

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 636

VOICE OF BRANCH 1477

Jan/Feb, 2023

Inside This Issue:

President's Report <i>by Joe Henschen</i>	1-4
Executive Vice President article— <i>Hubble's Troubles</i> <i>by Chris Hubble</i>	4-5
Minutes of the Branch <i>by Recording/Financial Secretary</i> <i>Ken Grasso</i>	5-7
Welcome New CCA Members article <i>by Editor Judy Dorris and</i> <i>TC Bourlon</i>	7
Legislative Update <i>by Gene Carroll</i>	7-8
Auxiliary 181 News <i>by Sandra Hart</i>	8
Director of Retirees article <i>by O. D. Elliott</i>	9
Wounded Warriors Leave Rights	9
Union's Data Page	11
Calendar	12



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By President Joe Henschen

Twitter @ JaHe1

State of the Branch

Article 6 of the NALC Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches requires that the Branch President shall at the end of his/her term make a report showing the progress and condition of the Branch. This report covers the 2020-2022 term of office.

Administration

The Branch is fully compliant with Department of Labor, Internal Revenue Service, and State of Florida reporting requirements. The Branch Trustees and it's committee have audited the branch books monthly with no irregularities found.

The Branch has remained in good standing with the National Office of the NALC, the FSALC and has maintained affiliations with the AFL/CIO West Central Florida Central Labor Council and the Southwest Chapter CLC.

I am proud of the job the Finance Committee and Trustees in this term of office has done in developing policies that define our procedures ensuring transparency in our accounting practices. Executive Vice President Chris Hubble, Treasurer Chuck Cavicchio, Secretary Ken Grasso, and Trustees Brian Andrews, Eric Short and Patrick Jacques continue to work for the best interests of the Branch with their diligent monitoring of Branch finances.

NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2023

Director of Insurance Tom Phillips, while promoting the NALC's Mutual Benefit Association and Health Benefit Plan has over the Term administered the Eye Glass Plan which has provided active, retired members and dependents a benefit for out-of-pocket expenses associated with vision care.

Membership

Active carrier membership increased from 820 to 827 There are 61 non-members, leaving the branch at 93% organized. There are currently 554 retired members of which 86 are lifetime members who have achieved 50 years of continuous membership.

Finance

Branch 1477 is in sound financial condition. Balances for the funds as of December 31, 2022, of the combined checkbook balances of \$274,663.69 and investments of \$56,072.16 for a total of \$352,843.19 in Branch assets.

Total Branch Assets as of December 31, 2019, were \$244,089.75 for an increase of \$108,753.44, a 30% increase over 3 years.¹

Training

The Branch conducted new steward training as necessary and provided opportunities for stewards and members to take advantage of training opportunities provided by Branch 1477, the Florida State Association of Letter Carriers, and the Region 9 office.

In 2020, The Branch sent Stewards Patrick Jacques and Shiela Bradley to a Region 9 Stewards Training in the Marietta, Georgia Regional Office.

The Branch also conducted steward training at the monthly steward meetings and in 2020 hosted a Retirement Seminar. In 2021 and 2022 the Officers assisted the State Director of Retirees with Retirement Seminars. Director of Retirees, President Emeritus O.D. Elliott has throughout the term provided 1 on 1 counseling to members completing their retirement applications.

¹ Increase was due in part to COVID restricted Convention/Training opportunities

In early 2022 Officers Eric Short and Patrick Jacques attended a more advanced version of Steward Training in a newly formatted Steward Boot Camp.

In 2022 the NALC and FSALC seminars provided many training opportunities for delegates.

At the onset of the Pandemic, the Branch using the guidelines of Roberts Rules of Order 12th edition, restricted attendance of all meetings held by the Branch to an electronic format. With COVID restrictions lifted, meetings are open for live attendance, however, we have continued to augment attendance with virtual options.

Grievances

In 2020, Branch 1477 stewards initiated 869 grievances at Informal Step A. At that initial step only 275 cases were resolved. Appeals were written for Formal A Meetings resolving 420 files. 30 cases were appealed to Step B. With 4 cases appealed to arbitration. This resulted in developing 1319 grievance files.

