, especially to those actively engaged in legislative postal reform. The chief postal inspector's testimony before the House

Oversight Committee was deemed incompetent.

USPIS needs to be on the chopping block first, even before management. It is a redundant entity that wants to be Big Brother and has very little to do with protecting employees or the sanctity of mail. Let the DEA handle drugs, OIG handle fraud and law enforcement handle the rest. USPS cannot afford USPIS, especially while rushing to implement degradations of customer service. Get these people from behind the computer monitors and into essential positions.

Lee Taylor, Branch 2611

South Jersey, New Jersey

It's official! Thanks to the unanimous vote of the membership at the April 21 general membership meeting, and the approval of our national union, Branch 908 will now be called the Bill Revak Branch 908, South Jersey Letter Carriers, NALC. This is a proud moment for our branch, as this will cement the legacy of our brother and founder. It was nice to hear from so many of those retirees who were all for this name addition, as they all said to me that Bill really deserved this recognition for all the time and hard work he put in to start this branch, as well as keeping it going strong for all the years since he stepped aside as branch leader.

I know there are many new members who won't ever understand why we did this, but trust me when I say this, Bill was the reason this local has gotten the respect from our leaders in DC for all these years. I once again urge all current members who aren't really sure what this union is all about to go and watch the "Strike at 40" video, which shows all of those brothers and sisters who came before us to get us to where we are today. Bill was one of those local guys who led the charge in our area, and gave up a lot of his energy for all the members he was representing. I am sure many of you know of some of those members who are still with us who were part of that movement. I ask you to talk to those members and have them tell their story. My late father was one of those on the line as a local member of Branch 540, and I loved his stories. Take the time to ask.

Gary DiGiacomo, Branch 908

Southeast Pennsylvania Merged

Don't let them tell your story. Let's talk CCAs. It has been a struggle to train, retain and develop our next group of letter carriers. In fact, the retention rate has fallen to 20 percent. Some factors are that they are not interviewed anymore. They do not have to take the test. But to give up on them would be criminal of us. They represent us carriers. And if the more experienced carriers don't play more of a role in their development, who knows where this company will go.

But I'm a glass-half-full type of person. And to that end, there are many CCAs out there carrying on our legacy. One such carrier is Cristine Johnson from the Bala Post Office. She was going to be let go by her previous office for being "slow." So, her trainer at the carrier academy

(Beth Lloyd) talked to President Dillman about facilitating another chance for her. Les Dillman has given many other carriers second chances by facilitating transfers. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. But as of this writing, things are going well for Cristine at Bala.

On March 30, Cristine witnessed an accident on the route she was delivering. Upon arriving, she discovered a man unconscious. But she was the only one to respond. She called 911 and stayed until an ambulance arrived. The wife wrote a letter to the postmaster and stated that Cristine's actions saved his life.

So, call her "slow" or whatever you want. But be sure to call her a hero as well. And she is one example of many. Silly management will never get out of the mentality that we all have to be fast. The same haste causes more mistakes and only serves to negate our image as postal employees.

Eric Jackson, Branch 725

Springfield, Ohio

Obligation—"A course of action to which a person is bound by a promise or vow."

Responsibility—"Being accountable for something within one's management."

Every quarter we have the right to sign the overtime desired list (ODL), choosing the overtime we want to work—no overtime, overtime on route only, 10, or 12 hours in a day. Once you choose, you have obligated yourself to work whichever list you signed.

Management is responsible to make every effort to adhere to our chosen obligation by following Article 8 of our National Agreement.

The problem is that management plays favorites by allowing some carriers to refuse the overtime that they are entitled and obligated to perform. And when that occurs, carriers who don't want overtime are ordered to work overtime while the overtime carrier is not. So, how can an overtime carrier refuse overtime while a non-overtime carrier cannot?

The answer is, they can't. Article 8 explicitly states that all ODL carriers must work 12 hours before any non-ODL carrier is utilized off their route for overtime. Period.

The bottom line is that if you are making plans for a weekend getaway or there is an event you would like to attend on your day off, you should seriously consider getting off the overtime list.

Management has the responsibility to order you to work in lieu of a carrier not on the list.

