

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 664

VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

SEPTEMBER, 2025

Inside This Issue:

President's Report
by Joe Henschen 1-3

Executive Vice President
article—Hubble's Troubles
by Chris Hubble 3-4

Director of Retirees
article by O. D. Elliott 4

Short Stories
article by Eric Short 4

Bylaw Proposal 5

Minutes of General Membership
Meeting on 7/10/25 6

Union's Data Page 7

Calendar 8



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

Twitter @ JaHe1

Scheduled and Unscheduled/Unprotected Leave

In just about every corner of the Branch, Carriers are being scrutinized for use of leave, and the scrutiny takes aggressive actions. Since August 12, 2024, the Branch has processed 176 Informal A grievances for attendance related discipline. Thirty-five percent of these cases had to be appealed to Formal A while half of the Formal A cases are appealed to Step B for resolution. Once a case is at Step B it can take weeks or months for resolution.

What we are seeing is that in many cases, discipline is issued and not brought to the attention of the Union Steward. There are time limits to address the

issue. If a grievance is not filed timely, a Carrier may be left with a Letter of Warning or more severe level of discipline in the file for two years. There should be zero reasons that a Carrier receives discipline, and nothing is done about it.

For a minute let's compare scheduled leave with unscheduled leave.

Unscheduled Leave

The Manuals state: 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. The same is said for requests for Sick Leave.

An exception to the advance approval requirement is made for unexpected illness or injuries; however, in this situation the employee must notify appropriate postal authorities of his or her illness or injury and expected duration of the absence as soon as possible. ¹

NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2025

This is important because it is the unscheduled leave that is focused on and reasonably, so unscheduled leave causes the case lights not to be turned on and the Manger assigned to monitor Sick Leave goes to work. Sending emails to Supervisors directing discipline.

¹ ELM 513

Scheduled Leave

Management does not look unfavorably on scheduled leave. Management can plan for coverage. However, the most important thing you can do is protect any absence that meets the criteria under the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a Federal Law that Congress enacted in 1993 requiring many employers, including the Postal Service, to grant eligible employees time off work without penalty under certain conditions.

Article 10 of the National Agreement incorporates this law into the leave program for City Letter Carriers. The FMLA guarantees eligible Letter Carriers up to 12 weeks of leave each postal leave year for:

A new child in the family—by birth, by adoption or by placement in foster care.

Caring for a family member with a serious health condition.

The employee's own serious health condition that prevents him or her from performing the job; or

Qualifying exigencies arising out of the fact that the employee's family member is on or has been notified of "covered active duty" in the armed forces.

The FMLA also guarantees eligible Letter Carriers up to 26 weeks of leave in a single 12-month period to care for a "covered" service member with a "serious injury or illness," if that service member is their spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin.

The FMLA guarantees time off, whether paid or unpaid. The type of leave taken depends on the reasons for the leave and the usual postal leave regulations. Eligibility criteria, medical certification guidelines and other detailed rules govern Letter Carrier rights to FMLA leave.

According to the act, employers are prohibited from interfering with, restraining or denying the exercise of any rights provided by FMLA. The employer cannot retaliate against an employee for exercising or attempting to exercise FMLA rights. Employers cannot use the taking of FMLA leave as a negative factor in

employment actions, such as hiring, promotions or disciplinary actions. Similarly, FMLA covered absences may not be used in any disciplinary actions. Employees cannot waive, nor may employers induce employees to waive, their prospective rights under FMLA. FMLA is not a separate category of leave and does not provide Letter Carriers with any additional paid leave. Sick and annual leave accrual amounts remain the same as what Carriers are entitled to under the National Agreement.

Employees may use sick leave, annual leave, or leave without pay (LWOP) for FMLA protected absences in accordance with current leave policies.

Though City Carrier Assistants (CCAs) earn only up to 13 days of annual leave per year, CCAs are covered under FMLA and are eligible to use both annual leave and LWOP for FMLA-protected absences.

All employees, including CCAs, are eligible for FMLA-protected leave if they meet two requirements:

- 1) the employee must have worked for the Postal Service for at least 12 months, and
- 2) must have accrued at least 1,250 work hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave. CCA breaks in service do not cancel out accrued time of service for FMLA purposes since the 12 months do not have to be consecutive.

