

# 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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Inside This Issue:

President's Report <i>by Joe Henschen</i>	1-2
Pinellas Park Retirees Breakfast	2
Executive Vice President article—Hubble's Troubles <i>by Chris Hubble</i>	3-4
Minutes of the Branch <i>by Recording/Financial Secretary Ken Grasso</i>	4-5
Overtime Distribution	5-6
Director of Retirees article <i>by O. D. Elliott</i>	6
Legislative Update <i>by Gene Carroll</i>	6
Union's Data Page	7
Calendar	8



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*By President Joe Henschen*

*Twitter @ JaHe1*

### ***Slowing Things Down***

Recently, while talking to some good friends a comment was made that stuck with me. The conversation had been centered on the way Carriers and their supervisors communicate with each other. In some situations, it is evident that Carriers do not speak to each other all that well. It has evolved into a different dynamic. The comment about the workroom floor was simple. There was a time that it was ok to disagree with someone without getting angry.

We spoke of an individual's opinion without getting upset if it was different than our own. It certainly isn't that way now. The workroom floor can for whatever reason: masks, vaccines, politics, or policy, be divided. Tempers

are short and is that way when directed on either side of the isle or to each other. It may be the speed that information comes at us now requiring action so fast, how we react is lost or how the answer is given is not necessarily received the way it was intended.

Is it something that can be changed? It certainly is worth a shot. Tolerance is something that can return, something that we should try to accept. Maybe it's as simple as slowing things down.

I turned to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) website just to see if there was anything that could help improve day to day communication. Looking for a technique to improve your personal well-being, an interesting piece of advice given is:

#### **Jot This Down: Journaling Could Boost Your Well-Being**

Research shows that regularly writing down what's on your mind can help you release emotions and make

**NEXT BRANCH MEETING AT THE HALL AND VIA ZOOM: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022**

sense of what's going on in your life. This is particularly true during periods of transition or change, like the COVID – 19 pandemic's disruption of day-to-day activities. Journaling can also help improve relationships with others, lower your blood pressure, and decrease symptoms of depression.

**There's no "Write" Way**

There are many different ways to go about journaling. You can write about your thoughts and feelings. Or you could use your journal to help problem-solve. Try taking a big problem that you're facing and then make a list breaking it down into smaller, more manageable parts that you can tackle one at a time, so the issue no longer feels so overwhelming.

You could also journal by jotting down a few things that you're grateful for. Studies show shifting your focus from you daily hassles to gratitude can help lower stress, improve your mood, boost the quality of your sleep, and even reduce inflammation in your body.

The key is finding what feels best for you. To make journaling a part of your daily routine, try linking it with a habit that you already do. For example, after brushing your teeth in the morning or in the evening, take a few minutes to write in your journal,. Over time, writing will become just as automatic and beneficial as reaching for your toothbrush.

From the standpoint of slowing things down, advice like this can help. If you chose to jot things down looking back on your entries may help you realize if a reaction or curt response to a question could be handled differently next time.

I get a very large number of questions. Phone calls, emails and texts continue, some days until late in the evening. Some responses (especially to Managers) if answered too fast can lead to an unnecessary back and forth. Some responses may be intended to cause an argument, but I realized a while ago to go ahead and vent in the text or email but not send it until I calm down a little and read the response. Not an easy task sometimes.

Same goes for a conversation. A quick response is not always the best and can be misunderstood. A chance to weigh an answer would hopefully allow time to understand someone elses' opinion and not get upset if it differs from your own. Slowing things down may also be advantages when speaking to a supervisor. A calm discussion should be 2 sided. It's not ok to be spoken to in a manner less than

respectful, nor is it ok to direct answers in the same manner. When a supervisor gets confrontational it makes it ok to push back.

Putting these thoughts on paper reminds me of the number of times I hit unfollow on a social media account because opinions were different from mine. I've got things to work on, too.

**ATTENTION  
PINELLAS PARK  
RETIREES**

**Effective February 7th  
@ 9:00**

We will be resuming our  
Monthly Breakfast at the  
Parkside Café.

We will be meeting the  
1st **Monday** of every month.

