

# 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 631

VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

AUGUST, 2022

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*By President Joe Henschen*

*Twitter @JaHe1*

### ***Quota Full...Or Is It?***

Recently, we have had a lot of confusion regarding the approval of Sick Leave to insure employees from loss of pay when incapacitated due to illness or for medical appointments. Article 10 explains the differences between Sick and Annual Leave.

First of all, Article 10 of the National Agreement includes Section 10.3.A and discusses the Choice of Vacation Period.

**A.** It is agreed to establish a nationwide program for vacation planning for employees in the regular work force with emphasis upon the choice vacation period(s) or variations thereof.

### **Vacation Planning—Local Implementation**

Article 10.3 establishes a nationwide program for vacation planning for the regular work force and specifically addresses the selection of the choice vacation period(s). Article 30 provides for local implementation of more specific leave provisions consistent with the general provisions of Article 10.

A new Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) may be negotiated shortly after each new National Agreement is finalized. The LMOU is negotiated between the parties at the local level pursuant to Article 30 and covers, among other items, the operation of local vacation selection.

The LMOU typically sets forth a system where the leave year is divided into times known as the "choice vacation period" (also called "prime time") and other times which are outside the choice vacation period ("non-prime time").

**NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 2022**

Whereas Article 10.3 provides for negotiating how Choice and Incidental Leave is intended to occur, it does not give the parties at any level the right to negotiate anything relating to Sick Leave.

**Sick Leave. Article 10.5** provides for the continuation of the Sick Leave Program, whose detailed regulations are contained in the ELM Section 513. Section 513.1 defines sick leave as leave which “insures employees against loss of pay if they are incapacitated for the performance of duties because of illness, injury, pregnancy, and confinement, and medical (including dental or optical) examination or treatment.”

There are two distinct classifications for Career Employees. The use of sick leave is never impacted by Local Memorandum negotiated provisions defining the “Choice” and “Other” Leave, with one exception. In most Branch 1477 LMOUs an employee on long term sick leave in some cases limits access to incidental Annual Leave. Long Term Sick Leave does not restrict an employee to schedule a medical appointment or if they are incapacitated due to illness or injury.

Of course, as the City Carrier Assistants only have one category of leave the contract explains:

#### **Re: City Carrier Assistant (CCA) Annual Leave**

Article 30 of the National Agreement and Local Memorandum of Understanding provisions do not apply to City Carrier Assistant employees, except as follows:

During the local implementation period, the parties may agree to include provisions into the local memorandum of understanding to permit City Carrier Assistant employees to apply for annual leave during choice vacation periods, as defined in Article 10.3.D of the National Agreement.

Granting leave under such provisions must be contingent upon the employee having a leave balance of at least forty (40) hours.

Again, these provisions deal specifically with the use of CCA Leave and the Choice Vacation Period. It does nothing to restrict the use of leave for reasons listed above in Article 10.5.

Finally, the Employee Labor and Relations Manual includes:

#### **512.411 General**

Except for emergencies, annual leave for all

employees except postmasters must be requested on PS Form 3971 and approved in advance by the appropriate supervisor. Leave requests from rural carriers must be approved in accordance with Article 10 of the USPS-NRLCA National Agreement.

#### **512.412 Emergencies**

An exception to the advance approval requirement is made for emergencies; however, in these situations, the employee must notify appropriate postal authorities of the emergency and the expected duration of the absence as soon as possible.

These final two provisions have been a focus of management for a while. Carriers are judged by unscheduled leave and scheduled leave. If more focus was spent on approving Leave in accordance with the LMOUs and Article 10, there would be less instances when the carrier case lights do not go on at begin tour.



## **Hubble's Troubles**

*By Executive Vice President,  
Chris Hubble*

### ***The process of changing a branch by law....***

A fundamental concept in any democracy is the right to have your voice heard. This ensures that governing is based on the will of the people. As such, the importance of one's right to vote cannot be overstated. There are many slogans used to highlight and bring awareness to the importance of voting. Your vote, your voice; if you don't vote, you can't complain; elections have consequences.... the list goes on and on. Incorporated within the NALC Constitution are several provisions that require the will of the members to direct specific activities or changes.