The months of service may be accrued at any time during the seven-year period immediately preceding the leave. Only actual hours worked, not time spent on paid leave, are used to determine whether an employee has met the 1,250-work hour requirement.

Under the law, FMLA has specific definitions for family members. A parent is defined as a biological, adoptive, step or foster parent, or an in loco parentis. An in loco parentis is a person who acts as a parent toward a son or daughter, or a person who had such responsibility for the employee when the employee was a child.

A spouse is defined as the other person with whom an individual entered into a marriage as defined by the applicable state laws where the marriage occurred. This includes common law marriages. For the purposes of applying the FMLA, all legally married couples who are otherwise eligible for FMLA-protected leave can now take such leave for a qualifying FMLA reason, regardless of where they live or work.

A son or daughter is defined as biological, adopted, foster, legal ward or stepchild under the age of 18; or a child 18 or over who has a disability as defined under the Rehabilitation Act and where the disability makes the person incapable of self-care.

When the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable (e.g., pregnancy) employees should notify management of

the need for leave and provide appropriate supporting documentation (PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence) at least 30 days before the absence is to begin. If 30 days' notice is not practicable, employees should notify management as soon as possible (i.e., the same day the employee learns of the need for leave or the next business day). When the need for leave is not foreseeable, an employee must comply with the employer's usual and customary notice and procedural requirements for requesting leave.

If you have a situation that qualifies for absences under the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act, make sure to exercise your rights outlined above to protect yourself. 2

FMLA protection is a good way to protect your job.

2 July 2023 NALC Contract Talk



Hubble's Troubles

By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble

60-minute Office Play....

The "60-minute play" is a SWI (Standard Work Instruction) management has pulled out of their playbook once again. The instruction is basically a blanket policy telling Letter Carriers that they have to be out of the office in 60-minutes....or less.

The pre-arbitration settlement (Q06N-4Q-C 11022051) dated September 16, 2011 (M-01769) states in relevant part:

.... time projection system/tool(s) will not be used as the sole determinant for establishing office or street time projections.

An Interpretive Step settlement (Q01N-4Q-C 05022610) dated July 30, 2007 (M-01664) states in relevant part:

The Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS) is a management tool for estimating a Carrier's daily workload. The use of DOIS does not change the Letter Carrier's reporting requirements outlined in section 131.4 of Handbook M-41, the supervisor's scheduling responsibilities outlined in section 122 of Handbook M-39, or the Letter Carrier's and supervisor's responsibilities contained in Section 28 of Handbook M-41. DOIS projections are not

the sole determinant of a Carrier's leaving or return time, or daily workload. As such, the projections cannot be used as the sole basis for corrective action.

As outlined above, in previous national-level settlements, the "60-minute play" is not only a blanket policy but a tool designed to establish a Carrier's leaving time and in direct conflict with the above mutually agreed to agreements.

JCAM pages 19-1-& 19-1 provide in relevant part:

Handbooks and Manuals. Article 19 provides that those postal handbook and manual provisions directly relating to wages, hours, or working conditions are enforceable as though they were part of the National Agreement.

Local Policies. Locally developed policies may not vary from nationally established handbook and manual provisions (National Arbitrator Aaron, H1N-NAC-C-3, February 27, 1984, C-04162).

Management is attempting to enforce the "60-minute play" via a program that calculates a workload projection. This does not change the Letter Carrier's reporting requirements as outlined in Section 131.4 Handbook M-41, the supervisor's scheduling responsibilities outlined in Section 122 of Handbook M-39, or the Letter Carrier's and supervisor's responsibilities contained in Section 28 of Handbook M-41.

The National-Level Settlements referenced earlier are clear that any USPS workload projection tool is just that, a management tool. Management has unilaterally instituted a new work measurement of determining a Letter Carrier's office time.

Moreover, the "60-minute play" only considers how long it would take a Letter Carrier to case and pull down the day's volume of letters and flats, based on 18 pieces per minute for casing letters, eight pieces per minute for casing flats, and 70 pieces per minute for pulling down letters and flats combined.

