

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

A Tale of Two NALC Regions.

I want to start by assuring our members that the delegation you sent to Boston for the 73rd Biennial Convention represented you well. Many of the area Branches have bylaws that include time off from convention business. Our Branch requires attendance and participation in the business sessions of the convention, and attend we did. The Convention theme "Grow, Rise, Together" set the tone for a number of guest speakers, and a number of prepared brief videos designed to welcome the 5,109 delegates in attendance and in part let us know that it is the delegates in attendance that speak funny not the locals.

Scheduled between all this, was the business of the National Association, and the discussion of National Agreement Resolutions, General Resolutions, and proposed NALC Constitution Resolutions. Once the

discussions were complete, votes were taken. The accepted resolutions are now on the table for future contract negotiations.

One particular topic that had a lot of focus was the backlog of Step B cases in most areas of the country. Certainly Region 9 consisting of the Carolinas', Georgia, and Florida are experiencing the same backlog. This topic had a lot of focus and passionate debates on enforcement of the Dispute Resolution Process Memo, and when back-up Step B Teams can or should be activated. I wanted to highlight this debate to illustrate the contrasting way our Region 9 Leadership Team handles the backlog of cases. Prior to leaving for the convention, our National Business Agent Eddie Davidson and his team pulled hundreds of case files from Region 9 Step B Teams and assigned them to the RAAs to negotiate resolutions to the files. On the Friday prior to the convention a large number of decisions were released to Branches in Region 9.

NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

Branch 1477 received our share of solid sustained cases. The files included 8 discipline cases for actions ranging from Letters of Warnings to 14 Day No Time Off Suspensions and in 1 case a Separation during the probationary period without notice. All of which were reduced to an Official Discussion or expunged all together. The latter separation case included a make whole remedy for the time the employee was left off the clock.

A number of Contract Cases were returned also. To highlight a few:

1477-205-06-24, Management's actions violated Articles 3, and 19, and 34 the National Agreement, specifically Handbook M-39 Section 115.4, Sections 134.21, ASM Section 273.172. when photographing a City Letter Carrier with a personal cell phone while the Carrier was in the performance of his/her duties. **Management is prohibited from taking pictures of Carriers while casing or delivering mail.**

1477-576-10-23, The DRT agrees management violated Article 8 of the National Agreement when the grievant was required to remain on stand-by. Management will comply with Article 8 as it relates to CCA work hour guarantees, and future violations may result in additional remedies. The Grievant received a lump sum payment. **CCAs scheduled to report to work should not be told to stand by and not begin tour. This includes the Sunday Hub.**

1477-152-06-24, The DRT agrees management violated Article 8 of the National Agreement when they failed to provide the grievant with four (4) hours of work or pay in lieu of work on April 2, 2024. **Any CCA employee who is scheduled to work and who reports to work in a post office or facility with 200 or more work years of employment shall be guaranteed four (4) hours of work or pay. CCAs at other post offices and facilities will be guaranteed two (2) hours' work or pay.**

1477-564-2A-24, It is agreed that management has violated Article 19 of the National Agreement Employee Labor Relations (ELM) Handbook via Article 19 by **deeming the grievant desirable and requiring them to supply medical documentation for an absence of 3 days or less.** It is also agreed that the grievant shall be paid a lump sum amount of \$40.00 to reimburse him for mileage and his co-payment.

1477-228-01-24, management violated Article 8, 15.3.A, and Postal Service Policy Letter (M-01517) in the scheduling of overtime at the Midtown Station. Additionally, Non-ODL/WA Carrier(s) will be compensated an additional 100% at the straight

time rate for the overtime improperly required to work off assignment. **This escalated the penalty from 50% to 100% for Non-ODL/WA off their duty assignment.**

1477-213-2A-24, management violated Article 5, Section 322.31 of Handbook M-41, Section 125.1 of Handbook, M-39 via Article 19 of the National Agreement when City Carrier Assistants (CCAs) were given instructions inconsistent with Handbook M-39 and Handbook M-41 regarding loading parcels into postal vehicles. Section 125.25 of Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services provides the following: Sequence Parcels When Loading. **While loading parcels into the vehicle, Carriers are to arrange them in the sequence of delivery.**

1477-162-06-24, management violated Articles 5 and 19 of the National Agreement via Handbook M-39, Sections 111.2, 117.1, and 261.2, to include Handbook M-41, Sections 242.5, 261.21, 431 **by not obtaining individual clearance of accountable items from City Letter Carriers.**

