

## 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.

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.

For career employees, items can be sent by mail to USPS/HRSSC, Attn: RTR Tram, P.O. Box 970100, Greensboro, NC 27497-0100, or by fax to 650-577-4324.

For non-career employees, items can be sent by mail to USPS/HRSSC, Attn: Form 50 Team, P.O. Box 970400, Greensboro, NC 27497-0400, or by fax to 339-662-4073.

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 "6-10pt-Comp over 30%." If Box 11 does not denote "6-10pt-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 healthcare 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 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 is 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.

## Veteran profile: Paul Trzeciak

**A**t 102 years old, Baltimore, MD Branch 176’s Paul Trzeciak has led a long life of service to his country and community.

Right after high school in 1941—the same year the United States officially entered World War II—Trzeciak got a job with the Post Office in Baltimore County. Almost immediately upon starting the job, Trzeciak became a member of NALC. He worked as a letter carrier until 1943, when he was drafted by the Army.

His time in the Army got off on a rough start. Ruminating on an experience he had in basic training, he called his military experience strict. “Out of all those troops, my rifle got

a piece of dust down into it, and they gigged me, which meant I did not get a weekend pass to go home. That was really heartbreaking,” he said.

Once through basic training, Trzeciak hoped he could continue with something mail-related in the Army, but due to the lack of postal positions available at the time, he was assigned to be an on-call driver for military officers, chauffeuring them at any hour of the day.

Despite the strictness of the Army, he noted that he generally had a good experience and “had it easier” than many others due to his assignment.

His military service took him to both theaters of the war, European



Trzeciak in the Army during World War II

## Veteran profile: Paul Trzeciak (continued)

and Pacific. He was first stationed in France for about two years, then in Japan for less than a year.

A memorable experience for Trzeciak was riding in a ship while traveling to Okinawa that was commanded by former heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey.

He missed home, but stayed out of trouble, saying, “There were no kind of problems, because I never drank and didn’t smoke. I wanted to get home, that’s all.”

He recalled meeting a Polish woman in France who he planned to marry after the war, but upon his return in 1946 to the Baltimore area, he met his neighbor who ended up being his wife of 70 years. They had three children: Ricky, who died about 15 years ago, and Autumn and Tom, who are both now in their 70s.

When he returned, he went back to his job as a letter carrier. For about 29 years he worked delivering mail to his community, retiring in 1972 at the age of 48. He enjoyed being a letter carrier and was grateful to be outside as opposed to being “cooped up” in an office. Walking

about 5 miles a day as a carrier, he believes his career choice has contributed to his long life.

He remembers getting to know the people and animals that made his route interesting. “I knew mostly everybody,” he said.

Trzeciak remembered fondly how a dog who regularly followed him while he delivered mail once came to his house and barked at him. “He wanted me to go to work,” he said.

He partially attributes his long life to staying active even after retirement. Since retiring from the Postal Service, Trzeciak has not slowed down. He had a brief stint in real estate. Then, for years, he operated several storefront resale shops called “Paul’s Sales,” until he downsized to “Paul’s Corner” at the Joppa Grand Market flea market in Joppa, MD, where he still works several days a week. There he sells furniture, jewelry, tools, records, DVDs, antiques and collectibles with the help of his elderly children, saying, “If we don’t have it, you don’t need it.”



Now 102, the retired carrier currently sells at a flea market in Maryland.

### 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