**Article 12, Section 3 of the Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches** (CGSFB) addresses funds in part: *All funds shall be devoted to such uses as the Branch may determine; provided, that no appropriation shall be made except when ordered by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a regular meeting; provided further, that Branches may make provision in their bylaws allowing officers to spend a certain sum of money between Branch meetings in*

cases of emergency. The above is meant to illustrate the importance of the vote in establishing the will of the membership and is not inclusive of every circumstance in which a branch vote is required or necessary.

**Article 15 of the NALC Constitution** sets forth rules that branches and state associations must follow to approve a change in their bylaws. Branches or State Association bylaws may contain additional guidelines. Article 15 of the NALC Constitution explains: *That branch bylaws “may be amended at any regular meeting of the branch, provided the amendment has been submitted in writing at the last previous regular branch meeting, and suitable notification to members shall be made at least ten (10) days before the regular meeting at which the vote is to be taken.”*

Any proposed change in a branch’s or state association’s bylaws, whether involving deletion of old language, addition of new language or both, constitutes an amendment of the bylaws and would be subject to the requirements of Article 15 of the NALC Constitution.

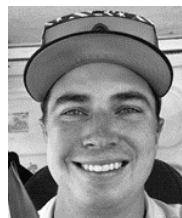
After the proposed bylaws have been approved by the branch or state association, the proposed changes must be submitted to the Committee of Laws for approval.

The Committee of Laws has three options available when ruling on proposed changes. They are: “Approved,” “Approved with exception(s)” and “In conflict with the National Constitution.”

“Approved with exception” means that the items listed as exceptions are in conflict and not approved. To remedy the exceptions and amend bylaws, the entire process contained in Article 15 of the NALC Constitution must be completed again (submitting, notification, voting and mail to the Committee of Laws).

For further information on Bylaws, visit the link below and/ scan the QR code.

<https://www.nalc.org/news/the-postal-record/2019/september-2019/document/AS-T.pdf>



## Sergeant at Arms

*Clay Hansen*

### 5 With Clay

Admittedly I've been on vacation for 2 weeks and an article slipped my mind until TC reached out asking for one! So, to get one to the presses in time for print I interviewed myself!

Clay Hansen – Indian Rocks Beach

1. How long have you been a letter carrier?  
**“Almost 9 years”**
2. Was there another carrier who helped or influenced your career as a letter carrier?  
**“During the applying phase Kevin Clark was my carrier at home and answered all questions I had. Once I was hired, I was lucky to be put in an office that set me up for success. There were plenty of veteran carriers to show me the way”**
3. Hardest part of being a letter carrier?  
**“Finding your own technique. Learning the job, you see so many people doing the same job, but everyone does it different than the other. It took a few months for me to find the way that worked for me. Once that happened the speed and confidence picked up”**
4. What snack is always in your lunchbox?  
**“Blue Powerade Zero.”**
5. Favorite TV show? **“The Office”**

Again, if you'd like to be featured, please answer the 5 questions above and send them to me through text or email! Retirees can be featured as well if you'd like to answer those questions, please reach out to me, thanks!

Clay Hansen  
Sergeant at Arms  
727-744-2456

[Claybranch1477@gmail.com](mailto:Claybranch1477@gmail.com)

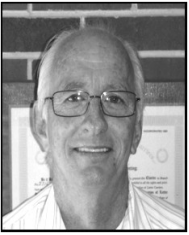
***The following proposed Bylaw changes were read at the July 14th General Membership Meeting and will be discussed and voted on at the August 18th General Membership meeting.***

***ARTICLE 7, Section 2 as it now reads...***

- A. The regular dues shall be twenty-nine dollars and eighty cents (\$29.90) biweekly beginning January 2019 following the November 24, 2018 pay consolidation. Each time the COLA increases effective under the provisions of the Contract, the regular dues of the active members will be increase by 1/12 of 1% of the COLA increase each January.
- B. The regular Branch dues will be increased in the same amount as levied by the National per capita tax known as the "National Minimum Branch dues" as required in the National Constitution. The regular dues will be increased annually in the like amount of the increase as levied by the Florida State Association of Letter Carriers in the Convention at the 59<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention held in June 1987. Any member failing to pay any fine assessment or monthly dues within thirty (30) days after notification of same shall become due, shall forfeit his membership as prescribed in ARTICLE 7, Section 4 of the national Constitution, for subordinate Branches.
- C. Forty-six Cents (\$.46) per active member per pay period will be expressly used for the Building Fund. The Treasurer of the Branch will reimburse the Building Fund each pay period.
- D. Twenty-Three Cents (\$.23) per active member per pay period will be expressly used to maintain an Automobile Fund for the sole purpose of expenses relating the purchase of a replacement Branch Automobiles. The Treasurer of the Branch will reimburse the Automobile Fund each pay period.

