

The Twig of the Branch



Branch 1477 West Coast Florida Letter Carriers



Serving:

**St. Petersburg — Largo — Dunedin — Pinellas Park — Indian Rocks Beach
Punta Gorda — Englewood — Bradenton Beach — Palmetto — Ellenton**

VOLUME 643

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

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Relocating

There are always calls to the hall for advice on how to transfer to another Craft, City or State. Below is a compilation of a number of resources explaining transfer requests.

Transferring Outside the Installation

Career Letter Carriers desiring to transfer to another installation have two options for submitting their request for a voluntary reassignment. Regardless of the option you choose, the request will be entered in eReassign, the automated system used by the Postal Service to administer transfer requests. eReassign may be accessed online at liteblue.usps.gov, through the Postal Service intranet for employees with computer access at work, or through the self-serve kiosks located in some postal facilities.

The first option is for an employee to submit a written request to human resources (HR) in the installation where the desired location is to transfer. It is recommended to keep a written record of the request. In addition, HR is required to provide the employee with written confirmation of the request.

The second option is to submit the request through eReassign, using one of the options listed above; however, most Letter Carriers will use LiteBlue for their submission. Accessing eReassign requires the employee to log in again using their EIN and password. It is important that your pin and passwords are

NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

updated well in advance to your attempts to eReassign. After logging in, employees can submit a request if they know the installation and craft into which they want to transfer. If they do not know which craft positions are employed in offices where they hope to work, eReassign allows them to search by city or state. Even though an office may have Letter Carrier craft employees, a vacant position may not be available at the time of the request. Employees still should request a transfer to the installation, because when a position does become available, all individuals who request transfer into that installation will be considered in the order in which the requests are made. Employees may submit an unlimited number of transfer requests; however, each request expires one year from the date of submission. If a request is placed in review in eReassign because transfers are being considered to fill a vacancy, it will automatically be extended for one year. If the request is never in review, the employee is responsible for renewing the request, which may be done up to 90 days prior to the expiration date. If an employee fails to renew the request, any new requests will be placed in order based on the date of the new submission. This could result in their missing out on a transfer opportunity that they would have otherwise been offered. Career Letter Carriers who wish to transfer to another craft within the installation where they are currently employed must submit a written request to the installation head. As stated above, the employee should keep a copy of his or her request. These types of requests are not entered in eReassign; therefore, there is no need for the employee to renew the request on a yearly basis. Requests to transfer to another craft are filled based on the contract covering the requested craft. ¹

The National Agreement includes:

In evaluating transfer requests managers will give full consideration to the work, attendance, and safety records of all employees who are considered for reassignment. However, local managers may not add additional criteria for accepting transfer requests. For example, a policy of only accepting transfer requests from within the district would be a violation of the memorandum.

Employees who accept the opportunity to transfer into an installation with Part Time Flexible Carriers (PTF) will report to the gaining installation as a PTF and begin a new period of seniority. ²

Evaluations must be fair, valid, and to the point, with unsatisfactory work records accurately documented. They must be based upon an examination of the totality of an employee's individual work record. Evaluations based on the application of arbitrary standards such as a defined minimum sick leave balance do not meet this standard.

If a request is denied contact your Steward for assistance.

Within the Installation

When Letter Carriers want to transfer to another craft within the installation, there is only one option for submitting the request. These requests must be submitted in writing to the installation head, usually the Postmaster of the city. These requests will not be entered in eReassign, so the employee should sign and date the request and keep a copy for the records in case there are any questions about when the request was submitted. Since these requests are not entered into eReassign, there is no requirement to renew them each year. Like requests to transfer to another installation, requests to reassign to another craft within the installation are considered in order, based on the date they are submitted.

Mutual Trade

The Postal Record includes an opportunity to mutually trade with another member in another geographic area.

How to place a Mutual Exchange

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.