The office time projection allows no fixed office time to perform necessary daily functions such as vehicle inspections, stand-up talks, retrieving mail from the throwback case, withdrawing mail, and retrieving or signing for accountable mail and office breaks. These are just a few of the required daily office duties not accounted for in the "60-minute play".

Letter Carriers are harmed when overzealous managers and/or supervisors attempt to use a "60-minute play" in violation of M-01769 and M-01664. This leads to confrontations and/or unnecessary stress in the workplace when management tries to hold Letter Carriers accountable to flawed, non-contractual time projections. The use of the "60-minute play" is both

arbitrary and capricious. Management is initiating unrealistic leaving times based on inaccurate and misleading information and in violation of postal handbooks and manuals.

If you are being forced out of the office in a certain time under undue stress by management, ask to see your Steward and let them know so that they can investigate.

HELP WANTED

**The Branch is looking for
someone to do
light Janitorial work.**

Flexible Hours

**For more information, please call
727-531-1477**



Retiree Update

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

The Windfall Elimination and Pension Offset Act of 1983 passed under the Reagan Administration was a formula to adjust (reduce) Social Security benefits for retirees who also received pensions from jobs where they didn't pay Social Security. This act adversely affected Federal (including Postal) State, County and City employees. Prior to passage of this Act, Postal employees often worked part time jobs during and after their career to earn credit for Social Security. After passage of this Act, they could still earn credit for Social Security benefits but would only be entitled to 40% (approximately) of what they should receive. The unfairness of this Act was fought by Federal employees, with the NALC in the lead, year after year until we received success with passage of the Social Security Fairness Act in November 2024 and signed into law on January 5, 2025. This law repealed the Social Security Windfall Elimination and Pension Offset provisions. It was made retroactive to January 1, 2024. In early 2025, many CSRS retirees were pleasantly surprised to receive a huge increase in Social

Security benefits they were receiving. At the time, I received a call from several retirees who weren't aware of this new law and were worried that a mistake had been made and wanted to know what they should do about this sudden increase. I explained the new law and that now they were getting the benefits to which they were entitled.

Recently, I met with a carrier to assist with his retirement papers. This carrier was retiring as a CSRS employee after 44 years' service. I asked if he had ever had a job in which he paid into Social Security. He said he had not. I then asked if his wife would get Social Security. He said she worked in a job where she pays into Social Security and would get Social Security upon her retirement. I then pointed out that under the repeal of the Pension Offset provisions, he would be entitled to Social Security benefits equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ the amount his wife will receive. Under repeal of the Pension Offset, a CSRS retiree will be eligible for any Social Security they may have earned or an amount equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ of what his/her spouse receives, whichever is the higher. If you are a CSRS retiree, and fall into these categories, you need to contact Social Security.

Short Stories

*By Sargeant at Arms,
Eric Short*

The American Philosopher Jim Carey recently wrote, "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer". (Joking on the philosopher reference!) Some people say money does not make you happy. Others say only rich people use that statement. Think about this. One of the lowest paying jobs in the Post Office is a starting CCA. Recently reports have shown that over half of all new CCAs in 2024 quit the Post Office. The main reasons for the departures are treatment by management and no personal life due to working too many hours and no set schedule. So new employees are looking to start a career, leave because they would rather spend more time in their personal life and less time at work. So, they are choosing personal life over extra money. Maybe they are the smart ones. I think many of us try to balance our work and personal lives while we try to find a happy medium. It took me a long time to realize where that medium is for me. Hopefully you all find yours. We all need to make the money to live just don't forget to live your life.

The following proposed Bylaw changes were read at the August 14th General Membership Meeting and will be discussed and voted on at the September 11th General Membership meeting.

Now Reads:
SECTION 1.