***Proposed By Law change to read....***

- A. The regular dues shall be twenty-nine dollars and eighty cents (\$29.90) biweekly beginning January 2019 following the November 24, **2018**, pay consolidation. Each time the COLA increases effective under the provisions of the Contract, the regular dues of the active members will be increase by 1/12 of 1% of the COLA increase each January.
- B. The regular Branch dues will be increased in the same amount as levied by the National per capita tax known as the "National Minimum Branch **Dues**" as required in the National Constitution. The regular dues will be increased annually in the like amount of the increase as levied by the Florida State Association of Letter Carriers in the Convention at the 59<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention held in June 1987. Any member failing to pay any fine assessment or monthly dues within thirty (30) days after notification of same shall become due, shall forfeit **his/her** membership as prescribed in ARTICL 7, Section 4 of the national Constitution, for subordinate Branches.
- C. Forty-six Cents (\$.46) per active member per pay period will be expressly used for the Building Fund. The Treasurer of the Branch will reimburse the Building Fund each pay period.
- D. Twenty-Three Cents (\$.23) per active member per pay period will be expressly used to maintain an Automobile Fund for the sole purpose of expenses **relating to the maintenance, and repairs, and purchase of a Branch Automobile**. The Treasurer of the Branch will reimburse the Automobile Fund each pay period.



## Legislative Update

*By Gene Carroll, CDL District 15*

In June, the House Committee on Appropriations voted 31-22 to advance the Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) appropriations bill. This bill is one of the many appropriations bills currently moving through Congress that reflect the objectives included in President Biden's budget proposal.

Related to the Postal Service, the bill includes \$100 million for zero-emission electric vehicles and charging infrastructure for the federal vehicle fleet, including the Postal Service. The bill also includes \$56 million for the Postal Service to cover free voting mail from overseas and mail services for the blind. Additionally, the bill includes funding for a pilot postal banking program in select areas. Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR) introduced an amendment that would strike this pilot program, but it did not pass.

As it relates to six-day delivery language, which has been included in every FSGG appropriations bill since 1983 and required the Postal Service to ensure delivery six days a week, the legislation did not include this provision. With the enactment of the Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA) of 2022 (Public Law 117-108), a provision requiring six-day delivery typically included in this appropriations bill was unnecessary.

"It is worth celebrating that for the first time nearly 40 years, NALC did not have to ask appropriators to include language on six-day delivery," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Our successful fight for the PSRA removes the need for Congress to act on this issue any further for this self-sustaining agency."

More broadly, the bill includes \$29.8 billion in funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 23, an increase of \$4.3 billion from FY 22. It aims to assist small businesses through increased funding to the Small Business Administration and Community Development Financial Institutions. It also funds Election Security Grants to ensure safe and secure elections. The bill provides funds to rebuild the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide better customer service for working families and to enforce collections on corporations and the wealthiest individuals.

The House Appropriations Committee has approved all 12 appropriations bills and a vote in the House is expected as early as this month. NALC will continue monitoring the budget and appropriations process and will update letter carriers on any future action.

In May 2021, Reps. Jackie Speier (D-CA) and Dan Newhouse (R-WA) introduced the bipartisan USPS Shipping Equity Act (H.R. 3287). This bill would allow the Postal Service to ship beer, wine and other alcoholic beverages directly from licensed producers and retailers to legal customers. H.R. 3287 has 42 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) has introduced companion legislation in the Senate (S. 1633).

Under current law, the Postal Service is banned from shipping alcoholic goods, which makes private shippers such as FedEx and UPS the only option for wineries, breweries and other producers to have goods delivered directly to customers. This bill would give USPS two years to develop regulations, ensuring the Postal Service is prepared to safely deliver alcoholic beverages to adult consumers with appropriate identification checks. If passed into law, this bill would generate an estimated \$190 million annually in new revenue for the Postal Service.