Ads are published for NALC members only. A Branch Officer or Steward must endorse the ad to certify membership. Include your name, address, and branch number. Begin each ad with your state abbreviation, city and seniority date.

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

¹ Contract Talk, Postal Record

² M-01947

posted for bids in accordance with local and national agreements.

Carriers reporting to an installation after a mutual trade will assume the seniority of the junior Carrier making the trade.

City Carrier Assistant Transfers

CCAs may request a transfer from a current position/installation by completing a CCA Flexible Workforce Request for Voluntary Transfer form. This form is used for transfers within the USPS Florida 2 District. It only requires the gaining installation have compliment approval to transfer a CCA. The form requires signatures by both the gaining and losing installation head. CCAs voluntary reassigning in this manner will begin a new period of Relative Standing.



Hubble's Troubles

*By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble*

The Letter Carrier Uniform, Annual Allowance... and Tort Claims

Over decades, the Postal Service has established a high level of confidence with the American public and has consistently been rated the most trusted federal agency. City Letter Carriers, in their familiar blue uniforms, are the public face of USPS. People recognize the USPS brand and feel at ease when they see their Letter Carrier wearing the familiar uniform.

Besides brand recognition, the City Carrier uniform serves several other purposes. Uniforms provide immediate visual identification to the public, which makes the job safer when Carriers are going down streets, up to houses, and into businesses. Uniforms provide protection from the elements while delivering mail outdoors for hours a day. In addition, uniforms project a neat and professional appearance that customers associate with the outstanding service provided by Letter Carriers.

Over the years, NALC has negotiated numerous contractual provisions related to uniforms. Since

it is a requirement that eligible Letter Carriers wear postal uniforms, it was established that the Postal Service must provide eligible Letter Carriers with the resources to acquire them. Article 26 of the National Agreement states that all employees who are required to wear uniforms or work clothes shall be furnished uniforms or work clothes or shall be reimbursed for purchases of authorized items from licensed vendors.

Understanding how the uniform program works can be confusing for newly hired Letter Carriers. It is important to know when a new employee becomes eligible for his or her uniform allowance, how much that allowance will be and how it will be provided, and the ways in which uniforms can be purchased. The uniform program varies depending on the employee's status at the time he or she becomes eligible to receive a uniform allowance. Whether the employee is a City Carrier Assistant (CCA) or career employee can affect how the employee receives the allowance and how items are purchased.

CCAs are eligible to receive their uniform allowance upon completion of whichever of the following two comes first: either 90 workdays or 120 calendar days of employment. The date they become eligible becomes their uniform anniversary date. This anniversary date is maintained for the duration of their career, even after converting to career status, and becomes the date each year they receive their next uniform allowance.

Within 14 days of the eligibility date for receiving a uniform allowance, newly eligible employees should be provided with a letter of authorization—more commonly referred to as a voucher—from their local management, to purchase uniforms. Once the form is completed, they may take the letter of authorization to USPS-authorized vendors to purchase uniform items. Uniform allowances may be used only to buy items from authorized USPS vendors. A list of USPS authorized vendors can be found on the LiteBlue website at liteblue.usps.gov. Click on the "My HR" section and then the "Uniform Program" link. From this section, click on the "Licensed Uniform Vendors" link.

Effective May 21, 2022, the annual uniform allowance for all eligible letter carriers is \$499. After a CCA converts to career status, he or she will receive a one-time additional credit on the next uniform anniversary date. Effective May 21, 2022, this one-time additional credit is \$116.

Unfortunately, uniform prices are on the rise.

Uniform manufacturers and vendors cite several reasons for higher prices, including increases in the cost of materials, labor, utilities, and shipping.

