

Now that you are retired



**Dan
Toth**

The most common time to retire is at the end of the year. So, each January we tend to have a large number of fresh retirees starting a new phase of their lives. This article will cover some of the resources available to help retirees on their new journey.

Retirees who receive notice from the Postal Service regarding an alleged debt should be sure to act quickly. In accordance with Memorandum of Understanding Re: Debts of Retired Employees (page 217 of the National Agreement), the retiree may initiate a grievance through the local branch of their former employing office. Retirees who are not sure

whether the amount, or the debt itself, is valid, should contact their local branch immediately upon receiving notice.

Another time-sensitive issue involves maintaining your NALC membership by completing Form 1189 Dues Check-off Provision. National per capita dues for retirees are only \$7 annually. Some state associations and some branches charge additional dues. NALC Headquarters mails all recently retired members a packet that includes Form 1189 when NALC is notified by the Postal Service of a retirement. If you haven't received or need Form 1189, ask your branch or your national business agent, or call the Headquarters switchboard at 202-393-4695. Be sure to include your Civil Service Active (CSA) number when completing the form.

Cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) are based on the difference of the average monthly consumer price index for urban wage earners and clerical workers (CPI-W) during the third quarter (July through September) of the current calendar year and the third quarter of the previous year. The COLA becomes effective in December and appears in the January payment. All Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuitants receive COLAs, but Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuitants under the age of 62 do not (exceptions for disability and survivor annuitants). Projections of the COLAs, based on the latest CPI-W, can be found at nalc.org and several times a year in *The Postal Record*.

Once you've received your CSA number from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), you can access your account through Services Online. This OPM website allows you to perform a few functions, such as reviewing your payments, updating your bank account, modifying tax withholding, and viewing tax documents.

Each year you'll receive Form 1099-R from OPM, which is a tax form used to detail distributions from pensions. OPM will mail out the 1099-R to all annuitants by Jan. 31 for the preceding year. You may not receive it until mid-February, according to OPM. Typically, the form is ready and available for viewing online starting the third week of January.

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) launched a new version of its user portal in 2022. By setting up and accessing your account, you can view your investments, complete forms and sign electronically, as well as manage withdrawals and distributions. If you're always on the go or would rather take care of business from your smartphone, it also offers a TSP mobile app.

When approaching age 65, or if older and just retired, it's time to consider your Medicare options. Remember that Part B has a late enrollment penalty that generally becomes cost prohibitive if you let it accrue. Choosing from your health care options can be complex and will depend on which health insurance plan you are enrolled in, and its interaction with Medicare.

Each person will have to make their own decision by weighing the costs, benefits and individual circumstances. An average of 80 percent of postal annuitants elect to enroll in Part B. Those who retire in 2025 or later and are under age 64 as of Jan. 1, 2025, will be required to enroll in Parts A and B when eligible if maintaining their Federal Employees Health Benefits Program coverage.

Want to learn more about a particular topic? Head over to the Retirement page under "Workplace Issues" at nalc.org and you can find more than 10 years of retirement columns covering a variety of topics, as well as other resources and information to answer all your questions. And as always, retirees and future retirees should feel free to reach out to my office with suggestions for columns.

Need direct assistance? The NALC Retirement Department is here to help our members with answers to and guidance on all retirement-related issues. The department is fortunate to be staffed by knowledgeable professionals, Assistant to the President for Retirement Nina Kunkel and secretary Cheryl Pugh. They, along with myself, are here to help you. You can reach us by calling 800-424-5186 (toll free) Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon and 2 to 4 p.m. (Eastern times), or by calling the NALC Headquarters switchboard at 202-393-4695 Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern time) and asking for the Retirement Department. And most importantly, be sure to enjoy your retirement!