"NALC supports the USPS Shipping Equity Act and encourages all members of Congress to cosponsor the bill," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "The Postal Service delivers to every address in the nation, while private shippers do not. This legislation would allow the Postal Service to expand its services, which benefits all Americans, while providing needed revenue for the agency."

On June 16, in an 84-14 vote, the Senate passed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 (H.R. 3967). The comprehensive bipartisan legislation would provide relief, health care and other benefits to veterans who have been exposed to burn pits. H.R. 3967 was introduced by Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) and Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS) in the Senate and by House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) in the House. The bill would provide expanded access to Veterans Affairs Department (VA) health care and disability compensation for the estimated 3.5 million veterans who have been exposed to burn pits. If signed into law, the bill would be the first of its kind to address veterans who suffer from toxic exposure.

The House passed the bill in March but must hold another vote on the Senate amended version of H.R. 3967. While lawmakers were hoping to send the bill to the president's desk before the July 4 recess, the House has yet to hold a vote due to a procedural error with the text. Once the procedural error is corrected, the bill is expected to be retaken in the Senate and sent back to the House for another vote. President Biden released a statement in support of the legislation and urged the House to move swiftly to pass the bill.

NALC



## Retiree Update

*By Director of Retiree Affairs,  
O.D. Elliott*

In the July issue, I wrote about a retiree who failed to apply for Medicare when he reached 65. He's now 75 and recent health problems have shown the need for the additional benefits of also having Medicare. However, since anyone failing to apply for Medicare at age 65 are assessed a penalty of 10% for each year over the age of 65, the monthly cost of Medicare for him would be approximately \$340.00 rather than the \$170.00 per month had he applied at age 65. He asked about the item in the recently passed Postal reform Act which would allow, on a one-time basis, for retirees who failed to apply for Medicare at age 65 to enroll without the 10% per year penalty. I checked with Dan Toth, NALC Director of Retired Members who responded that they would be able to sign up for Medicare sometime in 2024 to go into effect 1/1/25. I indicated that when we get a firm date for this provision, I would note it in a future article.

In the July issue of the Postal Record, Brother Toth noted that for a six-month period beginning 4/1/2024, those annuitants who failed to enroll when first eligible would have the opportunity to enroll without the penalty.

Brother Toth further noted that employees who retire before 1/1/2025, and any active employee at least 64 years of age as of 1/1/2025, will get to decide whether to enroll (or not) in Medicare when they first become eligible. Future annuitants under the age of 64 as of 1/1/2025 who retire after 1/1/2025 who choose to maintain their FEHB coverage into retirement will be required to enroll in

Medicare. However, there are exceptions for those enrolled in TRICARE (health care provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs) or Indian Health Services or those who reside outside of the USA.

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## Auxiliary 181 News

*By Dottie Tutt-Hutchinson*

Sue Elliott, Sandy Hart, Alice Wannike, Shirley Moran, Joyce Keller, and Gerry Bournon met for lunch at Frida's Cafe on July 6th. Neither Sally Madden nor I felt well enough to attend, and sorely wished we could have. We had no business to discuss; just friends catching up on family, the news, and each other. Joyce and Shirley had traveled up north for sibling memorials, and Joyce had an exhausting, but fun sorority convention at the St. Pete Hilton. Sue will be going with Denny to the NALC convention in Chicago in August, he to the business meetings, she to see the city.

We next meet September 7th at noon at Joyce's home with Alice hosting. We'll plan the Ice Cream Social then amongst all the fourth quarter of the year's business.

Happy August birthdays to Alice Wannike (11) and Alvern Brown (26).

To all our Letter Carriers: Take care in the heat, don't rush, hydrate more, be safe. Your health is so important.