As for footwear however, exceptions to the certified footwear program may be granted, when appropriate (e.g., medical reasons, very unusual sizing restrictions), under the following guidelines as provided in the Employees Labor Manual (ELM) 939:

- a. Employees must submit their request for exception, in writing (with appropriate supporting documentation), to the district Human Resources manager. The employee's request, whether approved or not, must be filed in his uniform folder.
- b. When authorization is granted to purchase footwear from other than a Postal Service vendor, employees must present an itemized invoice to the uniform clerk at their facility. Invoices must include the name of the employee; the name of the firm from which the purchase was made; the date of purchase; the post office finance number; the employee's anniversary date; the employee's Social Security number; an itemized description of the items purchased including size and color; and a statement by the employee certifying that the items listed were actually purchased.
- c. Installations process the purchase in the same manner as a vendor invoice except that 81886 is used for the vendor number. This provides payment to the employee.

The wearing of the cap is mandatory for (a) Casual employees, (b) new employees who are not required to wear a uniform during the first 90 days of their employment, and (c) all other employees who are authorized only a cap as a means of identifying them with the Postal Service. No substitute headgear may be worn by these employees.

Those employees required to wear the uniform cap are reimbursed from uniform allowance funds for the cap (see F-1, Post Office Accounting Procedures, 756).

Only caps may be used as promotional items for uniformed employees, and they may be used only to promote Postal Service products or services. Designs must be consistent with the overall appearance of the uniform and must not contain

extraneous decoration.

New City Carriers who have questions about the uniform program, or who have met the eligibility requirements but have not received their letter of authorization or purchasing card to buy uniform items, should contact their NALC Shop Steward or a Branch Officer. For more information about uniform allowances and the purchasing process, visit the "New Member Resources" section of the NALC website at nalc.org/member-benefits/newmember-resources.



Article 27 Employee Claims JCAM page 27-1 provides:

Subject to a **\$60** minimum, an employee may file a claim within fourteen (14) days of the date of loss or damage and be reimbursed for loss or damage to his/her "personal property" except for motor vehicles and the contents thereof taking into consideration depreciation where the loss or damage was suffered in connection with or incident to the employee's employment while on duty or while on postal premises.

Personal Property includes cash, jewelry, clothing and Carrier uniforms as well as other items that are worn or otherwise brought to work.

"Normal wear and tear" are that damage that occurs during the normal course of working and day-to-day living. In C-02111, the arbitrator concluded that damage done to an employee's shirt by a customer's package **"was not ordinary wear and tear"**.

In C-04462, where five (5") pairs of trousers were damaged due to the employee's vehicle seat, the arbitrator ruled that this damage, all occurring in the same area, could not constitute ordinary wear and tear and upheld the claim.

Claims should be documented, if possible, and submitted with recommendations by the Union Steward to the Employer at the local level. The Employer will submit the claim, with the Employer's and the Steward's recommendation, within 15 days, to the Step B Team for determination.

PS Form 2146, Employee's Claim for Personal

Property, is filed to document a claim. However, any written document may be treated as a proper claim if it provides substantiating information. Claims should be supported with evidence such as a sales receipt, a statement from the seller showing the price and date of purchase, or a statement from the seller concerning replacement value.

Minutes of August 10, 2023 Membership Meeting



**Recording/Financial
Secretary**
Ken Grasso

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by President Joe Henschen.

Invocation by Greg Welsh.

Pledge of Allegiance: led by President Joe Henschen.

Minutes of previous meeting: Motion to accept the previous month's minutes as printed in the Twig by Terry Johnson, seconded by Javier Urrutia. Motion passes.

Application of New Members: by Ken Grasso—

- Slone Beckelheimer—Largo
- Brian Thompson—Pinellas Park
- Nichola Noce—Pinellas Park
- Ryan Wizniak—St. Petersburg
- Anthony Klim—Pinellas Park
- Kristi Nauertz—Dunedin
- Raphael Jovane—St. Petersburg
- Vincenzo Manzano—St. Petersburg
- Shauna Glasgow—St. Petersburg
- Scott McGinnis—Largo

Branch by the Numbers: As of PP 15 the Dues Roster has 823 Active Members with 792 paying dues, 3 are on Military Leave, 9 paying direct, with 19 on LWOP. Retirees 567 (90 Gold Cards). 1388 Total Members.