1477-01-02-24, management violated Articles 5, 15, and 19 of the National Agreement by falsely editing Carrier clock rings and when they improperly required Carriers to move to MODS code 354 when on personal needs and MODS code 228 when delivering Express Mail. **This moves Carriers from other operations rather than labor distribution code 721 and hides the time in the Carrier's day.**

Remedy: management shall cease and desist from falsely editing clock rings, **for the failure to provide requested time and/or information, the Union Steward shall be paid a lump sum of \$50.00.**

Each of these resolves include the caveat: "In keeping with Step B Decisions, this settlement is precedent setting in this installation"

As I mentioned earlier, during the business sessions at the 73rd Biennial Convention one NALC Region's NBA and a number of large Branch Presidents in the same Region, opened discussions relating to the backlog of files in their area. They pointed to the memo that created the DRT process and failures of USPS Labor Relations in their area to act. They asked for support from Headquarters and other regions to help fix their issues.

Region 9 Leadership took a stand, with the same backlog of cases and pushed back, then worked it out without relying on permission to be granted. As our NBA, Eddie Davidson often states; "We are on offense not defense". We are in good hands.



Hubble's Troubles

By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble

Can I buy back my casual, TE and or CCA time?

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 would modify what is considered creditable federal civilian service under FERS. It 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 noncareer positions, providing greater retirement security.

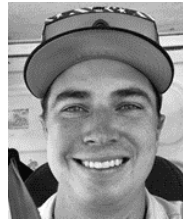
Support the **Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 5995)** by scanning the QR Code below.



Press the *(take action tab)* under the Support the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 5995)

After logging in, you will be able to send a pre-written letter to your Member of Congress asking them to support House Resolution 5995.

Currently there are 120 bipartisan cosponsors of the bill.



Clay Hansen

Carrier Academy Instructor

First day of official duty

It's been a while since I've written an article for the Twig, but I wanted to thank the branch members for allowing me the opportunity to be a delegate for branch 1477 for the 73rd Biennial Convention in Boston. I wanted to highlight a topic discussed in a workshop I attended, Career Orientation.

As a Carrier Academy Instructor, I have the opportunity to help CCAs start their careers with the Postal Service but unfortunately, I don't get to follow up with many of the CCAs after the 4 days they spend with me in the academy. As they continue their journey they will be converted to a career employee, which at that point they **must** receive **Career Orientation**. The Director of City Delivery Chris Jackson wrote about this in the January Postal Record and was the instructor for the workshop that brought this issue up in Boston.

The ELM Section 715.2 states: **"An orientation program is required at all levels for new career employees on their first day of official duty."** The orientation topics should include:

- Thrift Savings Plan
- Federal Employee Health Benefits Plans
- Federal Employee Group Life Insurance
- Flexible Spending Account
- Federal Employee Retirement System
- Annual/Sick Leave

If you are soon to be converted, make sure local management provides you with this orientation. If you were recently converted and were not provided with this orientation by local management, please speak to your Steward so a grievance can be filed.

In closing if you're reading this and I was your academy instructor, keep up the hard work and congratulations on the success you've had.

George B. and Annie R. Elliott Scholarship winner:



Alexis Smolka
(Daughter of Bob Smolka, Crossroads)

I am so thankful to be the recipient of the George B. and Annie R. Elliott, Branch 1477 Scholarship! Here is some of the information requested in the letter:

I am entering my senior year majoring in Athletic Training at Florida State University, where I had the opportunity to work with the women's basketball team and football team through their ACC championship. After graduating, I plan on working towards a doctorate in physical therapy to pursue my passion in sports medicine.

Bernard Baxley Scholarship winner:



Chase Knight
(Son of Darla Knight, Dunedin)

Hello, my name is Chase Knight. During my time in High School, I was a member of our National Honors Society (NHS) where I volunteered with my other peers at beach cleanups or helping out at school. My main activity was obviously my academics as it wasn't easy being dual enrolled and taking exclusively College courses.

I was also part of our school's Science Club which had a "Save the Monarchs" butterfly garden. As the lead gardener for that, I took pride in our little

creation with it even getting awarded the title "Monarch Butterfly Way Station", a national program helping to keep the endangered butterflies alive.

Our High School was a bit special with the passion from all of the staff and students. This year in fact, the class of 2024 seniors were the first to have a 100% Associates degree and High School graduation rate!

As of now, I'm gearing up for my first semester at the University of Florida as a Biochemistry major in the liberal arts and sciences program. I plan on graduating with my Bachelor's in 2 years and applying to the Pharmaceutical Sciences PhD program.

Thank you so much for this generous gift.