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## Steward Meeting Attendees

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

### July 21st:

Donny DeMila, Eric Short, James Grazioso, Scott Archbold, Brian Andrews, Patrice Cannonier, Ken Domingos, Patrick Jacques, Tiffany Naughton, Tom Phillips, Scott Held, Mark Patrick, Anwar Douse, Sheldon Jones

# Minutes of July 14, 2022 Membership Meeting



**Recording/Financial  
Secretary**  
Ken Grasso

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

**Invocation** by: O.D. Elliott

**Pledge of Allegiance:** led by President Joe Henschen.

**Minutes of previous meeting:** Motion to accept the June minutes as printed in the Twig by A. J. Pollard, seconded by Chris Hubble. Motion passes.

**Application of New Members:** by Ken Grasso - 1

**Branch by the Numbers:** As of PP 13 the Dues Roster has 803 Active Members with 776 paying dues. We have 25 members as No Deductions, 4 are on Military Leave, 6 paying direct, with 13 on LWOP and 8 Carriers have separated or on break in service and appear on the rolls. Retirees 562 (89 Gold Cards). 1365 Total Members

I would like to welcome Kelly Bins from Absolute Quality Interpreting Services LLC.

**Treasurer:** Chuck Cavicchio-Check book balances and total investments were read. Motion to accept the Report of the Treasurer and send to the trustees for audit by Anthony Roger, seconded by O.D. Elliott. Motion passes.

**Director of Retiree Affairs:** O. D. Elliott—Received a call from a retiree who didn't take Medicare Part B when offered. Asked about upcoming legislation being able to join without a penalty. On April 1, 2024, for a period of 6 months a onetime offering to join without a penalty to be effective in 2025.

**Director of Insurance:** Tom Phillips—Eye Glass Plan reimburses you for Eye Glass expenses including doctor visit. Out of pocket expenses up to \$60.00 for member and \$50.00 each dependent.

**Political District 13 Liaison:** Tom Phillips—A new bill out for Veterans Health Care.

**Trustee Report:** Brian Andrews—Books up to date through May.

**Sergeant at Arms:** Clay Hansen—No Report.

**Editor/Webmaster:** Judy Dorris—No Report.

**Vice President Report:** Zulma Betancourt—No Report.

**Executive Vice President:** Chris Hubble—Not much to say about the new route adjustment process. Went to training and now are gathering a lot of information about the 33 zones we plan to visit in July and October 2022 and another RCI in 2023.

## **Welfare Reports:**

### **Sad:**

- Derrick Sampson, Carrier Northside—Passed away.
- Ernest Eva, Retiree St. Petersburg—Passed away.
- Glen Fagan, Retiree St. Petersburg—Brother ill.
- Mary Marquardt, Retiree Crossroads—Husband passed away.
- Eric Marrero, Carrier Midtown—ill.
- Rachel Hodges, Carrier St. Pete Main—Husband in motorcycle accident.
- Adela Torres, Carrier Open Air—Underwent surgery.
- Jaquan Smith, Carrier Open Air-Father passed away.
- Richard Rink, Retiree Seminole—Passed away.
- Stacy Farris, Carrier Largo—Seriously ill.
- Wayne O'Riley, Carrier Largo—Seriously ill.

### **Glad:**

- Donny DeMilta, Carrier Seminole—Daughter Dakota graduated from North Florida University.
- Jonathan Swinney, Steward Pinellas Park and Wife Melissa—Expecting their first baby.
- Vice President Zulma Betancourt and Husband Rudy—Celebrated a new Granddaughter.

## **CCA Promotions to FTR:**

Erin Dennis St. Petersburg  
Nadezhda Antonova St. Petersburg  
Jordon Conover St. Petersburg

## **Presidents Report:**



All Officers and Stewards need to complete the I-9 Form. If you are an Officer or Steward and didn't get a quarterly salary check, it may be on hold pending the completion of the form.

The new phones have been installed and proving to be a little tough to operate so please be patient with us as we learn this new system.

National Convention Delegates Meeting is scheduled for July 27<sup>th</sup> at 7 P.M. At this meeting we will distribute all the materials that you will need.

Executive Board authorized that O.D. Elliot and President Henschen attend the Retiring Officers Dinner at a cost of \$85.00 per person for a total of \$170.00 for both.

Executive Board authorized sending MDA Coordinator Sandra Pagan to the MDA Function at a cost of \$100.00.

Executive Board authorized moving the August General Membership meeting to be on Thursday August 18<sup>th</sup> and the Augusts' Steward Meeting to be on Wednesday August 17<sup>th</sup> due to the National Convention.