I would like to welcome Caleigh Collins of Absolute Quality Interpreting Services.

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio—Check book balances and total investments were read by President Henschen. Treasurer Chuck Cavicchio spoke about cashing in some CDs and taking some money from Auto, Convention, Leave Accounts and getting 1 CD worth \$174,000 at a rate of 4.49%. Motion to accept the Report of the Treasurer and send to the trustees for audit by O. D Elliott, seconded by Eric Short. Motion passes.

Director of Retiree Affairs: O. D. Elliott—Recently Retirees have received a brochure about Insurance regarding the Postal Reform Act of 2022. Discussed the provisions and how it applies to Retirees and those employees in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan. It becomes effective January 1, 2025.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips—Open Season opens on November 13 through December 11 of this year. Federal Dental and Vision Plans are also available and separate from your health insurance.

Trustee Report: Brian Andrews—Books for June and July were audited and are in order.

Vice President Report: Greg Welsh—Did a mock demonstration of how a supervisor goes around to see if Carriers need a 3996. Your handbooks dictate how you should answer your supervisor's questions.

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—In the month of June our Stewards filed 41 grievances: 19—Article 16 (Discipline), 16—Article 8 (hours of work), 3—Article 41 (Letter Carrier Craft), 2—Article 17/31 (Steward Time/Information), 1—Article 10 (Leave), 1—Article 1 (Union Recognition), 1—Article 21 (Limited Duty), 1—Article 19 (Handbook and Manuals) 16 of the above grievances were settled at Informal A, 23 were settled at Formal A and 9 appealed to Step B. 4 of the Step B were Letter of Warnings and all were thrown out. 1 Emergency Placement was remanded by Step B for more information then appealed back to Step B and then thrown out and grievant made whole. 1 was pulled back at the request of the Union and resolved locally and 3 of the Step B appeals were impasse and scheduled for Arbitration. This same period last year there were 5,000 Step B grievances were met on. Currently there are over 12,000 Nationwide at Step B.

**Welfare Reports:
Sad:**

- A.J. Pollard, Carrier St. Pete Main—Mother

passed away.

- Tom Phillips, Carrier Gateway—Ex-wife going through some health issues.
- Peter Kehr, Retiree St. Pete—Passed away.
- Scott Glemin, Carrier Largo—Passed away.
- Debra Castro, Carrier St. Pete—Underwent surgery.
- Tom Phillips, Director of Insurance—Was hospitalized.
- Dale Krout, Retiree St. Pete—Passed away.
- Ed Sax, Retiree Largo—Passed away.

O. D. Elliott asked for the members to have a moment of silence for AFL-CIO President Mike Williams who passed away and all the Letter Carriers that have passed away.

Glad:

- Anthony Randazzo, Carrier Largo—Has a new son, which means his father, John Randazzo, Carrier Crossroads—has a new Grandson.
- Ken Grasso, Financial/Recording Secretary—Grandson Evan graduated from Fla. State Univ. with a degree in Medical and Human Sciences.
- Mike Rich, Carrier Largo—Got married.

Promotion to PTF

Adam Obando St. Petersburg
Lynn VanMeter St. Petersburg

Presidents Report:

August 24-26, 2023—FSALC Convention/Training in Naples, Florida. Next Thursday August 17, 2023 following the Stewards meeting we will be having a delegates meeting to discuss the training topics and convention business. This will be on Zoom and in person.

The Executive Board has been discussing the need to develop standard processes in the office. This brings us to our Grievance Tracking Program EZ Office. Purchased in 2002. Program ran on Microsoft XP and by Windows Vista in 2007. This program is not compatible with any Microsoft platforms. For several years we kept the XP program and tower isolated to network access with the use of a switch. We had some issues and we hired Software by Design USA. In about 2018, 2019 the owner Gil Ribal started to rebuild the EZ Office program and worked on it off and on for 5 years. In February 2022 he came to us to tell us there was no way to move the information into Microsoft Access which was the current program and returned \$9500 to the Branch for payments we made for billable

hours.