Alternate for both Elliott and Bernard Baxley Scholarships



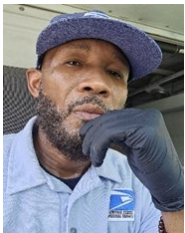
Armanee Gary
(Daughter of Alicia Gary, Carrier Pinellas Park and Supervisor Robert Gary of Seminole)

I would like to thank the NALC for being an alternate for the scholarship. The following is what I did in high school:

My name is Armanee Gary and during my time at Seminole High School I was part of the following clubs:

National Honor Society, National English Honor Society and Health Information Project. I participated in the CEL (Center for Education & Leadership) program all four years.

I was part of the Varsity Cheer Squad for four years and captain my senior year. I graduated Summa Cum Laude. I also received the Joseph L. Carwise and the Dr. Mac J. Williams Achievement Awards multiple years. I enjoy reading, going to concerts and movies and hanging out with friends.



Patrick Jacques

Branch Trustee

We support those that support our jobs!

I would like to thank the members for making it possible for me to attend and represent our Branch at the National Convention this year in Boston. All our delegates in attendance did a fantastic job representing our Branch.

We attended Workshops before and after the convention daily. This is the second convention that I had the privilege to attend and am looking forward to more as I continue my career, and more importantly as a Union member till the end.

This convention was a little different this time around, and delegates that have attended many in the past also agreed. This one has set precedence to all future conventions and reflects a strong collective Union. Some delegates strongly expressed their views and divisions on certain issues, but at the end of the day we were able to agree on the presented resolutions and move forward.

Let's also reassure ourselves that we collectively elect these officials to represent our best interest, and they do. As we continue our journey and navigate our career, it is our human nature to become complacent at times, but also remind ourselves there are people (Union representatives) continuing to fight to maintain our livelihood during our career and into retirement, it is fact!

Union makes the force.... solid!

You can be a part of your Union Meetings by logging into Branch1477nalc.org to find the link and passcode. The Next General Membership Meeting is September 12, 2024, at 7PM.



Minutes of August 15, 2024 Membership Meeting



Recording/Financial Secretary

Ken Grasso

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Executive Vice President Chris Hubble.

Invocation by Greg Welsh.

Pledge of Allegiance: led by Executive Vice President Chris Hubble.

Minutes of previous meeting: Motion to accept June's minutes by Terry Johnson, seconded by Eric Short. Motion passes.

Reading of Official Correspondence: by Ken Grasso - Two.

Branch by the Numbers: As of the PP 16 dues roster, 783 Active 776 Members paying dues. Retirees 564 (128 Gold Cards) – 1347 Total Members.

Recognize from Absolute Quality Interpreting Services Kelli Bins.

Scholarships Award: Ken Grasso

President Emeritus O.D. Elliott was asked to assist in presenting the Elliott Scholarships.

Elliott Scholarship Male Winner: Christian Junevicus

Elliott Scholarship Female Winner: Alexis Smolka

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio read ending balances for July. Motion to accept Treasurer's Report by Glen Fagan, seconded by Jim Bumbul. Motion passes.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips—Received a phone call from a member from one of the South Branch cities who has Blue/Cross. I told her we only discuss or help with NALC Health Benefit Plan members. Eyeglass Plan paid out \$500 for month of July.

Political District 13 Liaison: Tom Phillips—Amazon workers trying to organize into a Union in some areas.

Vice President Report: Greg Welsh—What I got out of the National Convention was that our leadership is strong. For new CCAs coming in, Management will give you false information to try to get rid of you and resign. Talk to your Steward, call

the hall, let us help you.

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—Office Grievance Summary: 110 Grievances Filed, 99 were contract cases, 11 were discipline cases, 37 were resolved at informal A. 73 were appealed to Formal A and are at Formal A. 183 files were processed and we sent 0 to Step B.

Last night the Executive Board approved sending 1 Steward to the Region 9 Basic Steward Training and 1 Steward to the Formal A Steward Class in Marietta Ga in September. The total cost is 1,993.22. Motion by O.D. Elliott, seconded by Kyle Garlow. Motion passed.

We had a Com Switch burn out and ordered one for \$149.00.

Welfare Reports:

Sad:

- Gilbert Migliano, Retiree St. Petersburg—75-year Member passed away.
- Richard Martin, Retiree Largo—Passed away.
- Auburn Loggins, Retiree Largo—Passed away.
- Richard Ortiz, Retiree, Largo—Passed away.
- Oria Allen, St. Petersburg Carrier—Mother-in-law passed away.
- Ellis Pujols, St. Petersburg Carrier—Wife is ill/hospitalized.