In 2021, Branch 1477 stewards initiated 1043 grievances at Informal Step A, resolving 434 at that initial step. Appeals were written for Formal A Meetings resolving 429 files. 70 cases were appealed to Step B. This resulted in developing 1542 grievance files.

In 2022, Branch 1477 stewards initiated 738 grievances at Informal Step A at that initial step only 352 cases were resolved. Appeals were written for Formal A Meetings resolving 274 files. 26 cases were appealed to Step B. With 4 cases appealed to arbitration This resulted in developing 1038 grievance files.

I am proud of the great work the stewards and officers of this Branch do day after day. The membership is well represented, and you should thank your stewards for a job well done.

Injured Workers

Much of the time spent in this office in the last 3 years has included assisting injured workers. Most of my time as your President has included navigating the waters of eComp. It's for this reason I will be urging the activation of Executive Vice President Chris Hubble to Full Time for representation purposes as outlined in the Branch

Bylaws.

Member Activities

Signaling the first National Meeting of the NALC since the Pandemic, Branch 1477 hosted the Committee of Presidents October 24-25, 2021. A majority of the National Officers were in attendance. The Board as well as the several Stewards assisted in registering guests from all over the country.

Community service activities remained strong. In 2019 the Branch finished 2nd in Category #3 for Branches 1,000-1499 members with collected food totaling 1,272,792 pounds. The 2020 and 2021 annual NALC's Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive were virtual food drives. When we resumed an in person drive in 2022 the overall drive was clearly impacted by the years off from 2nd Saturday in May format. Collections were down across the country, however the 650,332 pounds of food collected in the B ranches 10 cities was enough to finish 1st in Category #3.

The Sunshine City Carriers Charities Inc. non-profit MDA fundraising effort were too hampered in 2020 and 2021 when virtual donation drives had branch donations matched by the NALC.

When 2022 rolled around, Sunshine City Carriers Charities Inc. President Sandra Rivera organized a very successful event with the St. Petersburg Gran Prix collecting over \$4500 in donations while staffing 5 concessions booths with active, retired carriers and a few family members too. Thank you, Sandra.

Editor and Web Host Judy Dorris has continued to provide the Branch with quality sources of information publishing 33 Twigs of the Branch's during the term while updating the Branch Web page providing links to recorded versions of the General Membership Meetings.

In addition to being a local Labor Union, Branch 1477 is also an employer. Anyone calling the office for assistance realizes importance of the job our Clerical Secretary T.C. Bourlon does for the members. When you call thank her for what she does for us.

The Postal Service

The Postal Reform Act of 2022 was signed into law. The Act eliminated the prefunding burden that the NALC has been fighting since its

enactment in 2006. What once had the NALC lobbying for the Postal Service to be added to an appropriations act annually now has the USPS automatically included in the budget, eliminating the questions of service cuts.

USPS Many New Challenges Over the Past Three Years.

When elected for a 3rd term in 2019, no one could imagine what challenges we were about to face. The COVID-19 pandemic changed to workroom floor as much as any implemented Managernt changes would ever do. During the pandemic all union leaders, at all levels, had to make very difficult decisions based on the information they had at that time. Each day we learned more about this pandemic, and we changed our strategy as needed. Shortages on vehicles, technology changes pale in comparison to the pandemic. The work that all letter carriers, postal workers, and all essential workers have done and continue to do during this pandemic is nothing short of extraordinary.

Many of the issues that letter carriers have been struggling with can be directly or indirectly related to the lack of staffing at many post offices.

The necessity for Carriers to work long hours due to the availability of staff due to quarantine over such a long period of time, disrupted the balance of non-overtime desired carriers to ODL carriers. This imbalance is to this day results in continuing contractual violations, low retention rates among the pre-career workforce.

Building Updates

In 2021 the Branch authorized the replacement of the Air Conditioners in the Business Office and Hall. When the Branch relocated to Pinellas Park, the AC units were moved from the prior location.