We reviewed a web based custom program called Grievance Manager being used by two branches. This program is customized for the NALC DRT Process. We have a trial demo being looked at for 30 days to see if we can adapt to this system. The cost to buy is \$10,000 and \$90 per month. This program will help us on the time it takes to process data and make our Grievance Program up to date.

The Executive Board recommends that we purchase the Grievance Manager Program for a cost of \$10,000. Motion made by A.J. Pollard and seconded by Anthony Roger. Executive Vice President Chris Hubble spoke about the program and the workings of how it would benefit the Branch. Voting took place and the motion passed.

I have been reporting at least 1 heat illness issue per week, some have been hospitalized. If you hear or know someone that is having issues with the heat, tell them to notify their supervisor through rims, take a break and get into the AC. If you are questioned about being late tell them I sent you a message. I had to take an extra break because of the heat.

I had a vehicle accident with the branch car in August 2022, just before the National Convention. Eight months later in April 2023, I received a summons that Branch 1477 and myself are being cited in a lawsuit. I have contacted a local lawyer and got advice from him, and he said to call your insurance company which is State Farm. They are gathering some attorneys for both the Branch and myself. I received some requests for information recently and sent that in.

Door Prize Drawing:

Lotto – Scratch Off Ticket
Winner: Joe Henschen

<p style="text-align: center;">**** Sad News****</p> <p>James “Gator” Kilgore, Carrier Dunedin for over 30 years—Passed away.</p> <p>Cindy Deakins, Carrier Crossroads—Mother passed away.</p>



Retiree Update

By Director of Retiree Affairs,
O.D. Elliott

Postal Service Health Benefits

Recently, Postal Retirees received a pamphlet entitled "Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB): For Annuitants." Some contacted me with concerns about their Health Benefits. They wanted to know if they would be able to retain the Plan they were in, if they would be required to take Medicare Part B and if the family members under their plan would be required to take Medicare Part B.

The PSHB came about as part of the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 (PSRA). (Note: This was the Act that ended the Postal Service's required yearly payments of \$5 Billion to prefund the Health Benefits of Retirees 75 years into the future.)

Under this law, the USPS and OPM were required to implement a new Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program. This is a new, separate program within the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program and will be administered by OPM. Coverage under this program will become effective January 1, 2025. All Postal employees and annuitants will be required to select a Health Plan in the PSHB Program during the Open Season period of November 11, 2024, through December 9, 2024. The plan options and premiums aren't available at present but are scheduled to be available in October 2024.

This plan requires certain annuitants to enroll in Medicare Part B to continue your Health Benefits coverage in retirement. However, if you are already retired as of January 1, 2025, are over 65 and did not enroll in Medicare Part B, you will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B to continue your Health Benefit coverage. If you are an annuitant as of January 1, 2025, and already enrolled in Medicare Part B, you are required to remain in Medicare Part B to keep coverage under the PSHB.

If you are retired and over 65 as of January 1, 2024, and have not enrolled in Medicare Part B, you may do so during a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) that starts on April 1, 2024, without having to pay the late enrollment penalty (10% per each year over the age of 65).

If you are enrolled in Medicare Part B, your spouse and family members covered under your plan will also be required to enroll in Medicare Part B as they become eligible (65 years of age).

For those who retire after January 1, 2025, there are exceptions to the Medicare Part B enrollment requirement. They are: (1) You were an active employee as of January 1, 2025, and were at least 64 years of age, (2) You live outside the US and its territories, (3) You have health care benefits under the VA, (4) You are eligible for health services under the Indian Health Service.