***We are back to having  
in-person  
Branch Membership Meetings at the Hall.***

***Please plan to wear a mask.***

***We can have up to 20 people and be able to  
safely social distance.***

***Meetings will continue to be held via Zoom.***

***As of now, food may be provided depending on  
the number of attendees.***



## Hubble's Troubles

By Executive Vice President,  
Chris Hubble

### **Route Count and Inspection Process....**

With the New Year and the recent realignment of Florida Districts, rest assured that there will be proposed Route Inspections for the Spring. There have been many new conversions of City Carrier Assistants and Part-Time Flexibles to Full-Time City Letter Carriers. With that said, many have not had the pleasure of going through a full blown **RCI**.

Once you have been notified that your office is going to be inspected, you should begin preparing for the process. One of the first steps you should take is to start taking notes about your route and the delivery unit where you work. You should continue to keep these notes throughout the entire process to ensure that you do not forget information that could assist your shop steward in the grievance process. Some questions you should ask yourself when making these notes:

*Do you need overtime or auxiliary assistance on a regular basis, or do you pivot (undertime) on other routes?*

*Do you take both rest breaks on the street or is one taken in the office? Does the entire office follow the same procedure?*

*Do you have businesses closed on Saturday, affecting the amount of time you spend delivering? Does this lead to an increase in delivery time on Monday?*

*Is there any new construction on your route and if so, is your edit book up to date?*

*Do you complete a PS Form 3996, Carrier-Auxiliary Control when you need overtime or auxiliary assistance? Do you complete a PS Form 1571, Undelivered Mail Report, when you curtail mail in the morning or if you bring mail back in the afternoon?*

As the Regular Carrier assigned to a route during the Route Count and Inspection process, you have a vital role to play in determining the outcome of any adjustments. One of the most important pieces of

information gathered during the count is included in the PS Form 1838, Carrier's Count of Mail – Letter Carrier Routes (Mngt. Summary). This form shows the mail volumes for the route during the week of inspection as well as the amount of time spent by the Carrier performing other office duties. These duties include time spent conducting the vehicle inspection, retrieving accountable items, withdrawing mail from distribution cases, personal needs time (five minutes per route) and any other duties that do not include casing and pulling down your route.

PS Form 1838-C, Carrier's Count of Mail–Letter Carrier Routes Worksheet. This is a handwritten form completed for each route during the six days of the count and inspection. It is very important that the information on this form be accurate, and the best way to ensure that everything is recorded is for you to fill out the form. *Do not agree to allow management to fill out this form.* The Carrier servicing the route during the inspection completes the PS Form 1838-C each day, except for the day of inspection, which is the day an examiner will accompany the Carrier on the street. Even if you are not servicing your regular route or if you do not have a regular route, you still should complete this form.

Prior to the week of inspection, management is required to conduct a dry-run training with each Carrier participating in the process. This training must be given within 21 days of the first day of the inspection. During this training, you will complete a sample PS Form 1838-C, which management must review for accuracy and discuss any errors. If necessary, a second practice form may be completed.

The second important piece of information used during the inspection process is the PS Form 3999, Inspection of Letter Carrier Route. This form is completed on the day, or days if more than one, of inspection and records the street time for your route, beginning when you move to street time in the morning and ending when you move to office time in the afternoon. This form is completed by the inspector and is in either handwritten or electronic format.

The final piece of the puzzle is that Management is required to consult with you during the evaluation and adjustment stages of the process. They must provide information showing what data was used to evaluate your route times and again once they have adjusted the route. Once the Branch is notified of a proposed **RCI**, we will schedule a training class to

go over the process. If you have questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to the Hall.

**Happy New Year!**

Excerpts from Contract Talk by the Contract Administration Unit



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## Minutes of December 9, 2021 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:** Minutes will not be voted on, they weren't available to print in the Twig.

**Reading of Official Correspondence:** by Ken Grasso: None

**Branch by the Numbers:** As of PP 23 the Dues Roster has 783 Active Members with 748 paying dues. We have 45 members with no deductions, 5 are on Military Leave. 4 paying direct, 4 OWCP, with 19 on LWOP. Retirees 543 (84 Gold Cards). 1356 Total Members 124 Members in the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

**Application of New Members:** None

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

**Treasurer:** Chuck Cavicchio—No Report

**Director of Retiree Affairs:** O.D. Elliott—No Report

**Director of Insurance:** Tom Phillips—Last day for Open Season is December 13th. You can download Eyeglass Plan forms from the branch website.

