A busy time for health benefits

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As you read this month's magazine, we are on the doorstep of another Open Season for health benefits. This period of time gives all NALC members the opportunity to select the health benefit plan that is best for them and their families. If you are not currently a member of the NALC Health Benefit Plan, I guarantee nearly all of you that we offer a plan that is best for you and your family.

As Director of Health Benefits Stephanie Stewart writes in this month's *Postal Record*, the NALC Health Benefit Plan is built by letter carriers and run by letter carriers. Our Plan exists to provide the best health benefits at the most affordable cost to NALC members. Under Stephanie's leadership, around 300 dedicated employees work at the Plan to serve you, the members of NALC, on a daily basis. The level of customer service they provide is unmatched. Their work for our members is emblematic of the spirit of service and solidarity that makes our union and our Health Benefit Plan strong.

If you are not a member of our Plan, I strongly encourage you to take a close look at it this open season. No other plan offers our level of coverage, vast provider network and affordability. Add in the highest quality customer service and a central focus on serving NALC members, and you have the best option for health care available.

If you're a retired member and are currently enrolled in Medicare Part B, we also offer a Medicare Advantage Plan that may suit your needs and save you a significant amount of money through rebates to help offset the monthly cost of your Medicare premium. For information on all that the NALC Health Benefit Plan offers, please see the insert included in this month's magazine, and of course, you may always call customer service at the Plan at 888-636-NALC (6252) for answers to all your questions.

In addition to this Open Season, NALC Headquarters as well as the NALC Health Benefit Plan are hard at work with both the Postal Service and the Office of Personnel Management leadership on the implementation of the provisions of the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 that was signed into law by President Biden in April 2022.

Let's start with the impact of the bill and the reason it was needed. Back in 2006, a bill called the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act became law and required the Postal Service to pre-fund future retiree health benefits—a requirement that cost the Postal Service $5 billion to $6 billion each year. No other public or private company was mandated to make such a payment. This requirement was responsible for nearly 90 percent of the Postal Service's financial losses over the last decade-plus.

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The Postal Reform Act of 2022 repealed this pre-funding mandate and also integrates Medicare with postal retirees' health care at a much higher level, which results in a positive impact on health care premiums. The cost of premiums is shared by the Postal Service and the employee or retiree, so integrating Medicare at a higher level saves both the Postal Service and us money.

Our members have many questions about the timing of when and how this integration will take place. The provisions of this bill will begin to be implemented in calendar year 2024. There is nothing required of anyone during the current Open Season. There will be detailed information and education materials readily available to our members in future editions of this magazine, on the NALC website, and more.

If you are interested in learning more, please check out the NALC's official podcast, "You Are the Current Resident." It is available anywhere you listen to podcasts. On a recent episode, Director of Health Benefits Stephanie Stewart joined the podcast, where we discussed the benefits for 2024 and the impact of the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 in detail.