

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**

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VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

Twitter @JaHe1

We have a lot to be encouraged about as 2021 unfolds. I hope it is a healthy and happy year for all our families.

Ratification of the National Agreement

Since 1971, there have been 15 National Agreements between the NALC and the Postal Service. Six were awarded by an Arbitrator as a result of interest arbitration. Eight Agreements were negotiated and ratified by the membership. The Terms of the 2019-2023 Agreement if ratified will be the ninth time our National Officers have negotiated an agreement with the USPS. Each of these contracts achieved wage increases and improved working conditions. Each one of these agreements were ratified by the members of the NALC.

Here's how it will work: Plans are now being made to mail a copy of the tentative contract and all associated MOUs to the active members of NALC, along with a ratification ballot and instructions on voting. This should occur around January 10,11, 2021. Once the active members receive the MOUs and Contract, there will be some questions raised and give you the opportunity to get those answers locally.

As dictated by the NALC Constitution, only active Letter Carrier members of NALC will be permitted to vote. A Ballot Committee has been appointed comprised of Branch leaders all around the country. This committee is tasked with monitoring and observation of the dispatch, receipt, and tabulation of the ballots.

President Rolando called for a National Conference pursuant to Article 3.4(b) of the NALC Constitution so

NEXT BRANCH MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

that branch leaders could be fully briefed on the proposed contract and be prepared to answer members' questions before the ratification vote is taken. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the conference was held virtually on Sunday December 20th via video conference. Due to the nature of video conferencing and participant limits, the meeting was limited to Branch Presidents and designees. Executive Vice President Hubble and I participated in the conference by logging in.

During this meeting it was mentioned that the return deadline for the ratification ballot is set at February 16, 2021.

Although the December Postal Record recently out has the details of the MOUs and contract modifications, here are the highlights we recorded during the National Rap Session:

The Term of the Contract runs September 21, 2019 – May 20, 2023.

General Wage Increase released at 1.1% in November paid retroactively for November 23, 2019—Nov. 21, 2020, 1.3 % on Nov. 21, 2021 and Nov. 19, 2022. CCA's receive an additional 1% on these dates in lieu of COLA's

Nov. 19, 2022 adds Step P for all employees with 46 weeks at Step O—\$444 annually.

All Career Carriers will receive 7 COLAs: The first effective February 29, 2020 and August 29, 2020 will be paid retroactively. The CPI-W determined they were \$166 and \$188, respectively.

The next COLAs will be effective March 2021, Sept. 2021, March 2022, September 2022, and March 2023.

On June 19, 2021, the entry step for CCAs will be BB and then 52 weeks to AA. The 2016-2019 Contract used a 12-week period at Step CC before moving to BB and 40 weeks to AA.

Back-pay provisions for Carriers and recently retired Carriers

A full back-pay calculation for all Letter Carriers (career and non-career alike), covering all paid hours since the expiration of the 2016-2019 contract, will be made as soon as practicable. These back-pay calculations will include the Nov. 23, 2019, and Nov. 21, 2020, general wage increases (plus the 1 percent additional increase for CCAs on those dates) and the Jan. 2020 and July

2020 COLAs for Career Letter Carriers.

It will take some time for the Postal Service to complete the more than 205,000 back-pay calculations, so it is impossible to know right now the exact pay period in which back pay will be issued. Carriers who have retired since September 2019 will receive the back pay for hours worked up until their retirement—and their annuities will be adjusted accordingly. It is possible that the two COLAs and the two general wage increases may slightly raise their high-3 average salary and, therefore, their monthly annuities.)

The Sunday delivery memo stays in effect. This memo requires volume to dictate compliment. In each district the continued employment of any CCAs that would exceed the greater of six percent over the Article 7.1. C.1 cap or one CCA for every 275 Sunday packages delivered in that District. This period of calculation is agreed to by the parties.

To curb unreasonable delays in transfers the 2019-2023 Contract requires management to begin the process of filling the residual vacancies in the ratio at 14 Days.

The Ratio memo continues to be 1 in 4, and 1 in 6.

24-month relative standing in same installation for auto conversion. This is not retroactive back to 24 months. *CCAs converted under the 24-month auto conversion will not serve probation.*

Conversion to Career will occur in all Installations no later than 60 days from the ratification of this agreement or 1st day of the 3rd full pay period. Conversions will be into PTF unless a residual vacancy exists.

In offices of 200 or more work years PTFs will not count in the 88/12 ratio until they have 52 weeks of service as a career employee. Maximization is still in effect.

The Article 11: 90 Day exclusion for taking A/L upon conversion is removed from the contract.

Converted Carriers will be assigned the Table 2 Step AA rate and the period for advancement to Step A will be 46 weeks.