**Political District 13 Liaison:** Tom Phillips—No Report

**Political District 15 Liaison:** Gene Carroll—No Report

**Trustee Report:** Brian Andrews—Books for November were done and are in order.

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

**Editor/Webmaster:** Judy Dorris—We won't have a January Twig but will have a Jan/Feb Twig. Articles are due January 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Vice President Report:** Zulma Betancourt — Happy Holidays

**Executive Vice President:** Chris Hubble—The Penalty Overtime exclusions starts December 4<sup>th</sup> and expires December 31<sup>st</sup>. The ODL can work more than 12 hours in one day.

**Welfare Reports:**

**Sad:**

Ed Smith, Retiree St. Petersburg—Is facing a serious illness.

**Glad:**

Tony Mells, Open Air Station—Retired.

Ken Visovich, Midtown Station—Retired.

**Presidents Report:**

November Contractual Increases occur on 11/20/21 which will be a 1.3% increase for all Regular City Carriers and an additional 1% for all CCAs. CCAs will increase to \$18.94 (.43). FTR's will increase to \$35.04 (.43) Pro Rated by Steps.

7 PTFs promoted in St. Petersburg effective January 1, 2022. 5 CCAs in Largo were promoted to Regular and are already in positions.

Update on ebike test: on 11/31/21 the test was halted in St. Petersburg due to safety concerns with the bikes. They are stored at the Main Office. 1 bike still being tested in Miami Beach and will end 12/31/21.

Postal Service does not consider the ebikes as a viable option to replace the traditional bikes currently.

Management is at it again to try and change mode of delivery in some residential neighborhoods. This time in Kings Gate in Punta Gorda. This deals with growth within an established community. The plan is to have Letter Carriers deliver curbside to 60% of the neighborhood then go to cluster boxes to deliver the remaining 40%.

COP in Atlantic City, NJ April 24-26. Airfare is \$450 to Philadelphia and \$22 train ride to Atlantic City. \$119.00 room rates for \$829 Travel/Hotel and \$206.50 Per Diem for a total of \$1035.50. President Henschen would like to have Executive Vice President Chris Hubble to attend also.

Motion to accept by O.D. Elliott, seconded by Rick Renshaw. Motion passes.

Modified Duty Job Offers are still being made to injured employees improperly.

Extension of dispensation for branch and state meetings and elections due to corona virus. A letter granting branches to utilize alternative electronic meeting methods. This letter now extends through calendar year 2022.

2022 Convention Delegate Call has been made by National which requested our decision to use electronic registration for the delegates. Last month 35 members were nominated with 24 having met the minimum requirements to attend as a paid delegate.

Discussion was raised about the cost of additional Delegates vs. the cost of a Mail in Ballot. A motion was made and seconded to raise the total from 20 to 24 paid delegates. In the next several days all delegates receiving a nomination will receive details about their status and registration. If you were nominated and you haven't signed a form declaring you haven't been in a 204B position in the last 2 years you need to do so by January 31, 2022.

Old Business: A/C is in and working and trees have been trimmed. Waiting on another bid for roof for

hall, getting materials could slow it.

Auxiliary 181 having another raffle of baskets and had packets for the stewards to sell tickets. Auxiliary 181 raffle drawing results:

1. Lisa Ryan
2. Jeff Dusseault
3. Ken Morrisette

Tom Phillips made a motion to give \$500 to Auxiliary 181, seconded by Brian Andrews.

TC bonus/leave selection to take place. TC has elected to receive the 1 week bonus this year. Motion to accept by O.D. Elliott, seconded by Clay Hansen. Motion passes.