ARTICLE 4 ELECTIONS

- A. Election of officers and delegates shall be held by Mail Balloting in accordance with the NALC Constitution and NALC Regulations governing Branch Elections Procedures. The Election Date (by which all ballots must be received) will be the Regular Branch Meeting date in December. Nominations of officers and delegates will be held at the November meeting of the Branch. ***(Adopted 12/4/2015)***
- B. All nominees must signify their willingness to serve, if elected. Nominations will be closed at the end of the November meeting. In the event a member seeking nomination is unable to be present at this meeting, he/she must signify, in writing, his/her desire to be placed in nomination for the office that he/she is seeking. Said letter must be presented at the time of nominations.
- C. Election of delegates shall be in accordance with ARTICLE 5 of the National Constitution and By-Laws.
- D. All officers shall hold office for a period of three (3) years. Any Branch Office that is vacated, for any reason, shall be filled by an appointment made by the President until the next regular election is called for by these by-laws. Any appointment shall be affirmed by a majority of the Executive Board present and voting.

Change to read:
SECTION 1.

ARTICLE 4 ELECTIONS

- A. The Election of officers and delegates shall be held in the month of December. Notification of election will be published in the October issue of the "Twig of the Branch." Nominations of officers and delegates will be held at the November meeting of the Branch. The installation of officers will be held on the second Saturday in January.
- B. All nominees must signify their willingness to serve, if elected. Nominations will be closed at the end of the November meeting. In the event a member seeking nomination is unable to be present at this meeting, he/she must signify, in writing, his/her desire to be placed in nomination for the office that he/she is seeking. Said letter must be presented at the time of nominations.
- C. Election of delegates shall be in accordance with ARTICLE 5 of the National Constitution and By-Laws.
- D. All officers shall hold office for a period of three (3) years. Any Branch Office that is vacated, for any reason, shall be filled by an appointment made by the President until the next regular election is called for by these by-laws. Any appointment shall be affirmed by a majority of the Executive Board present and voting.

Add:

- E. Any member in good standing may, by written request, vote by absentee ballot. All requests must be individually mailed. No verbal requests will be granted. Procedures for the handing of absentee ballots shall be in accordance with the NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedure.

Minutes of August 14, 2025 Membership Meeting



Recording/Financial Secretary *Ken Grasso*

Meeting called to order 7:00 p.m. by Tom Phillips.

Branch by the numbers: 762 Per Capita 735 deduct count pay. Retirees 562 (124 Gold Cards) 1329 Total Members.

Officers' Reports were omitted due to attendance at the Convention.

Executive Vice President—Chris Hubble:

Welfare Report

Sad:

- Syncer Wisdom, Carrier Pinellas Park—Had surgery.
- Randy Hanbrick, Retiree—Son passed away.
- Jim Herren, Retiree St. Pete—Passed away.
- Johann Mohorko, Carrier Open Air—Brother passed away.
- Jim Good, former President of Tampa's Branch—Passed away.
- Jerry Vann, Retiree St. Pete—Mother passed away and his wife passed away in December.
- Ron Hearon, Retiree Pinellas Park—Passed away.
- Greg Fiess, Carrier St. Pete—Father passed away.
- Ralph Brown, Carrier St. Pete—Had shoulder surgery.

Glad:

CCA Promotions

- Dawn Vest—Seminole—7/26/25
- Richard Hanson—Largo—8/9/25
- Nick Noce—Pinellas Park—7/26/25
- Ryan Wizniak—St. Petersburg—8/9/25
- Vinny Manzano—St. Petersburg—8/9/25

New Hires

St. Petersburg:

- Til Vogeler
- Ismael Riveria
- Javaris McCloud
- Gerard Garcia
- Tiffany Brummer
- Kai Miller
- Ken Cunningham
- Eric Mills

- Shenera Moyer—**Largo**
- Al Villareal—**Dunedin**
- Joel Prokosch—**Seminole**
- Sean Shanahan—**Englewood**

Grievance Workload since our last meeting:

62 Informal A files appealing 15 to Formal A and 10 appealed to Step b.

FSALC State Convention begins today in Orlando, Florida.

New Employee Experience and Retention starting July 1, 2025 all new hired City Letter Carriers will receive the following prior to leaving the Carrier Academy and reporting to their employing office: Assignment of a Mentor.

The Parties are preparing to send local teams for a "Train the Trainer" event in Kansas City, on June 24, 2026.