Health Benefit Plan

Report by President
Joe Henschen

Benefits

Let me start by recognizing Clearwater Branch 2008 Health Benefit Plan/Mutual Benefit Officer, John Wood for compiling the information in this article.

Over the past 60 days the merged cities of Branch 1477 have converted 23 City Carrier Assistants to career positions. All through the 24-month provisions in the National Agreement. In the next few months, we will promote 26 more across the Branch. It is important converted employees understand the benefits and the timelines associated with registering for them.

Once you are converted to a career position, you have 60 days to enroll in a Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHB). You will receive a package of information in the mail that will include a brochure listing the available plans and their cost. FEHB is available to all career Letter Carriers and has many plans to choose from, including the NALC Health Benefit Plan (HBP). As Branch 2008's HBP Representative, I strongly urge you to sign up for the HBP, which is a comprehensive plan that has provided letter carriers and their families with first-rate health insurance since 1950. The plan is owned and operated by Letter Carriers and pays particular attention to their health needs. The plan is not-for-profit, only focusing on the health of its members. To find out more about the NALC HBP, visit www.nalchbp.org.

As a CCA, if you were enrolled in the USPS Non-Career Employee Health Benefits Plan and converted to a career position, your enrollment in

that plan is terminated either (1) the last day of the month that is 28 days after you are converted to a career position or, (2) If you chose to enroll in a FEHB the date your FEHB coverage begins, whichever is earlier. It is recommended that you enroll in the FEHB as soon as possible to avoid any gap in coverage or to start receiving health benefits. Enrollment is NOT retroactive! Your coverage in your FEHB plan will begin the first day of the first pay period after Human Resources (HR) receives your election. This part is very important:

*IF YOU DO NOT ENROLL DURING YOUR FIRST 60 DAYS AFTER BEING CONVERTED TO CAREER, YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT TO ENROLL DURING OPEN SEASON, which begins in November.
Current active letter carriers have four ways to enroll in the NALC HBP*

Use your home computer, tablet or smart phone. Go to <https://liteblue.usps.gov>. Have your 8-digit employee ID number (it's printed on your earnings statement above the words employee ID) and your USPS PIN number (it's the same one you use to access Postal EASE).

The Blue Page (Intranet) at work.

Employee Self-Service Kiosks are located at some USPS facilities.

[PostalEase by telephone - call 877-4PS-EASE \(877- 477-3273\) and enter option 1.](#)

***** If you are making an enrollment change due to a qualifying life event (QLE),** you will need to contact Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) for the forms to enroll when you have a QLE.

Qualifying Life Event (QLE):

You cannot use PostalEASE to newly enroll, to change your enrollment, or to cancel or reduce your coverage due to a qualifying life event (QLE). You must contact Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) to assist you with these actions.

Instructions: When enrolling by internet, intranet, or Employee Self-Service Kiosk, follow the instructions on the screen. If you prefer to enroll or make changes by phone, call PostalEase at the number above. TTY users can call 866-260-7507.

Have your PostalEase worksheet completed before you call.

When prompted, select Federal Employees Health Benefits.

Follow the prompts to enter your Employee ID, USPS PIN, and the information you entered on your worksheet. This information will be required:

- + Daytime telephone number.
- + Name of the health plan in which you want to enroll.
- + Health plan code numbers:
 - 321 - Self Only High Option Plan
 - 322 - Self and Family High Option Plan
 - 323 - Self Plus One High Option Plan
 - 324 - Self Only Consumer Driven Plan
 - 325 - Self and Family Consumer Driven Plan
 - KM 1 - Self Only Value Option Plan
 - KM 2 - Self and Family Value Option Plan
 - KM 3 - Self Plus One Value Option Plan

Names, addresses, dates of birth, and Social Security numbers for all eligible family members covered under your enrollment.

* Name, policy number, and effective date of any other group health insurance in which you or eligible family member are enrolled, including Medicare and Tricare.