President Henschen and Executive Vice President Chris Hubble will be attending the COP in Alaska September 25-26, 2022. Rooms and flights are taken care of.

The Branch did well on the Food Drive which took place on Saturday May 14, 2022. The amount of food collected Branch wide was 650,332 pounds. Branch 1477 finished #1 in our Branch Size Category. At the Convention during the Food Drive presentation Food Drive Coordinators Brian Andrews, Eric Short, Sandra Pagan, and Clay Hansen will go to the front to receive the Plaque for the Winning Branch Category.

Report of Committee Article 10 Charges against a member:

The Committee met and interviewed the parties involved and others that were named as witnesses. The Committee Chairman read the Committee's report to the Members present at the meeting and on the Zoom Telecast. The Committee presented to the Branch a written report of the facts elicited. The Branch shall then decide by simple majority vote, the issue of whether the facts, as presented by the committee sustains the charges. Each party got to speak to the membership during the meeting. Also,

other members could speak to the membership about any relevant facts. The membership present at the hall and those on Zoom were polled. The voting was tabulated, and the membership present decided by simple majority that the facts as found by the committee did not sustain the charges. This issue was then declared closed by President Henschen.

We have a Bylaw that was read to the Membership and will be put in the Twig and voted on at the next General Membership Meeting. The Bylaw is in reference to Article 7, Section 2 Auto Fund and changing some of the language in it.

We are no longer  
excepting  
ANY uniforms  
at this time  
at the Union Hall

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President Auxiliary 181

For Branch 1477 St. Petersburg FL

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kellerjoyce6@gmail.com	FAX: 727-623-9209



## Notes and Quotes

The following are intended to keep the Members informed on a number of topics that are asked throughout the month.

### Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 4268)

Many federal employees, including Postal Service employees, begin their federal/postal service in non-career positions before transitioning to career status. These employees, including letter carriers who were employed as casuals, transitional employees (TEs) or city carrier assistants (CCAs), do not receive retirement credit for their time spent in these positions. Because years employed as a non-career employee are not creditable under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), employees who started in non-career positions and transition to career status must work longer to reach the required years of employment to receive full retirement benefits.

The Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 4268), sponsored by Reps. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Tom Cole (R-OK), would modify what is considered creditable federal civilian service under FERS. This bill would allow these employees to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as non-career employees after Dec. 31, 1988, making such time creditable service under the FERS, and for other purposes.

This legislation would allow letter carriers and other affected employees the opportunity to purchase retirement credit for the time they spent in these non-career positions, providing greater retirement security.

NALC supports H.R. 4268, which would allow certain federal employees to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as non-career employees after Dec. 31, 1988, thus making such time creditable service under FERS.

Sponsored by Reps. Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Tom Cole (R-OK)<sup>1</sup>

### Right where we left off!

Branches across the country returned to an annual tradition on Saturday, May 14, holding the Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger® Food Drive after two years during which the drive couldn't be held for safety reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The return of the food drive was met with enthusiasm from postal patrons donating food, from local food banks whose shelves were filled, and most of all from the families that depend on the food banks.

In the 30 years since it began, the food drive has collected about 1.82 billion pounds of food for the hungry.

The nationwide total, reported as of June 15, was 35,658,590 pounds. That brings the total collected since the food drive began 30 years ago to almost 1.9 billion pounds of food.

The NALC sets a Category for Branches in similar membership size. The July Postal Record released the rankings

#### Category 3 (1,000-1,499 members)

West Coast Florida Br. 1477 .....	650,332
Tampa, FL Br. 599.....	640,000
Northeast Florida Br. 53.....	382,000

Although the totals for the Food Drive were about half of our last in person drive. Branch 1477 remained in the top of our category.

### Telehealth

Have you been deemed desirable to provide medical documents to protect the Interests of the Postal Service?

Telehealth visits were added to the NALC Health Benefit Plan in 2020. This added the convenience of telehealth virtual visits. Telehealth allows you to receive high-quality, affordable care for minor acute conditions, wherever you are.

A virtual visit with a physician or nurse practitioner for things such as sinus problems, allergies, abrasions, and minor wounds can save you time and money. If appropriate, prescriptions for medications can be ordered. All these services, for a \$10 copayment per visit!