Mentors, Stewards, supervisors, and all OJTs are required to attend a Zoom Orientation

South Branch Meeting: We have rejoined the Port Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and reserved the 4th Thursday of the month beginning September 25, 2025 at 6:30.

Goods of Service

Reading of the Bylaw Proposal

Motion to Adjourn.

Steward Meeting Attendees

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

August 21st:

Laurann Rose, Scott Archbold, Eric Short, Wyatt Stribling, Nadir Alwani, Ken Domingos, Jody Dodd. Patrick Jacques, Erica Baker, Gary Johnson, Karen Peck, Scott Held, Daavid Brown, Donny DeMilla, Jillian Iuliucci, Al Baldwin, Olbin Flores-Elvir, Tim Cox, Chuck Cavicchio

BRANCH 1477 PHONE DIRECTORY

UNION HALL: (727) 531-1477

UNION FAX: (727) 531-1478

EMAIL: branch1477nalc@gmail.com

WEBSITE: branch1477nalc.org

OFFICERS OF BRANCH 1477

PRESIDENT

Joe Henschen. (727) 492-4009

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Chris Hubble. (727) 641-8396

VICE PRESIDENT

Greg Welsh. (727) 804-4726

RECORDING/FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Ken Grasso. (727) 744-2578

TREASURER

Chuck Cavicchio. (727) 798-8506

EDITOR

Judy Dorris. (727) 403-2173

DIRECTOR OF RETIREE AFFAIRS

O.D. Elliott. (727) 608-6027

DIRECTOR OF INSURANCE

Tom Phillips. (727) 458-4127

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Eric Short. (727) 251-9846

TRUSTEES:

Shiela Bradley. (813) 335-7783

Brian Andrews. (941) 807-5669

Patrick Jacques. (727) 218-2721

STEWARDS OF BRANCH 1477

St. Petersburg:

Crossroads 9	Jody Dodd	(727) 768-2562
Crossroads 10	Ken Domingos	(716) 598-1205
Euclid	Wyatt Stribling	(727) 480-6121
Gateway	Jillian Iuliucci	(727) 458-1623
Gulfwinds 7,11,15	Olbin Flores-Elvir	(913) 671-0397
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Midtown 5	Al Baldwin	(727) 754-0199
Alt	Tony Cook	(727) 244-3194
Midtown 12	Gary Johnson	(316) 209-3764
Northside 2	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
Northside 16	Javiar Urrutia	(813) 484-2499
Open Air	Nadir Alwani	(813) 305-6136
Alt	Scott Archbold	(727) 422-4766
St. Pete Beach	Laurann Rose	(727) 226-3291
St. Pete Main 13	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971
St. Pete Main 14	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254
Alt	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971

Bradenton Bch	Brian Andrews	(941) 807-5669
Dunedin	Scott Held	(727) 418-5742
Alt	Devin Price	(803) 944-2706
Ellenton	The Hall	(727) 531-1477
Englewood	Jon Robinson	(740) 919-7687
Indian Rocks Bch	Tim Cox	(727) 481-5348
Largo 71/78	Daavid Brown	(727) 657-5606
Largo 70/73	Karen Peck	(727) 418-1990
Palmetto	Sheldon Jones	(941) 580-1058
Pinellas Park 81/82	Javier Urrutia	(813) 484-2499
Punta Gorda	Erica Donaldson	(941) 661-5196
PC Annex	Erica Donaldson	(941) 661-5196
Seminole 72/74	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Alt	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413
Seminole 76/77	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413
Alt	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846

Congressional Liaisons:

District 13: Tom Phillips (727) 458-4127
District 15: Gene Carroll (727) 742-1640

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.



Branch 1477, N.A.L.C.
5369 Park Boulevard North
Pinellas Park, FL 33781-3421

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ST. PETERSBURG, FL
PERMIT 5489

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

September, 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Labor Day	2 St. Pete Retiree Breakfast	3 Largo Retiree Breakfast	4 Executive Board Meeting	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 General Membership Meeting	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 Steward's Meeting	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 South Branch Meeting	26	27
28	29	30				