Your union has the responsibility to protect all carriers by following the contract for both overtime and non-overtime carriers and will hold management responsible by filing grievances for violations. Choose your obligations wisely.

Branch meetings are the second Thursday of each month in Room 221. Pizza at 6:15 p.m. Meeting at 6:30 p.m. Show up. Listen. Ask questions. Knowledge is power.

Brian Gourilis, Branch 45

Toledo, Ohio

It's been a strange spring in northwest Ohio. One day we have a record snowfall for this late

in the year, and a week later, we set a record high temperature of 88 degrees. Those two extremes are not our normal spring.

We are slowly getting back to some sense of normal with our Formal A reps returning to the hall. There appears to be some movement from Labor Relations on the large backlog of grievances. It could just turn out to be wishful thinking.



Fort Collins, CO Br. 849 member Roger Cogburn was honored with a 60-year pin, along with a letter from NALC President Fredric V. Rolando.

Hiring of new employees continues to move at a snail's pace. Mail processing has improved somewhat. It's almost comical that the Postal Service is running a new commercial touting overnight and two-day priority shipping.

We are moving forward with plans for our Charles Cohen Golf Scrambles for MDA. We have scheduled the tournament for the last Sunday in June at the Chippewa Golf Club.

The Ohio State Association convention is scheduled for July 22-25 in downtown Cleveland.

The Ohio State Legislative Conference will be held in Washington, DC, Sept. 29-30.

With the pandemic curtailing almost all branch activities, we have found the organization to be in a substantially strong financial situation. The executive committee decided to pay off the mortgage, which reduced active members' dues by a dollar.

Hopefully, as the pandemic recedes, we can have a mortgage-burning celebration at the fully paid-for union hall.

Ray Bricker, Branch 100

Tri-Valley, California

Today I write to sing the praises of four of NALC's unsung heroes, the regional administrative assistants (RAAs) to our national business agent (NBA). NALC's Region 1 covers an immense geographical area, representing letter carriers in California, Nevada, Hawaii and Guam. NBA Bryant Almario relies on his top-notch staff of RAAs to keep the wheels of Region 1 spinning smoothly. These four RAAs are, in alphabetical order: Calvin Brookins, Jeff Frazee, James Henry and Allan Rios. All of them have been extremely helpful to me during my four years as president of our branch. I have

been privileged to testify in arbitrations advocated by three of these RAAs: Calvin Brookins, Jeff Frazee and James Henry. Although they advocate their cases with different styles and demeanors, they all have one thing in common—they come well-prepared and present their cases in a cool, calm and collected manner, often with victorious results. Although I have not yet seen Allan Rios in action as an arbitration advocate, I have heard he is an excellent one with a good record in arbitration like his counterparts. NBA Almario is blessed having such a great staff, and we can all rest assured knowing Region 1 is in good hands. A million thanks to all of you.

Congratulations to the 93 Branch 2902 CCAs converted to career status as PTFs on May 8. Although the life of a PTF is not perfect, at least as career letter carriers they can finally enjoy some of the benefits that have been lacking during their years as CCAs. Thankfully, our new contract has eliminated the provision prohibiting newly converted carriers from using annual leave for 90 days after conversion. If patience is a virtue, you long-suffering CCAs are all virtuous.

Ray Hill, Branch 2902

Western Massachusetts

The recent restructuring changes to the USPS introduced by PMG DeJoy are in the opinion of many folks, myself included, designed to erode confidence in the USPS and will chase mail volume *and revenue* away from the USPS. DeJoy wants to slow down first-class mail and charge more for it. Increasing prices while decreasing service and reliability is a recipe for disaster in any business—ours included.

One of the constants over the years has been the public's confidence in our ability to deliver for the American people in a timely and reliable manner. Anyone reading this knows that service has fallen off the cliff since DeJoy was hired.

With the "restructuring," DeJoy is consolidating authority and decision-making in the hands of a small number of people at headquarters. Dissent, second guessing and legitimate asking of questions, anemic now under feeble and myopic management will be non-existent. Orders and directives are likely to emanate out of L'Enfant Plaza that are harmful to the long-term future of the USPS and will blindly be carried out by clueless underlings. Does anyone think a 6 p.m. guarantee time is a good for our overnight business? Or if you can't attain your service standards, just lower them.