In 2021 the Branch authorized the replacement of the entire roof of the Branch 1477 building. The roof has been delayed by supply chain issues and the efforts are ongoing.

In mid-2022 the Branch upgraded the Office phone system to a Voice over Internet Provider (VoIP) system that when fully implemented will help communication with the members.

Although these building repairs were costly, they are necessary to ensure that we have a building

in great shape for many decades to come.

The Future of the Branch

I am excited about the future of the Branch. I am always optimistic that Branch 1477 will continue to do the great work for the membership and the communities we serve. We have some new faces on the Executive Board starting in 2023. However, the Union is not one person or only the Officers and the Stewards that are elected. The Union is all of us. Collectively we can accomplish much in the years ahead.

The history of the NALC is chronicled in the book Carriers in a Common Cause. It discusses how important the nation's political agenda is for Letter Carriers. Although the efforts of our National Officers and Letter Carrier Activists across the country has led to the passing the Postal Reform discussed earlier, it is no time to take our foot off the gas. Each member must take responsibility for political involvement now and in the future. If it is left up to us to ensure a strong postal service for generations to come.

Outgoing Officers

This three-year term ends with some outgoing Officers. I want to thank Sister Zulma Betancourt for her dedication to the members of the Branch 1477. Z has always done a great job representing letter carriers. It's bittersweet, watching a representative with this dedication step back is difficult. Knowing it's a well-deserved break makes it easier. We all need those breaks at times.

Brother Clay Hansen has decided also to step to the side from his position of Sargeant at Arms for a time to focus on his family as it expands. As the kids grow, I'm sure Clay will be back.

In Summary

Branch 1477 is able to address all challenges we face. Our future is bright. We have a fully functioning Union Hall which I hope will be used once again for many things and not just 3 of our 4 monthly meetings, when needed other training sessions to include FSALC District Meetings or functions to promote the mission of the Branch.

I am proud to continue serving as your President and with your help Branch 1477 will remain a

highly respected Branch of the NALC²

² Format taken from The Pioneer / January 2023 Ron Kania, Outgoing President, NALC Branch 2



Hubble's Troubles

By Executive Vice President,
Chris Hubble

NALC Member App...

Available now in the iPhone App Store and the Google Play Store for Android. From websites to email to social media, this union has continually developed the tools to put the most up-to-date information and resources into the hands of our stewards and members. The NALC has taken the next step with the NALC Member App for **iPhone** and **Android** smartphones. The app was developed at headquarters with the needs of the average member in mind.

The app contains links to workplace resources, including the National Agreement, the JCAM, the MRS, CCA resources and more. It also includes legislative tools, such as a bill tracker, an individualized list your congressional representatives and PAC information. And an Interactive Non-Scheduled Days calendar.



There's also a tab for member benefits. Learn about the Health Benefit Plan or the Mutual Benefit Association, find resources for new CCAs, contribute to the Postal Employees Relief Fund, join the Veterans Group and more.

Member Benefits

NALC belongs to its members and depends on their active participation to thrive. Members enjoy many benefits and many opportunities to serve their fellow carriers and the community through their participation in union affairs and events.

NALC Health Benefit Plan

Imagine having the security of a not-for-profit health insurance plan that was designed for and is run by letter carriers, with comprehensive benefits at an affordable rate? Whether you are a long-time letter carrier or just starting your career, the **NALC Health Benefit Plan** is a letter carrier's best choice for health insurance.

NALC Disaster Relief Foundation

The foundation has been set up to function in two ways: by providing hands-on relief and by receiving donations to offer financial grants.

Mutual Benefit Association (MBA)

The Letter Carriers **Mutual Benefit Association (MBA)**, founded in 1891, was created for the benefit of NALC members and their families. The MBA is the life insurance division of the NALC. Today, the MBA has more than \$224 million of life insurance in force on its members. Insurance plans offered by the MBA are designed to give NALC members and their families the best possible protection for the lowest cost.