The biweekly Employer contribution for self only, self plus one and self and family is adjusted to an amount equal to 73% in 2020 and 2021, and 72% in 2022 and 2023 of the average weighted average biweekly premiums under the FEHB as determined

by OPM. The adjustment begins on the effective determined by OPM in January of the years in question.

Effective Plan Year 2022, the Postal Service will make bi-weekly contributions equal to 75% of the total premium for any CCA employee who wishes to participate in the USPS Plan for Self, self plus one or family coverage regardless of years of employment. (prior it was 65% first year and 75% 2nd)

Holiday Pay effective July 4, 2021, hours worked on an employee's holiday or designated holiday may be paid at the straight time rate or credited to the Annual Leave Balance.

The Uniform MOU has been replaced with a Uniform Task Force to help expedite the modifications to the Uniforms.

Q&A

Some of the questions raised were answered as follows:

Why did we go from 12.4 weeks to over 13 years for top step? Why widen the gap? **The answer was pretty clear example for Branch 1477 will have 320 carriers immediately receive the additional Step P wage increase \$444 dollars so for the senior employees there is no wait for Step P.**

Non-Career Buy Back Time? **This is not something that the NALC can negotiate, when it occurred for the TEs it was a result of a Legislative Action in Congress.**

COVID related Memorandums were extended to March 26, 2021, **See EVP Hubble's article in this edition for more information.**

The Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) **has not been extended.** The FMLA expansion for childcare, and 80 hours of FFCRA emergency paid sick leave is no longer available.

The Route Count and Inspection (RCI) Memorandum has not been agreed to, however our National EVP Brain Renfroe stated "We are in the best position we've been in a while to get together on the RCI process."

Why don't we bargain with the APWU or Rural's? We always seem to bargain after them. **Fred stated: "Our contract is 44 months and theirs is 36 months so are we first or last?"**



Hubble's Troubles

By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble

Memorandums extended...

Liberal Changes of Schedules and Leave

The memorandum (M-01914) and its provisions are extended through March 26, 2021. The memo temporarily expands the use of sick leave for Dependent Care for unexpected childcare needs because of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In addition, managers and supervisors should allow liberal changes of schedule in recognition of the disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic. To the extent operationally practicable, managers and supervisors should accommodate employees who submit PS Form 3189, *Request for Temporary Schedule Change for Personal Convenience* because of childcare issues caused by daycare closures, school (Pre-K through Grade 12) closures, or the unavailability of a child's primary caregiver because of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Temporary Additional Paid Leave for CCAs

This memorandum (M-01911) will permit CCAs to use up to 80 hours of paid leave for use in conjunction with COVID 19 pandemic. The employee may request this leave if they have contracted COVID 19 or has been directly exposed to someone with COVID 19 or is experiencing symptoms generally associated with COVID 19 and/or consistent with the MOU Expanded Sick Leave for Dependent Care During COVID 19.

Leave used for the above purpose will be coded as TACS Code 086, *Other Paid Leave*. Except for emergencies, paid leave for the circumstances listed above must be requested on a PS Form 3971, *Request for Notification of Absence*, and approved by the appropriate supervisor. Employees should designate the reason for the absence as "Other" and write "LC10" in the remarks section.

Temporary Use of the City Letter Carriers (7:01 Rule)

Also extended is M-01913. A City Letter Carrier

who works more than 7 hours, but less than 8 hours of a regular scheduled day will, upon his/her request, be officially excused from the completion of the 8-hour tour and still credited with 8 hours of work time for pay purposes. All delivery service supervisors are reminded that City Letter Carriers should not be excused under the 7:01 rule unless they have completed their routes and cannot be assigned to any available work in the same wage level.

Temporary Workplace Changes to Promote Social Distancing

In this memorandum (M-01915), the parties agree that the social distancing recommendations of the CDC are important measures which should be practiced as much as possible to slow the spread of COVID 19. Some of those social distancing recommendations for the workplace include increasing physical space between workers, staggering work schedules, limiting large work-related gatherings, and reducing or eliminating travel.

With that in mind, the parties agree that in postal installations with 100 or more work years of employment, to minimize the possibility of exposure to COVID 19 or the possibility of unknowingly spreading the COVID 19 to a larger portion of the workforce by working in multiple facilities, to the extent possible all City Letter Carriers will work in their employing facility for the duration of this agreement. In addition, to the extent possible the MOU *City Carrier Assignments-Temporary Assignments to Other Post Offices* will not be in effect for the duration of this agreement.



Director of Insurance

By Tom Phillips

I hope all letter carriers were able to have a happy holiday season and hoping everyone has a better 2021. Good riddance 2020.

Covid cases are rising exponentially among postal employees across Region 9. Unfortunately, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) expired on December 31, 2020.