If you are changing plans or cancelling coverage, enter the code of your current health plan.

After completing your entries, it is always a good idea to write down and save the confirmation number you receive for PostalEase, the date your enrollment will be processed, and the date your paycheck will reflect the enrollment. Keep this information for your records.

Of course, if you have any questions about the NALC HBP or need help enrolling, please call Tom Phillips Branch 1477 Director of Insurance at 727-458-4127, or call the hall for advice.

This information was taken from the Letter

Carrier Resource Guide and is pertinent for new conversions and all current career letter carriers.

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance

(FEGLI): All career letter carriers are entitled to life insurance under the FEGLI program. The amount of coverage for a full-time letter carrier is based on annual salary. PTFs receive coverage based on their hourly rate and step. Enrollment in FEGLI basic coverage is automatic upon conversion; if you would like to purchase additional coverage you MUST apply within 60 days of conversion.

Article 21, Section 2 of the National Agreement provides that the employer shall maintain the current life insurance program in effect during the term of this agreement. It reads: The employer shall maintain the current life insurance program in effect during the term of this Agreement. The FEGLI is administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The regulations for the FEGLI are in the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), Section 530. However, relevant provisions of law and OPM regulations are controlling in the event of conflict with the instructions contained in the ELM.

From the ELM chapter 530: 531.1 General. The OPM administers the Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program. The FEGLI law, policies, and regulations issued by OPM, including those governing eligibility and benefits, are controlling in the event of conflict with these instructions.

532.11 Full-Time Employees. Full-time employees are covered by an amount of basic insurance (and an equivalent amount of accidental death and dismemberment insurance) based on their annual basic pay in effect at the end of any given pay period. The insurance of an employee who dies while serving in a higher-level position is based on the basic pay of the higher-level position. (Basic pay for insurance purposes excludes such additional pay as overtime pay, holiday pay, etc.)

532.12 Part-Time Employees. Employees who are paid at other than an annual rate are covered by an amount of basic insurance (and an equivalent amount of accidental death and dismemberment insurance) based on an annual rate determined by as follows:

Part-time regular. The annual basic pay of part-time regular schedule employees is

computed by multiplying the basic hourly rate of pay for their levels and steps by the number of scheduled hours of service in a 52-week work year.

Part-time flexible. The annual basic pay of part-time flexible schedule employees is computed by multiplying the basic hourly rate of pay for their level and step by 2,000 hours.

Basic Coverage. Once you are converted to career status, you are automatically enrolled in FEGLI to receive basic life insurance unless you waive coverage. The basic coverage begins the first day you are in a pay and duty status after you are converted to career. USPS pays the entire cost of the basic coverage. The amount of coverage is your annual rate of base pay rounded up to the next even \$1,000 plus \$2,000.

Accidental Death and Dismemberment. Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance is automatically included in basic life insurance at no additional cost. It is equal to your basic insurance amount described above.

Optional Coverage above the basic insurance. FEGLI has additional optional coverage that you can purchase for you or your spouse and dependents. To elect any of the optional coverages, you must enroll within 60 days from the day you were converted to career status. The cost is determined by the amount, type of coverage you choose, and your age. Optional insurance for new employees is effective on the first day you are in a pay and duty status in an eligible position or the day after your local personnel office receives your election.

Enrollment. To enroll you must submit a completed Life Insurance Election Form (SF 2917) to your local personnel office within 60 days of your conversion to career. The SF 2817 election form can be found at http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2817.pdf.

Eligibility to enroll in optional insurance after your first 60 days is limited. Open season for FEGLI is rare and the most recent FEGLI open seasons were held in 2016, 2004, and 1999. Outside of an open season, eligible employees can enroll or increase their coverage by taking a physical exam or with a qualifying life event (QLE). For more information on FEGLI and a list of QLEs, visit <https://www.opm.gov/life-insurancehealthcare/insurance/>.