CCA Retirement Benefits

NALC CCA Retirement Savings Plan is a retirement income plan designed for City Carrier Assistants (CCAs) to supplement your pension. You make small payments to the plan while you're young, so you can receive a lifetime of monthly payments after you retire.



Minutes of December 8, 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 previous minutes as printed in the Twig by Terry Johnson, seconded by Clay Hansen. Motion passes.

Branch by the Numbers: As of PP 24 the Dues Roster has 838 Active Members with 787 paying dues. We have 51 members as No Deductions, 3 are on Military Leave. 4 paying direct, with 19 on LWOP. Retirees 567 (87 Gold Cards). 1387 Total Members.

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

Treasurer: Chuck Cavicchio-Checkbook balances and total investments were read by President Henschen. Motion to accept the Report of the Treasurer and send to the trustees for audit by Eric Short, seconded by Steve Schiano. Motion passes.

Director of Retiree Affairs: O.D. Elliott-I've been getting a lot of questions about the NALC Aetna Medicare Advantage Plan.

Director of Insurance: Tom Phillips-A benefit of NALC Health Benefit Plan is Tele Health.

Political District 13 Liaison: Tom Phillips-51-50 advantage for Senate committees.

Trustee Report: Brian Andrew—Books are done and in order.

Editor/Webmaster: Judy Dorris-Articles due on January 5.

Vice President Report: Zulma Betancourt—Just write J for your 3996 in December.

Executive Vice President: Chris Hubble—No Report.

Welfare Reports:

Sad:

- Glenn Fagan, Retiree St. Petersburg—Brother passed away.

- Amy Mead, Carrier Seminole—Husband passed away.
- Dale Hart, Former NALC National Officer—Passed away.
- Joslyn Bouche, Carrier Indian Rocks Beach—Son diagnosed with a heart condition.
- Dan Nix, Carrier Open Air—Is ill.

Glad:

Lucirita Berrian, Carrier Gulfwinds—Had a baby girl.

Presidents Report:

We had another Doctor’s office added to our list of OWCP providers to assist injured federal workers. As in any case like this, I vetted the doctor about her experience and office practices. Yesterday while in eComp assisting a carrier, I noticed some medical notes using the terms “was seen by” and “was treated” rather than appropriate language in the ELM. I’ve corrected this with the clinic but please watch out for the incorrect return to works notes, it is becoming an issue getting paid when the wrong language is used. The documentation should provide an explanation of the nature of the employee’s illness or injury to indicate to management that the employee was unable to perform his/her normal duties for the period of absence.

As per Bylaws each Post Office will elect Shop Stewards. Nominations and election will be held during the last week in January. A notice will be sent to the present Stewards announcing the election by the Branch Secretary at least one week in advance. The Secretary will be notified of the results of the election by February 1, 2023.

The Executive Board discussed at length the installation of Officers event. The Board recommends changing the format from a sit-down meal to a Cocktail Party with heavy Hors d’oeuvres. The Event date is Saturday, January 7, 2023, beginning at 6:30 PM till 9 PM. The location is the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Clubhouse.

We looked at Grand Central Brewery and determined it was not large enough for our space needs and the \$500 per hour fee plus the \$25 per person charge for Beer and Wine seemed excessive.

We placed a \$200 deposit on the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club, the cost of the venue is \$1475 which includes:

The Clubhouse for 5.5 hours
Set up is 18 – 4 tops and the Branch brings 8 high tops

Outside Terrazzo Deck 5.5 hrs.
Kitchen 4 hours
8 Shuffleboard Courts 3 hours
Staff Fee 5.5 hours
Additional outside lighting.

We were able to get a quote from Lolita’s Catering for a Hors d’oeuvres menu at a cost of \$34.00 per person. This would be a Charcuterie Grazing Table, Baked Potato Bar with toppings.

