

## Wounded Warriors Leave rights

**W**ounded Warriors Leave (WWL) is a category of leave, distinct and separate from earned sick and annual leave. It was created in response to the passage of the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015. WWL is provided specifically for eligible employees to undergo medical treatment for a military service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more.

This additional category of paid leave is an important benefit for disabled veterans eligible to receive it. Disabled veterans generally have a need to attend regular medical appointments to maintain their health and to continue their eligibility to receive their veterans' benefits. Frequently, it is unavoidable that such appointments must be scheduled during normal work hours, and before the creation of WWL, letter carriers were often required to use leave without pay (LWOP) or their earned sick leave to attend those appointments. WWL provides some relief, in the form of 104 hours, credited annually, to those who are eligible and need to receive medical treatment.

It is an employee's responsibility to notify the Postal Service of their eligibility before requesting WWL. Employees must provide documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that they have a qualifying service-connected disability. Eligible letter carriers who have not yet submitted the necessary paperwork should do so as soon as possible to avoid any delays.

The eligibility requirements, as outlined in USPS Management Instruction EL-510-2019-2 (M-01901 in NALC's Materials Reference System), are as follows:

### Eligibility

#### Eligible Employees

*All employees who have a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more are eligible for Wounded Warriors Leave.*

#### Employees with Pending Disability Determinations

*Otherwise eligible employees with pending disability determinations who at any time during any Leave Year receive a 30 percent or more disability rating, will be eligible for leave retroactively to the first day of that current Leave Year. Any leave without pay (LWOP) or leave used while the determination is pending will be reimbursed and replaced with Wounded Warriors Leave, as appropriate, up to the maximum number of hours allowed. Wounded Warriors Leave may be retroactively applied for only the most current Leave Year and for no more than 104 hours.*

#### Losing the Disability Rating

*If an employee's service-connected disability rating is decreased to below 30 percent or discontinued during any Leave Year then the employee no longer has a qualifying service-connected disability. The employee must notify the HR Shared Service Center of the effective date of the change in the disability rating. The employee is no longer eligible for Wounded Warriors Leave as of the effective date of the rating change.*

Confirmation of eligibility to receive WWL can be found on the carrier's PS Form 50, Notice of Personnel Action. In Box 11 on their PS Form 50, it should indicate "6-1opt-Comp over 30%." If Box 11 does not denote "6-1opt-Comp over 30%," the employee will need to



submit the necessary documentation to certify that they meet the 30 percent eligibility requirement.

When possible, eligible carriers are required to request this leave in advance by completing and submitting to their supervisor a PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence. The supervisor is responsible for approving or disapproving requests by signing PS Form 3971 and returning a copy to the employee. In addition, to verify that any WWL requested by an employee is appropriately used for the treatment of a service-connected disability, the requesting employee must provide proof from a health care provider that the employee used the leave to receive treatment for a covered disability.

The Postal Service created a form to be used for this verification, PS Form 5980, Treatment Verification for Wounded Warriors Leave. The employee should designate the reason for the absence as "Other" on PS Form 3971 and write "Wounded Warriors Leave" in the space provided.

Should the need to use this leave be unforeseeable, the employee must notify the supervisor of the expected duration of the absence and the applicability of WWL. Carriers may use the Enterprise

Leave Request Application (eLRA) to request unscheduled WWL, accessible online via LiteBlue at [liteblue.usps.gov](http://liteblue.usps.gov). Employees also may use the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to report absences if this process is used in their employing office. A PS Form 3971 is required upon returning to work and a PS Form 5980 no later than 15 calendar days after returning.

Employees eligible for WWL also may be eligible for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—see Section 515 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual* for more information and eligibility requirements. Supervisors will initiate FMLA leave if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the leave might qualify. FMLA protection does not create any additional accrual of leave time; FMLA runs concurrently with the WWL. It is the employee’s responsibility to provide complete and sufficient documentation to establish eligibility for FMLA.

Newly hired eligible employees or those returning to the Postal Service will be credited with 104 hours of WWL following the Postal Service’s

receipt of documentation supporting the employee’s eligibility. WWL will be available for use retroactively to the first day of their enter-on-duty date, or the current leave year, whichever is later, for use through the end of the leave year. As long as the employee remains eligible, they will be credited with 104 hours of WWL on the first day of each leave year and the leave will be available for use until the last day of the leave year.

No employee may accrue more than 104 hours of WWL each year and it must be used during the leave year in which it is credited and will not be carried over. If the employee leaves the Postal Service at any time during any leave year, any remaining leave will not be reinstated or paid out, except as permitted by OPM regulations if the employee transfers to another federal agency.

Information regarding the rules and regulations of WWL is available on the NALC website, [nalc.org](http://nalc.org), and can be found on the NALC Veterans, Contract Administration Unit and City Delivery pages. PS Form 5980

can be found on those pages as well. After reviewing those guidelines, if you have any further questions about WWL, make sure to discuss them with your shop steward or a branch officer.

**NALC Member App**

Available for free in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store

## 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 your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at [nalc.org/veterans](http://nalc.org/veterans).



You continue to serve your country—  
**THANK YOU!**

## NALC Veterans Group

Complete this form and mail it to:  
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,  
100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
NALC BRANCH NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ BRANCH OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

I BELONG TO THE FOLLOWING VETERAN GROUP(S):

AMERICAN LEGION  DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS  VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
 OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**Free**  
to join