Prior to the restructuring, I was on a telecom with other union officials and district EAS personnel when the acting district manager informed us that the plant no longer reported to her and was not accountable to the district. That's being centralized in DC. We all know that our No. 1 problem is the failure of the plants to get the mail to carrier stations in a timely and reliable manner. Predictably, that's going to get worse than it already is—if that's possible. But hey—if you want to break the Post Office, start by breaking the plants.

Michael Harazmus, Branch 46

Auxiliary Update



Cythensis Lang
President

National Auxiliary Board

News and updates from the officers



Cynthia Martinez
Vice President



Crystal Bragg
Secretary



Linda Davis
Asst. Secretary



Pam Fore
Treasurer

From the Auxiliary Board

Greetings, union brothers and sisters. This month, we continue to celebrate 116 years of partnership with NALC.

In May, we listed many of our 50-plus-year members of the National Auxiliary, as well as the years of service of your national board members.

This month, we will list more of our members, ranging from two years to 51 years of membership. An asterisk denotes more than 50 years of membership.

The NALCA Board

116 years of partnership with NALC

Arizona

Aux. #377
Aux. #377

Chaeli Hoehn
Steven Martinez

Illinois

Aux. #21
Aux. #21
Aux. #153
Aux. #153

Ursula Bahlow
Patsy Canavan
Chris Barteck
Kathy Barteck

Aux. #313
Aux. #313
Aux. #153
Aux. #153
Aux. #153
Aux. #153

Louisiana

Aux. #1223
Aux. #1223

Virginia

Aux. #1200
Aux. #1200
Aux. #1200
Aux. #1200
Aux. #1200

Sallee Butzow
Stan Butzow
Norma Farris
Tamme King
Susan McKee
Brent Phillips
Angela Wheeler

Joyce Hickman
Patricia LaCaze

Jean Gaskin
Patricia Holman
Almatime Jackson
Marlene Little
Peggy Winston

Texas

Aux. #123
Aux. #1974

Burnie Miller
June Back*

Wisconsin

Aux. #436
Aux. #436
Aux. #436
Aux. #436
Aux. #436

Jackie Adams
James Kirby
Linda Kirby
Ed Salo
Suzette Salo

NALCA First Quarter Financial Report

The following report shows financial transactions from Jan. 1 through March 31, 2021.

Balance 1/1/21	\$3,403.40
Deposits	5,440.00
Total	\$ 8,843.40

Expenditures

Tax - FUTA	488.40
2021-22 bond insurance	339.00
Tax prep/tax return fees	130.00
Postage and supplies	202.87

Total disbursements	\$1,160.27
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Balance 3/31/21	\$7,683.13
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Submitted by Pamela Fore, Treasurer

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3532 W. Mauna Loa Lane
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3618 Hileman Drive S.
Lakeland, FL 33810
863-853-2113
sdprfore@aol.com



Include me in the fight for letter carrier rights

Sign me up as an Auxiliary member!

Branch No. _____ Branch City _____ Auxiliary No. _____

Name _____ Phone No. (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

I am a family member of NALC member _____ of Branch _____

Return form with membership fee of \$20 to a local Auxiliary member or mail to:

NALC Auxiliary
Crystal Bragg, Secretary
835 Westland Drive
Mt. Zion, IL 62549

Mutual Exchanges

AZ: Phoenix (9/00) to San Diego, North County area in California. Seeking mutual exchange with another city letter carrier. Looking to transfer ASAP. Robert, rgjohnson3124@gmail.com.

CA: Stockton (5/04) to Sparks/Reno, NV or surrounding area. Stockton is located in the San Joaquin Valley. It is centrally located: 2.5 hours to Tahoe, 1.25 hours to San Francisco and 1.5 hours to Napa Valley. Lots of OT available. Monica, 209-327-8375 (text) or monig8375@gmail.com.

CO: Denver (5/05) to Orlando, FL or surrounding areas. More than 20 bidding stations available in the metro and surrounding areas. Small to large offices to choose from. More than 300 days of sunshine, with all four seasons present. Regulars only. Friendly people and a strong union. A growing and thriving

city. Plenty of OT available. Looking to swap due to family reasons. Trinh, 303-594-3814.