Bar Cost estimate \$400 (We provide).
Linen Cost \$212.50

Estimated per person costs

\$44.50	Food and Beverage, Gratuity & site charges
\$14.75	Venue
<u>\$ 2.12</u>	<u>Linen</u>
\$61.46	Per person
<u>-\$25.00</u>	<u>Ticket Cost</u>
\$36.46	Per person <u>paid by the Branch</u>

We are charging each member \$25 which leads to a total cost of \$36.46 per person cost paid by the Branch. Can I get a motion to accept the recommendation of the Board to complete the planning to the event? Motion by O.D. Elliott seconded by Brian Andrews. Motion passes.

We need the Stewards to help us sell 100 tickets so any Steward selling 10 tickets their name will go in a drawing for a \$50 gift card provided by President Henschen. We have contacted National to send a National Officer to do the installing.

As referenced in Article 8, Sections 4 and 5 of the National Agreement the December periods during which the penalty overtime doesn’t apply begins PP26 Week 1 (December 3, 2022) and ends PP 01-23, Week 2 (December 30, 2022).

MBA Individual Disability Income has a new policy available to active members between the age of 18 and 59. Monthly Benefits of \$650, \$1350, and \$2000 are available.

Steward’s Meeting will be held next Thursday, No

South Meeting this month.

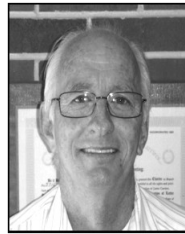
There will be a reception at the hall for Joyce Keller to celebrate her retirement as the Arslan Uniform Representative. December 30, 2022, from 5-8 PM.

The Auxiliary 181 drawing for the 2 Gift Card Christmas trees plus 3 gift cards that were donated resulted in the following winners:

Christmas Tree- Michael Payne
Christmas Tree- Chuck Donahue

\$100 Miller Ale Gift Card—Suzette Brown
\$25 Urban BBQ Gift Card—Lance Carswell
\$25 Urban BBQ Gift Card—Andrea Schad

Elliot Krueger
David Slack
Sean Thomas
Chadrick Williams



Legislative Update

By Gene Carroll, CDL District 15

House

As a result of the midterm elections, party control of the House of Representatives will change in the 118th Congress. Republicans, who will control the chamber, and Democrats have elected their party's leaders for the new Congress that will convene next month.

Republicans elected current House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) as their top leader. However, the election for Speaker of the House will be held in January, with all 435 representatives eligible to vote. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), the current minority whip, was elected as majority leader. Rep. Tom Emmer (R-MN), current chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), was chosen to serve as majority whip. Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) was elected as GOP conference chairwoman, and Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC) was elected to replace Rep. Emmer as NRCC chairman.

On the Democratic side, the party has elected new leaders and approved changes to its leadership structure. Following the midterm elections, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) announced that they would remain in Congress but not seek leadership positions, paving the way for what Democrats are calling a new generation of leaders. Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) was elected by acclamation to lead Democrats as minority leader, making him the first Black person to lead a party in either chamber of Congress. Rep. Katherine Clark (D-MA) was elected as minority whip and Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA) was elected as chairman of the Democratic caucus. Both were unanimously approved.

Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-SC) was elected as assistant leader, a position that is now fourth in the



Editor's Corner

By Editor/Webmaster,
Judy Dorris

New City Carrier Assistant Members

The Branch would like to welcome our new members who came on board from 12/15/2022 through the present.

Names are in alphabetical order by Office Installation but not Relative Standing, as follows:

Largo

Paul Fenochietti
Sophia Webb

Palmetto

Frank Finney

Pinellas Park

Tyler Fulton
Jamie Gemberling

Punta Gorda

Suyaporn Phetkong

St. Petersburg

Clayton Carodine
Jonathon Douglas
Durrel Evans
Devora King

leadership structure. He was unopposed after Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI) dropped his bid for the position before the vote. Rep. Ted Lieu was elected to serve as caucus vice chair after four rounds of voting, defeating Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Joyce Beatty (D-OH), and Madeleine Dean (D-PA).