*Many believed that the FFCRA's sick and family leave provisions would be extended into 2021 as part of the pandemic relief package that was signed by the President on December 27. However, these provisions were ultimately not extended, meaning that employers will not be **required** to provide paid leave under the FFCRA after December 31, 2020.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

Fortunately, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) has helped many letter carriers with paid leave (other than using their own sick, annual leave or no leave at all) who were forced to take time off due to the virus. I thought it would be helpful to review some of the Act's basics, in the event the next administration does put these provisions back in place *The FFCRA provides two weeks (up to 80 hours) of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate when he or she is quarantined due to a Federal, State, or local government order or at the advice of a health care provider. The Act also provides that an employee receive two weeks (up to 80 hours) at two-thirds of the employee's regular rate of pay if the employee is unable to work because of a "bona fide" need to care for an individual subject to quarantine, or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to Covid-19 and also up to an additional 10 weeks of *paid expanded family and medical leave* at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay to care for a child whose school or childcare provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to Covid-19. While all employees are eligible for the two weeks of emergency sick leave with qualifying reasons, to be eligible for this new 10 weeks expanded paid FMLA, the employee would have to be employed for at least 30 calendar days and is unable to work due to a "bona fide" need for leave.¹ As you can imagine, many issues have popped up due to inexperienced or uninformed supervisors. If you have any questions regarding FFCRA please contact your branch leadership. The NALC provides updated information on its website concerning Covid-19 at Nalc.org. Members may also email questions about the pandemic to: COVID10@Nalc.org. Please include your name and NALC branch number in the email. It would not hurt to call your Congressman and Senators and ask them to support renewing FFCRA to address the needs of the American working public

¹ dol.gov

Minutes of December 10, 2020

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: May I have a motion to accept the minutes of Last Month's Meeting as printed in the Twig? Motion by O.D. Elliott, seconded by Clay Hansen, Motion passes.

Reading of Official Correspondence: by Ken Grasso: None

New Members: None

Branch by the Numbers: Members 766 with 733 paying dues. We have 33 members with no deductions or are paying direct. (146 Gold Cards). Retires 602- 1368 Total Members.

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

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio—Read balances of accounts. Motion made to send to Trustees by Tammy Weber, seconded by Shiela Bradley.

Director of Retiree Affairs: O.D. Elliott—3 New Retirees this month and scheduled to meet 3 more in January. Having a WebEx Seminar.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips—NALC High Option has incentives for signing up with a \$50 gift card. Have several Wellness programs.

Political District 13 Liaison: Tom Phillips—District 13 has over 300 co-sponsors of bill.

Trustee Report: Willie Cochran – Trustees met and audited the books for October.

Sergeant at Arms: Clay Hansen—No Report .

Editor/Webmaster: Judy Dorris—There will be a Jan/Feb Twig Issue and articles due Jan 4th.

Vice President Report: Zulma Betancourt—No Report

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—No Report

Welfare Reports:

Sad:

Susan Chavez, Retiree Englewood—Husband Roger hospitalized.

Marie Audit, Carrier Punta Gorda—Mother passed away.

Glad:

None

Presidents Report:

We mailed out 23 Gold Cards and membership anniversary pins to another 6.

President Henschen then introduced Region 9 NBA Lynne Pendleton to speak on Zoom and update the membership on the Tentative National Agreement Contract. She spoke of the many provisions concerning Letter Carriers and City Carrier Assistants.

Covid 19 Update: The State of Florida has eased stage 3 restrictions but USPS has not. The mandate remains in force. There are 785 total cases in Suncoast District.

Largo had an OSHA complaint and President Henschen went to Largo Post Office to meet with the Case Manager. An anonymous complaint concerning the placement of time clock near a circuit breaker.

Update on St. Petersburg Intervention; meeting was held today under the guidance of Lynn Pendleton and Labor Relations Joe Homalash. Both sides presented their sides of the issues and after a 2 hour meeting we are tasked with attempting to agree on a working process to correct the Informal A problems and we report back to Lynne and Joe.

Christmas POT exclusion for 2020 begins 11/28/20 and ends 12/25/20.

Christmas Bonus for Employee: In July 2017 wages and benefits concerning our employee was discussed during the meeting. We had been giving her a bonus equivalent to 1 week's salary in lieu of a wage increase. In that meeting we passed a motion to set up wage increase(s) consistent with CCA pay scale and wage increase schedule. In viewing these moves we no longer automatically approve a Bonus at Christmas for her.

At tonight's meeting President Henschen recognized Chuck Cavicchio who made a motion to give her a bonus of 1 weeks' salary seconded by Willie Cochran. Motion passes.

Ladies Auxiliary raffle was held by Joyce Keller and the winner of the Large Basket was Katrina Davis. The winner of the small basket was John Myers. Over \$1300.00 was raised.