Heat Exposure

Congressional Legislation Info

Article by Joe Henschen

Senate Bill 732 focuses on heat exposure.

The bill, SB 732, introduced by Republican Sen. Ana Maria Rodríguez, requires employers to put in place heat-exposure safety programs that offer preventive measures for workers against heat, like access to sufficient, free drinking water as close as possible to the workplace. Workers who show mild to moderate heat illness must be pulled out of work and evaluated to see whether medical attention is needed.

Managers and employees must attend annual training on how to prevent, spot and treat heat-related illness. And “high-heat procedures” kick in based on the outdoor heat index. When temperatures are above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, employers must provide 10 minutes of rest every 2 hours. If passed, the law would take effect in October. However, the bill — which has an identical counterpart in the House of Representatives — does not carry penalties for employers.

Advocates say the measure would start the ball rolling on heat protections for workers, since the federal government has yet to introduce any specific rules for taking care of outdoor workers in extreme heat conditions.

While the Occupational Safety and Health Administration recommends employers offer their employees rest, shade and hydration when temperatures spike, the agency doesn’t really come into play until tragedy strikes.

Last week, OSHA said it plans to fine a North Florida company about \$25,000 after a 41-year-old employee clearing invasive plants on a 97-degree day in July died from heat-related complications. His supervisors had him rest, but once he started feeling sick there was no one nearby to provide first aid and potentially save his life. The Florida man was one of the 38 people who die each year, on average, from extreme heat while working.

Last year, OSHA announced plans to set a federal heat standard, which would have strong, enforceable rules on how employers are supposed to keep their employees safe, similar to those used by the military. The agency first described a need

for this standard in 1972, but it never followed through. Advocates cheered this welcome change but noted that it could be years before that standard applies. In the meantime, a state rule could offer another layer of protection for Florida’s 2 million outdoor workers, who make up a quarter of the state’s workforce.

There is also support for the bill from some outdoor employers, like Jon Esformes, chief executive officer of Sunripe Certified Brands, which farms tomatoes and citrus in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Mexico. In 2010, Sunripe Certified Brands entered an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to set new labor standards. Esformes spoke in support of the bill at the Senate Agriculture Committee hearing.¹

Any legislation that brings attention to heat illness is important to all workers that work outside. A bill like this will ensure the pressure stays on USPS supervisors to mandate compliance with our Heat Illness Protection Plan, training, and compassion when an employee is suffering from heat illness.

¹ WUSF Public Media

Steward Meeting Attendees

Meeting was held at the Hall and on Zoom and led by President Joe Henschen and Executive Vice President Chris Hubble.

August 17th:

Javier Urrutia, Heather Manley, Brian Andrews, Donny DeMilita, James Grazioso, Patrice Cannonier, Wyatt Stribling, Erica Baker, Sheldon Jones, Anthony Roger, Kalani Mosman, Ken Domingos, Tim Cox, Tiffany Naughton, Eric Short, Scott Archbold, Olbin Flores-Elvir, Patrick Jacques, A.J. Pollard, Josh Wheeler, Mark Patrick

South Meeting

August 16th:

Joe Henshen, Chris Hubble, Erica Baker, Chris Kotonski, Lisa Barth, Dennis Leach, Rui Almeida, John Knighten, Colten Smith, Dean Kauffman, Jason Giardina

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The Twig of the Branch is published monthly by Branch 1477 West Coast Florida Letter Carriers. Articles and opinions printed herein are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of Branch 1477 or the NALC. We invite all members to contribute material for possible publications. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject such material for reasons of good taste, legality, space, or the good of the Branch. Articles should be of general interest, be 350 words or less and be submitted by email to the branch by the 10th of the month.

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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3	4 Labor Day	5 St. Pete Retiree Breakfast	6 Largo Retiree Breakfast	7 Executive Board	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 General Membership	15	16
17	18	19	20 South Branch Meeting	21 Steward's Meeting	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30