Structural changes to the caucus include approval for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) chair to be appointed by leadership, rather than elected by the caucus, and the creation of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee. Rep. Joe Neguse (D-CO) was elected by acclamation as chairman of the new committee. Another new leadership position that will focus on assisting candidates in competitive reelection campaigns was also established. Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) was elected to this role.

Senate

In the Senate, Democrats will again control the chamber. Following Sen. Raphael Warnock's victory in the Georgia runoff, Democrats will hold 51 seats to the Republican's 49.

While Democrats have yet to hold their leadership elections, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) are expected to continue serving in their positions. Following the midterm elections, Schumer announced his intention to nominate Assistant Democratic Leader Patty Murray (D-WA) to serve as president pro tempore. She would replace Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), who is retiring.

Republicans reelected their top leaders. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) defeated Rick Scott (R-FL) to again serve in the party's top Senate position. Sen. John Thune (R-ND) will continue serving as minority whip and Sen. John Barrasso (D-WY) was reelected as Republican conference chairman.

NALC

On Jan. 3, President Biden sent dozens of nominations to Senate, including the renomination of Robert Taub to serve as a commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC). Taub has been a PRC commissioner since 2011 and served as the committee's chairman from Dec. 2014 until Jan. 2021. If confirmed by the Senate, Taub would serve a new term expiring on Oct. 14, 2028. The PRC is the independent body that exercises regulatory oversight over the Postal Service. Its responsibilities include preventing anticompetitive practices, promoting accountability, adjudicating

complaints, setting postal rates and helping oversee delivery service standards. The PRC has five commissioners, who are nominated by the president for six-year terms and confirmed by the Senate. Taub's re-nomination must now be approved by the Senate.

In a 219-201 vote, the House passed the VA Employee Fairness Act (H.R. 1948). This bipartisan bill would give collective bargaining rights to Veterans Health Administration employees, who include nurses, physicians, dentists and physician assistants who care for veterans. Currently, these employees are hired under Title 38 of the U.S. Code, which prohibits collective bargaining for these workers. "For our country to ensure that veterans receive the highest quality treatment, we must treat VA frontline healthcare workers with the same level of dignity and respect as other federal healthcare workers," Rep. Takano said. "Throughout the 117th Congress, this Committee prioritized providing veterans with the healthcare they earned, and we are reinforcing that by providing VA's frontline workers, who wholeheartedly provide critical care for veterans, with the workers' rights they deserve."

"NALC is pleased to see this bill pass in the House," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "The expansion of collective bargaining rights in any craft is a win for all working people. These federal healthcare workers, who provide critical care for our nation's veterans, deserve the right to bargain for a fairer and safer workplace." The bill must now be approved in the Senate. With limited time left in the 117th Congress, it is unlikely to receive a vote in the Senate.

NALC

Auxiliary 181 News

Sandra Hart

The members of Auxiliary 181 wish to sincerely thank all those who participated in our Christmas drawing. Thanks to your generosity we were able to give three Carrier families each a \$300.00 gift card to Walmart.

Due to illnesses and injuries in our group we have decided to put a hold on our meetings until further notice. We wish all a speedy return to good health.



Retiree Update

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

Strange questions

Since serving as your Director of Retiree Affairs, I have received some interesting, sometimes strange questions or enquiries from retired members, but none quite as strange as one I received from a woman APWU member. She said she contacted me because her local didn't have anyone who assisted in retirement matters. She then told me that twenty years before, while working, she divorced her husband and that he had been getting part of her pay and now that she was retiring, he would be getting part of her annuity. I asked if she had an attorney when she divorced, and if so, why had she been paying alimony. She said that she had been so distressed during the divorce that she just wanted to get it over with and didn't fight it. Now that she was retiring, she (and apparently her current husband) didn't feel that it was fair that her former husband would be entitled to a portion of her annuity.

I told her that first, it was strange that she has waited 20 years to address something she thought was unfair or not right and second, this was strictly a legal matter, and she needed an attorney who deals with divorces and preferably an attorney who has experience with divorce cases involving federal employees and/or federal retirees. She asked if I could recommend an attorney. I told her, no, but any attorney representing her could go on OPM's website which has a section just for attorneys handling such cases. It is my understanding that this section from OPM is about 50 pages of very detailed information.