Glad:

- Mickey Mikulis, St. Petersburg Retiree — Presented with his Life Membership Gold Card.
- Danny Giannetto, Carrier Largo/Seminole—Promoted to FTR.
- Mike Rich, Carrier Largo—Promoted to FTR.
- Ken Grasso, Recording/Financial Secretary and his wife Pauline—Celebrated their 47th Wedding Anniversary.
- Tom Phillips, Director of Insurance—Son announced his engagement.

Presidents Report:

2024 National Convention August 5-9 Boston MA.

National President Brian Renfroe told the delegates that they were close to finalizing the contract.

President Henschen also said that 5 delegates and himself contracted Covid while in Boston.

Fall COP Oct 20-22, 2024, Executive Vice President Chris Hubble and Recording/Secretary Ken Grasso are registered to attend.

TIAREAP extension expired on May 31, 2024,

without any exit strategy. However, it was a successful process for Region 9. Some history was given on all the other alternative Route Adjustments Processes that have been used instead of the traditional RCI process:

We can expect to see a return of the RCI proves now with this ending. Today we have 524 City Carriers who have never been through a Mail count and inspection (RCI).

Seminole station is scheduled for an RCI in September.

We will have training ready for the carriers in place next Thursday at the Stewards Meeting.

Discussed the new Postal Service Health Benefits Program effective January 1, 2025. The NALC HBP currently offers three options, In January of 2025 the NALC will offer six. Three available to Postal Service employees and the other 3 would be available for all other federal employees. The other component is the Medicare integration part of the Postal Reform Act. Under his law, future Postal Service retirees will be required to enroll in Medicare Parts A and B. However, there are a few exceptions to the rule:

1. Any postal employee who is retired before Jan 1, 2025
2. Any active postal employee who is 64 or older as of Jan 1, 2025
3. Any postal annuitant who can prove that they do not reside in the United States: or,
4. Any postal annuitant who receives benefits provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs or Indian Health Services. If you meet any of these criteria, if you chose not to enroll but now wish to there will be a special enrollment period in the spring of 2024 allowing Postal Service annuitants to enroll without paying the Medicare late enrollment penalties.

Legislative Update: Heather Manley—One of the speakers at the National Convention that stood out to me was Katherine Clark of Massachusetts. She said she was grateful for the work of Letter Carriers. The Protect our Letter Carriers Act has now 104 co-sponsors which pretty much doubles what we had. The Social Security Fairness Act has 323 co-sponsors now which is now a majority. The Retirement Fairness Act has 10 co-sponsors. HR 4971 Paycheck Protection Act introduced in 2023 and seems stalled in the Oversight Committee. This bill would make it illegal for Federal agencies to draw dues from your paycheck.

Good of the Service:

Door Prize Drawing: Lotto – Scratch Off Ticket
Greg Welsh

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	Chris Hubble	(727) 641-8396
Alt 9 & 10	Ken Domingos	(716) 598-1205
Euclid	Wyatt Stribling	(727) 480-6121
Alt	Patrick Green	(813) 671-4770
Gateway	Jillian Iuliucci	(727) 458-1623
Gulfwinds 7,15	Olbin Flores-Elvir	(913) 671-0397
Gulfwinds 11	The Hall	(727) 531-1477
Alt	OlbinFlores-Elvie	(913) 671-0397
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Midtown 5	Javier Urrutia	(813) 484-2499
Alt	Janice Pantoja	(813) 385-7000
Midtown 12	Patrice Cannonier	(786) 200-0957
Alt	Gary Johnson	(316) 209-3764
Northside 2	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
Northside 16	David Mills	(727) 677-8992
Alt	Javier Urrutia	(813) 484-2499
Open Air	Scott Archbold	(727) 422-4766
Alt	Dan O'Dell	(941) 315-0699
St. Pete Beach	Laurann Rose	(727) 525-6920
Alt	Jacob Lovelace	(618) 477-6492
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	Chuck Cavicchio	(727) 798-8506
Ellenton	Jocelyn Pagan	(646) 417-0392
Englewood	Jon Robinson	(740) 919-7687
Indian Rocks Bch	Tim Cox	(727) 481-5348
Largo 70/71/73/78	Daavid Brown	(727) 657-5606
Alt	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Palmetto	Sheldon Jones	(941) 580-1058
Pinellas Park 81/82	Heather Manley	(727) 244-0665
Punta Gorda	Chris Kotonski	(330) 212-1777
PC Annex	Erica Baker	(941) 661-5196
Seminole 72/74	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Alt	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413

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

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September, 2024

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