Schedule a medical Appointment virtually and receive a medical note via email for a \$10 Co-pay then ask to see your steward upon your return to work. **Download the mobile app, visit [nalchbptelehealth.org](https://nalchbptelehealth.org) or call 888-541-7706 to access this service**

### File a FECA Claim for COVID-19

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that

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<sup>1</sup> NALC Fact Sheet NALC.org

President Biden signed on March 11, 2021, makes it much easier for federal workers diagnosed with COVID-19 to establish coverage under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. To establish a COVID-19 claim, you simply need to establish that you are a "covered employee," meaning that:

1. You were diagnosed with COVID-19. Specifically, you were diagnosed with COVID-19 while employed in the Federal service at any time during the period of January 27, 2020, to January 27, 2023; and,
2. Your duties include any risk of exposure. Specifically, within 21 days of your diagnosis of COVID-19, you carried out duties that— a. required contact with patients, members of the public, or co-workers; or b. included a risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus.

You are only required to establish that your duties included a risk of exposure to COVID-19. You do not have to prove you were engaged in high-risk employment; that you were actually exposed to the virus; or that you were exposed to someone who had the virus while performing your duties.

If you establish that you are a "covered employee," any diagnosed COVID-19 will be deemed to have been proximately caused by your federal employment. You no longer have to establish a causal link between your employment and your COVID-19 diagnosis.

You can quickly and easily file a CA-1 Claim for COVID-19 through the Employees' Compensation Operations and Management Portal (ECOMP). You can access ECOMP at [ecomp.dol.gov](http://ecomp.dol.gov). If you don't have access to a computer, contact your supervisor.

If you were previously diagnosed with COVID-19 or even if you believe you just have a mild case of COVID-19, you should consider filing a COVID-19 FECA claim now even if you have fully recovered and/or had an asymptomatic infection.

1. In the event you develop a consequential injury, impairment, or illness later as a result of your COVID-19 diagnosis, timely filing your claim now will facilitate the processing of any future claim for any such consequential condition or impairment.

2. If you wait until you experience a consequential injury or illness to file your COVID-19 claim, your claim may be subject to time limitation and you will have to establish both the initial COVID-19 claim and the consequential condition claim before benefits can begin.<sup>2</sup>

If you test positive for COVID through a lab test or home test. Notify your supervisor immediately. You should remain at home. The Supervisor is to notify the Occupational Health Nurse who will contact you. After a few questions you will be given instructions based on your answers. Usually, the time off the clock will be about 5 days after there is not fever without the use of fever reducing medication. Upon a return to work a mask is required inside Postal facilities for an additional 5 days.

## **Management Standard Work Instruction for Conducting a PS Form 3999 LLV with Modified Bulkhead Door Interior Horizontal Sliding Cargo Door)**

Vehicles: Mounted routes: examiners are recommended to ride in the vehicle All other routes: determination is made based on local conditions:

- Examiner will sit in the jump seat behind modified bulkhead door
- Examiner must enter/exit via back door and have an extra vehicle key
- Carrier to replenish and retrieve parcels by opening rear cargo door from outside LLV
- Bulkhead door (sliding cargo door) is to remain closed during the inspection

Examiners will remain at least 6 ft. away from the carrier at all times on the street (excluding when seated on jump seat and carrier is in driver's seat), including during: Mail delivery, Relay / Reloading, Accountable delivery, Package delivery / pick-ups, CPMS scan & collection, Lunch / Breaks. Trainers, Recent Trainees. This goes for On the Job Instruction also. If there is not a modified door between the operator of the vehicle and the examiner or Trainee. **See your steward!**

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<sup>2</sup> NALC Injured on the Job

# BRANCH 1477 PHONE DIRECTORY

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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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# August 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> <i>Pinellas Park Retiree Breakfast</i>	<b>2</b> <i>St. Pete Retiree Breakfast</i>	<b>3</b> <i>Largo Retiree Breakfast</i>	<b>4</b> Executive Board	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> NALC Convention	<b>9</b> NALC Convention	<b>10</b> NALC Convention	<b>11</b> NALC Convention	<b>12</b> NALC Convention	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Steward's Meeting	<b>18</b> General Membership Meeting	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			