I've received questions about retirement from APWU members and MAILHANDLER members before and don't really mind, but this member's enquiry was strictly a legal matter, very interesting, but far beyond what I would even try to assist.

Wounded Warriors Leave rights (by Joe Henschen)

The creation of Wounded Warriors Leave (WWL) came about in response to the passage of the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015, which allows employees who meet the eligibility requirements to use this category of leave to undergo medical treatment for a service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more. As a disabled veteran myself, being eligible to use up to 104 hours of this distinct category of leave has made it easier to keep all of my Veterans Affairs (VA) appointments.

This category of leave is an important benefit to letter carriers who are also veterans with a disability rating of 30 percent or greater. Disabled veterans generally are required to attend regular medical appointments to maintain their health and to continue their eligibility to receive their veterans' benefits. Frequently, such appointments must be scheduled during normal work hours, and before the creation of WWL, letter carriers often were required to use leave without pay (LWOP) to attend those appointments. WWL provides some relief to those who are eligible and must receive necessary treatment.

Eligibility to receive WWL can be verified on the carrier's PS Form 50, which is found in their e-OPF. In Box 11 on their PS Form 50, it should indicate "6-10pt-Comp over 30%." If Box 11 does not denote "6-10pt-Comp over 30%," the employee will need to submit the necessary documentation to certify that they meet the 30 percent eligibility.

It is an employee's responsibility to notify the Postal Service of their eligibility before requesting WWL. Employees must provide documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs, or on any Office of Personnel Management (OPM) certification form certifying that they have a qualifying service-connected disability. Eligible employees who have not yet submitted the necessary paperwork should do so now.

Steps Eligible Employees Must Take

Eligible employees are required to request this leave in advance, when possible, by completing and submitting to their supervisor a PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence. The supervisor is responsible for approving or disapproving requests by signing PS Form 3971 and returning a copy to the employee. In addition, to verify that any WWL requested by an employee is appropriately used for the treatment of a service-connected disability, the requesting employee must provide proof from a health care provider that the employee used the leave to receive treatment for a covered disability.

The Postal Service created a form to be used for this verification, PS Form 5980, Treatment Verification for Wounded Warriors Leave. The employee should designate the reason for the absence as “Other” on PS Form 3971 and write “Wounded Warriors Leave” in the space provided.

Should the need to use this leave be unforeseeable, the employee must notify his or her supervisor of the expected duration of the absence and the applicability of WWL. Employees also may use the Interactive Voice Response system to report absences if this process is used in their employing office. A PS Form 3971 is required upon returning to work and a PS Form 5980 no later than 15 calendar days after returning

Employees eligible for WWL also may be eligible for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—see Section 515 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual for more information and eligibility requirements. Supervisors will initiate FMLA leave if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the leave might qualify. It is the employee’s responsibility to provide complete and sufficient documentation to establish eligibility for FMLA. FMLA protection will run concurrently with WWL

The eligibility requirements, are as follows:

Eligibility

All employees who have a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more are eligible for Wounded Warriors Leave.

Employees with Pending Disability Determinations

Otherwise, eligible employees with pending disability determinations who at any time during any Leave Year receive a 30 percent or more disability rating, will be eligible for leave retroactively to the first day of that current Leave Year. Any leave without pay (LWOP) or leave used while the determination is pending will be reimbursed and replaced with Wounded Warriors Leave, as appropriate, up to the maximum number of hours allowed.

Losing the Disability Rating

If an employee’s service-connected disability rating is decreased to below 30 percent or discontinued in any Leave Year then the employee no longer has a qualifying service-connected disability.

Accrual and Crediting

It is an employee’s responsibility to notify the Postal Service of his or her eligibility before requesting Wounded Warriors Leave. Employees must provide

documentation to the HR Shared Service Center from the Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that the employee has the requisite level of service-connected disability.