FL: Fort Lauderdale (6/93) to Lynchburg, VA; Michigan City, IN or surrounding areas. Large office with OT. John, 561-329-0944 or jetorres01@yahoo.com.

FL: Pembroke Pines (7/05) to Bethel, Lawrenceville, Lilburn, GA or surrounding areas. Five bidding offices with OT. Great weather. Marsha, 954-548-6220 (text) or gw2success@gmail.com.

IL: Chicago (9/93) to Denver, CO area or Palm Springs, CA. Uptown Northside station. Great area. Citywide bidding available. Scott, 612-298-2245.

IL: Chicago (9/93) to Fort Lauderdale, FL or surrounding areas. Regular carriers only. Large office with lots of over-

time, if wanted. Northside of Chicago. 15 minutes from downtown. Great routes. Tanny, 773-742-1197 (text or call) or reena2@hotmail.com.

MD: Annapolis (5/05) to Middle River, Dundalk or Towson, MD. Trying to get closer to home. May be open to other surrounding offices. Quentin, 443-677-0697.

MA: Boston (1/17) to Miami, Hollywood, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Kissimmee, FL or surrounding areas. Large office in the city with lots of parking, two minutes away from public transportation. Lots of overtime if wanted. Need to move closer to family. Christina, 857-301-6955 (text or call) or usps2transfer2021@gmail.com.

NV: Las Vegas (5/18) to NC or SC. Regular carriers only. No state tax. Large bidding area. John, 970-405-9193 or jdp91665@skybeam.com.

NY: Long Island (10/13) to East or West Coast areas of Florida. Plenty of OT. Close to Queens and the Bronx. Carolina, 929-225-6335 or carolinadalton@aol.com.

NY: Oakdale (5/99) to Apex, NC or surrounding areas. Regular city carriers only. Good office and area with OT, if desired. Omar, 516-524-0179 or omarronero17@hotmail.com.

RI: Newport (8/16) to Denver/Boulder, CO or surrounding suburbs. Carry in beautiful Newport, RI. Enjoy the island life! High on the seniority list with a date of 2016. Friendly place to be. OT available if desired. Brandon, 401-318-4386 (text or call).

TN: Kingsport (12/19) to Suncoast District, FL. Large office with plenty of OT. Good work environment with great union/management rapport. Robert, 423-617-4327 or rjgerner4@gmail.com.

How to place a Mutual Exchange ad

The cost of Mutual Exchange ads is \$15 for up to 30 words and \$25 for 31-50 words per month.

Ads must be received by the 5th of the month preceding the month in which the ad will appear, e.g., June's deadline is for the July publication. Mail ad with check (payable to NALC) to: Mutual Exchange Ads, Postal Record, 100 Indiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001-2144.

Ads are published for NALC members only. A branch officer or steward must endorse the ad to cer-

tify membership. Ads without endorsements will be returned.

Include your name, address and branch number. Ads must be received in the same format and wording as they will appear in the magazine. Begin each ad with your state abbreviation, city and seniority date.

Ads should be typed in upper/lower case (or, if this is not possible, printed clearly) on a full sheet of 8.5 x 11" paper. Make certain the numerals 0 (zero) and 1 (one) can be distinguished from the letters O and l in

e-mail addresses.

Note: Specific route information or mention of three-way transfers will not be published, nor any wording that offers cash or property to facilitate an exchange. Mutual exchanges must be approved by both postmasters involved. Seniority of carriers involved shall be governed by Article 41, Sec. 2E of the National Agreement. Carriers may not exchange assignments, since vacated positions must be posted for bids in accordance with local and national agreements.