Motion to Adjourn by Clay Hansen, seconded by Chuck Cavicchio. Motion passes.

******Sad News******

Ingrid Heise, Carrier Punta Gorda—Father Passed Away.

Danny Pocchiari, Retiree St. Pete (94 yrs old) — Passed away.

Auxiliary 181 News
By Dottie Tutt-Hutchinson

Happy new year, filled with hope for a cure for the COVID virus, no more quarantines, venturing out, enjoying family, friends, and activities without fear of contagion, and a calmer, less dramatic presidency. It's been a year unlike any other. We learned to social distance by wearing protective masks and washing our hands incessantly. The pandemic affected jobs, some even closing. We

couldn't go to movies, restaurants, church, libraries, or even school. We learned to Zoom to keep in touch. Basics such as toilet paper and bottled water were rationed. We worried.... a lot. We really appreciated those in medicine, care givers, teachers, and those who deliver to us. Thank you to Letter Carriers who stepped up, as they always do.

Our Auxiliary raffled 2 holiday filled baskets by selling \$1 tickets, collecting over \$1,000 to share amongst 7 families. Thanks to the shop stewards, Branch 1477, auxiliary members, and managers for willing to do this.

We celebrated Christmas with each other at Joyce Keller's cheerfully decorated home in December. Her daughter Diana came early to help, teasing Joyce that was the only reason she was invited! We laughed throughout dinner and the gift exchange, remembering care-free times.

Our next meeting is February 3rd, noon at Joyce Keller's home with me hosting.

Happy anniversary to Zulma and Rudy Betancourt (22).

Steward Meeting Attendees

Meetings are held at the Hall and on Zoom, led by Joe Henschen and Chris Hubble

November 19th:

Tiffany Naughton, Tom Phillips, Shiela Bradley, Cheryl Anderson, Zulma Betancourt, Patrick Jacques, Ken Domingos, Ben Hamilton, Harry Nieves, Anthony Roger, A.J. Pollard, Denise Clark, Jim Grazioso, Eric Short, Anne Winkelbauer, Donny DeMilta, Brian Andrews, Bert Lewis, Chris Kotonski, Sam Haddad.

December 17th:

Tiffany Naughton, Tom Phillips, Shiela Bradley, Cheryl Anderson, Patrick Jacques, Ken Domingos, Ben Hamilton, Joel Baez. Harry Nieves, Anthony Roger, A.J. Pollard, Tonya Lee, Denise Clark, Jim Grazioso, Eric Short, Anne Winkelbauer, Donny DeMilta, Brian Andrews, Josh LaGrew, Bert Lewis, Sheldon Jones, Chris Kotonski.

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Brian Andrews. (941) 748-5594

Joel Baez. (787) 629-3596

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Crossroads 9	Ken Domingos	(716) 598-1205
Crossroads 10	Ben Hamilton	(727) 735-5125
Euclid	(Union Hall)	(727) 531-1477
Gateway	Tom Phillips	(727) 458-4127
Gulfwinds 7	Zulma Betancourt	(813) 597-8363
Gulfwinds 15	" "	" " "
Gulfwinds 11	Joel Baez	(787) 629-3596
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Alt	Greg Welsh	(727) 804-4726
Midtown 5	Shiela Bradley	(813) 335-7783
Midtown 12	Harry Nieves	(787) 564-4993
Alt	Willie Cochran	(727) 687-4163
Northside 2	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
Northside 16	Tonya Lee	(813) 270-2918
Open Air	Tony Mells	(727) 385-8579
St. Pete Beach	Cheryl Anderson	(727) 531-1477
St. Pete Main 13	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971
Alt	Johnnie Booker	(941) 580-1714
St. Pete Main 14	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254
Alt	Dee Grant	(727) 225-9272

Bradenton Bch	Brian Andrews	(941) 748-5594
Dunedin	Chuck Cavicchio	(727) 798-8506
Ellenton	Bert Lewis	(941) 266-2109
Englewood	Josh LaGrew	(763) 232-8954
Alt	Kris Beal	(813) 500-0841
Indian Rocks Bch	Denise Clark	(407) 474-9038
Largo 70/71	Jim Grazioso	(727) 410-6492
Largo 73/78	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Palmetto	Sheldon Jones	(941) 580-1058
Pinellas Park 81/82	Alicia Gary	(973) 981-2174
Punta Gorda	Chris Kotonski	(330) 212-1777
(PC Annex)	Sam Haddad	(941) 219-9306
Seminole 72/74	Anne Winkelbauer	(708) 692-6540
Seminole 76/77	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413

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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.



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February, 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 (TBA)	3 (TBA)	4 Executive Board	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 General Membership	12	13
14	15 President's Day	16	17 (TBA)	18 Steward's Meeting (Zoom)	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						