Initial Eligibility

Newly hired eligible employees or those returning to the Postal Service will be credited with 104 hours of Wounded Warriors Leave following the Postal Service’s receipt of documentation supporting the employee’s eligibility.

Additional Eligibility

Eligible employees will be credited with 104 hours of Wounded Warriors Leave on the first day of each Leave Year and the leave is available for use until the last day of the Leave Year.

Carryover

Wounded Warriors Leave must be used during the Leave Year in which it is credited and will not be carried over. No employee may accrue more than 104 hours during any Leave Year.

Separation

If the employee leaves the Postal Service at any time during any Leave Year, any remaining leave will not be reinstated or paid out, except as permitted by OPM regulations if the employee transfers to another federal agency.

Information regarding the rules and regulations of WWL is available on the NALC website, nalc.org, and can be found on the “NALC Veterans,” “Contract Administration Unit” and “City Delivery” pages. PS Form 5980 can be found on those pages as well. After reviewing those guidelines, if you have any further questions about WWL, make sure to discuss them with your shop steward or contact the Branch 1477 Office for assistance. .

If you are a military veteran, don’t forget to sign up with our Veterans Group. All veterans registered with the Veterans Group will be recognized in the November Postal Record. The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join. Members receive a pin and an NALC Veterans Guide as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in the NALC.¹

¹ October 2021 Postal Record written by Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson

BRANCH 1477 PHONE DIRECTORY

UNION HALL: (727) 531-1477

UNION FAX: (727) 531-1478

EMAIL: branch1477@tampabay.rr.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:

Brian Andrews.....(941) 807-5669

Shiela Bradley.....(813) 335-7783

Patrick Jacques..... (727) 218-2721

STEWARDS OF BRANCH 1477

St. Petersburg:

Crossroads 9	Ken Domingos	(716) 598-1205
Alt	Jody Dodd	(727) 768-2562
Crossroads 10	(Branch Hall)	(727) 531-1477
Euclid	" "	(727) 531-1477
Alt	Patrick Green	(813) 671-4770
Gateway	Tom Phillips	(727) 458-4127
Gulfwinds 7,11,15	Zulma Betancourt	(813) 597-8363
Madeira Beach	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
Midtown 5	Anwar Douse	(727) 495-3535
Alt	Javier Urrutia	(813) 484-2489
Midtown 12	Patrice Cannonier	(786) 200-0957
Alt	Gary Johnson	(316) 209-3764
Northside 2	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
Alt	Suzette Brown	(727) 580-1084
Northside 16	Tonya Lee	(813) 270-2918
Alt	Ben Mead	(727) 249-4610
Open Air	Scott Archbold	(727) 422-4766
Alt	Ross Cassidy	(727) 510-9685
St. Pete Beach	Cheryl Anderson	(727) 531-1477
St. Pete Main 13	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971
Alt	Scott Holderbaum	(813) 777-7626
St. Pete Main 14	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254
Alt	Dee Grant	(727) 225-9272

Bradenton Bch	Brian Andrews	(941) 807-5669
Dunedin	Scott Held	(727) 418-5742
Alt	Chuck Cavicchio	(727) 798-8506
Ellenton	Mark Patrick	(941) 524-1746
Englewood	(Branch Hall)	(727) 531-1477
Alt	Josh LaGrew	(763) 232-8954
Indian Rocks Bch	Tim Cox	(727) 481-5348
Largo 70/71	Adam Deveau	(978) 435-1280
Largo 73/78	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
Palmetto	Sheldon Jones	(941) 580-1058
Pinellas Park	Heather Manley	(727) 244-0665
Punta Gorda	Dennis Leach	(941) 276-0806
PC Annex	Jason Giardina	(248) 763-5951
Seminole 72/74	Jim Grazioso	(727) 410-6492
Seminole 76/77	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413
Alt 72/74/76/77	Anne Winkelbauer	(708) 692-6540

Auxiliary 181		
President	Joyce Keller	(727) 541-2194

Congressional Liasons:

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

February 2023

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