NALC offers deepest sympathies to the families and friends of departed brothers and sisters

La John W. Fannin	Br. 576	Phoenix, AZ
Robert D. Garrison	Br. 576	Phoenix, AZ
James B. Wleand	Br. 576	Phoenix, AZ
Albert G. Cutruzzula	Br. 231	Central California
Samuel Castro	Br. 1100	Garden Grove, CA
Pedro Larez	Br. 1100	Garden Grove, CA
Elizalde A. Quibuyen	Br. 1100	Garden Grove, CA
Ian M. Roxas	Br. 1100	Garden Grove, CA
Stanley L. Wrazen	Br. 1100	Garden Grove, CA
Danny Thai	Br. 1111	Greater E. Bay, CA
Robert A. Wilson III	Br. 1111	Greater E. Bay, CA
Juan J. Fuentes	Br. 2614	Hawthorne, CA
Milton Givens	Br. 24	Los Angeles, CA
William D. Morehouse	Br. 133	Sacramento, CA
Francisco T. Paiz	Br. 133	Sacramento, CA
Frank E. Rich	Br. 411	San Bernardino, CA
Richard J. Como	Br. 70	San Diego, CA
Michael D. Macke	Br. 70	San Diego, CA
Glen G. Awai	Br. 193	San Jose, CA
Edward L. Shockey	Br. 193	San Jose, CA
Patricia C. Munayer	Br. 1280	San Mateo, CA
Fe P. Ramos	Br. 1427	Santa Clara, CA
Walter G. Dudek	Br. 86	Hartford, CT
Faith E. Robinson	Br. 5192	Apopka, FL
David M. Crawford	Br. 2148	Sarasota, FL
Rodeisha Burnett	Br. 1071	South Florida
Douglas C. Carrington Jr.	Br. 1071	South Florida
Calvin L. Berry	Br. 1690	W. Palm Beach, FL
Raymond O. Burkett	Br. 998	Valdosta, GA
Kosto J. Ljubenko	Br. 11	Chicago, IL
Ellen Mcbath	Br. 1870	Downers Grove, IL
Sean R. Dungey	Br. 1151	Naperville, IL
Ralph L. Paul	Br. 31	Peoria, IL
Michael J. Beard	Br. 245	Rockford, IL
James F. Eminger	Br. 4016	S. Suburban Mgd., IL

William F. Mulcahy	Br. 4016	S. Suburban Mgd., IL
MCArthur Hayes	Br. 580	Hammond, IN
Jack C. Shulze	Br. 39	Indianapolis, IN
Eugene Tabb	Br. 373	Cedar Rapids, IA
Gerald G. Sealock	Br. 314	Council Bluffs, IA
Melvin D. Dale	Br. 1018	Manhattan, KS
Donald M. Boresow	Br. 5521	Shawnee Mission, KS
William D. Kraft	Br. 5521	Shawnee Mission, KS
Charles L. Tigerman	Br. 5521	Shawnee Mission, KS
Ronald T. Lee	Br. 124	New Orleans, LA
Warren R. Gilman	Br. 92	Maine Mgd.
Robert F. Perry	Br. 92	Maine Mgd.
Sae W. Park	Br. 176	Baltimore, MD
L. C. Frey Jr.	Br. 2961	Oakland, MD
Amanda Minkove	Br. 2611	Silver Spring, MD
David G. Cullen	Br. 34	Boston, MA
Paul D. Mccarthy	Br. 34	Boston, MA
A. R. Sebring Jr.	Br. 34	Boston, MA
Donald L. Talbot	Br. 25	MA Northeast Mgd.
Kenneth V. Beitz	Br. 256	Mid-Michigan
Alfred J. Litherland	Br. 256	Mid-Michigan
Bethia H. Taylor	Br. 256	Mid-Michigan
Anthony G. Bischof	Br. 3126	Royal Oak, MI
Katherine A. Lee	Br. 3126	Royal Oak, MI
John A. Matthews	Br. 3126	Royal Oak, MI
Matthew J. Hingston	Br. 74	Saginaw, MI
Robert D. Ladner Jr.	Br. 4374	South Macomb, MI
Richard D. Olson	Br. 9	Minneapolis, MN
Anthony B. Alme	Br. 28	St. Paul, MN
Thomas P. Garvey	Br. 28	St. Paul, MN
Robert N. Kossmeier	Br. 343	St. Louis, MO
Robert E. Williams	Br. 343	St. Louis, MO
Frank J. Stachowicz	Br. 67	Elizabeth, NJ
John R. Leonard	Br. 42	Jersey City, NJ
William T. Brumbaugh	Br. 38	New Jersey Mgd.
John M. Easdale	Br. 38	New Jersey Mgd.
Joseph T. Smith	Br. 38	New Jersey Mgd.
Joseph Curham	Br. 396	Plainfield, NJ
Edward F. O'Brien	Br. 29	Albany, NY
Warner Lea	Br. 41	Brooklyn, NY
Gilbert Morales	Br. 41	Brooklyn, NY
Edward W. Maguder	Br. 3	Buffalo-Western NY

In Memoriam

Anthony Marino	Br. 3	Buffalo-Western NY
Mike J. Shannon	Br. 3	Buffalo-Western NY
J. Powder	Br. 294	Flushing, NY
Bryan K. Dottavi	Br. 137	Hudson Valley Mgd., NY
Rebecca L. Santiago	Br. 137	Hudson Valley Mgd., NY
Bernard Schwartz	Br. 36	New York, NY
Carol Litteral	Br. 210	Rochester, NY
Joseph P. Sheehan	Br. 134	Syracuse, NY
Frank R. Tringali	Br. 693	Westchester Mgd., NY
Alvin K. Robinson	Br. 1512	Gastonia, NC
Douglas Bentley	Br. 43	Cincinnati, OH
James Baker	Br. 78	Columbus, OH
Richard W. Bell	Br. 3688	Willoughby, OH
Samuel E. Fleming	Br. 3688	Willoughby, OH
Dennis E. Myers Jr.	Br. 1358	Tulsa, OK
Pamela E. Carter-Butler	Br. 920	Bux-Mont, PA
James J. Dolan	Br. 157	Philadelphia, PA
Harry J. Flomenberg	Br. 157	Philadelphia, PA
John J. Sudyka	Br. 157	Philadelphia, PA
Henry J. Marini	Br. 84	Pittsburgh, PA
John W. Mejasic	Br. 84	Pittsburgh, PA
Joseph J. Buono	Br. 258	Reading, PA
Joseph Cunha	Br. 15	Providence, RI
Bryan Daniels	Br. 15	Providence, RI
Joseph Palmieri	Br. 15	Providence, RI
Thomas Plunkett	Br. 15	Providence, RI
Normand Salois Jr.	Br. 15	Providence, RI
Ralph E. Gannaway	Br. 62	Chattanooga, TN
Walter L. Peggs	Br. 27	Memphis, TN
David G. Beadle	Br. 4	Nashville, TN
Guillermo Madrid Jr.	Br. 505	El Paso, TX
Jose J. Montoya	Br. 505	El Paso, TX
Willie M. Aguilera	Br. 4065	Garland, TX
Peter C. Fornell	Br. 283	Houston, TX
Don A. Sproles	Br. 4240	Irving, TX
D. F. Sweeney II	Br. 524	Roanoke, VA
Kenneth A. Wagner	Br. 1104	Vancouver, WA
Raymond M. Gay	Br. 852	Yakima, WA
Edward A. Fritsch	Br. 102	Sheboygan, WI
James L. Herber	Br. 102	Sheboygan, WI
Merwyn C. Tetzlaff	Br. 102	Sheboygan, WI

Michael W. Backus and David Bammes were erroneously listed as deceased in a previous issue of *The Postal Record*. We regret the errors and apologize for any problems they may have caused.

Help your NALC family affected by natural disasters

The **NALC Disaster Relief Foundation** provides hands-on relief for carriers affected by natural disasters, such as wildfires, hurricanes, floods and tornados. It receives donations to be used to assist regular NALC members affected by natural disasters.

NALC response teams throughout the country are activated to go to disaster locations and offer assistance to NALC members and their families who live in the same household. Basic supplies, including uniforms and food, are available for those who need assistance.

Financial support may be available depending on the availability of funding and qualifying criterias. Any regular member of NALC who has faced hardship as a result of a natural disaster will be able to apply for assistance.

Make a donation by sending a check or money order to:

**NALC Disaster Relief Foundation
100 Indiana Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20001-2144**

The foundation is a 501(c)(3). Your contribution to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation may be eligible for a tax deduction. It is recommended you seek further advice from your tax advisor.



**NALC
Disaster
Relief
Foundation**