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**Overtime Distribution**  
By President Joe Henschen

***The Letter Carrier Paragraph:***

*There has been some misunderstanding from a recent Newsletter as it relates to how overtime should be distributed. Much of the confusion usually centers on the word "mandate". A Mandate is technically when a non ODL or Work Assignment Carrier works off their duty assignment.*

*What is known as the "letter carrier paragraph," found on page 8-14 of the 2021 NALC-USPS Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM), explains this as such:*

*In the Letter Carrier Craft, where management determines that overtime or auxiliary assistance is needed on an employee's route on one of the employee's regularly scheduled days and the employee is not on the overtime desired list, the employer will seek to utilize auxiliary assistance, when available, rather than requiring the employee to work mandatory overtime.*

*A memorandum of understanding signed Dec. 20, 1988, further explained the requirement to seek to use auxiliary assistance before requiring letter carriers not on the ODL or Work Assignment List to work overtime on their own route on a regularly scheduled day. Management must seek to use all of the following to provide auxiliary assistance:*

- *Part-Time flexibles (PTFs) at the straight time or regular overtime rate*
- *City Carrier Assistant (CCA) employees at the straight time or regular overtime rate*
- *Available full-time regular employees, such as unassigned or reserve regulars at the straight time rate.*
- *Full-time carriers from the Overtime Desired List at the regular overtime rate*

*However, the memo states that management does not have to use ODL Carriers to provide auxiliary assistance if such an assignment would mean that the ODL Carriers would be working penalty overtime. In that limited situation if no auxiliary assistance is available without going into penalty overtime management can require full-time regular Carriers not on the ODL to work overtime on their own routes on a regularly scheduled day. In other words, there is no violation if management works ODL carriers and all available auxiliary assistance up to 10 hours. When a non-ODL/WAO carrier works off assignment the auxiliary assistance listed above should be working into penalty overtime.*

the retirees cost for NALC High option, self and family will increase by \$7.22 from \$430.49 to \$437.71. The NALC High option, self only will increase by \$7.47 from \$205.47 to \$212.94. Medicare Part B premiums will increase by approximately \$10.00 from \$148.50 to \$158.10.

Again, the NALC Health Benefits plans “High option Self Only” makes no sense for retirees, since the premiums will be greater than “High option Self and Family.”

For our retirees who might have a Health Benefit Plan other than NALC, you can find your rates for 2022 by going online to **Government Employees Health Benefit premiums for 2022 and scrolling down to OPM Premiums and then click onto FFS (Fee for Service/Nationwide Plans)**. As a retiree, your premiums will be listed under “non-Postal Rates.”



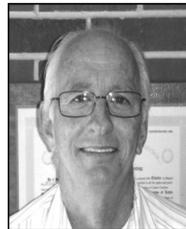
## **Retiree Update**

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

In January of this year, Federal retirees and Social Security recipients received a cost-of-living increase (COLA) of 1.3%, slightly less than in 2020. It has been announced that the 2022 COLA will be 5.9% for CSRS annuitants and Social Security recipients. FERS annuitants will receive a 4.9% increase. These increases will begin in January 2022. NOTE: The COLA increase for FERS is different than that of CSRS annuitants. The FERS COLA Formula is as follows – a COLA of 2% or less, both CSRS and FERS receive the same, an increase of 2% to 3%, FERS annuitants receive only 2%, an increase of 3% or more and FERS annuitants receive the COLA minus 1%. The NALC is working with Congress in an effort to eliminate this inequity.

You should be aware that with these increases in pensions and Social Security, there will be some offsetting by increases in Health Benefit premiums and Medicare premiums.

As far as Health Benefit premiums are concerned,



## **Legislative Update**

*By Gene Carroll, CDL District 15*

Thursday night, Dec 3 Congress passed a continuing resolution that will fund the government until Feb. 18. House members voted 221-212 and Senators voted 69-28, which sent the bill to President Biden’s desk. Lawmakers narrowly avoided a government shutdown by passing this legislation before the Dec. 3 deadline. This short-term fix includes funding to sustain federal agencies until the Feb. 18 deadline, \$7 billion to help resettle refugees from Afghanistan and \$1.6 billion to assist migrant children who arrive at the border without a parent. The new Feb. 18 deadline gives lawmakers time to focus on moving the Build Back Better Act through Congress and raising the debt limit, which will likely expire by the end of the month.

President Biden nominated Dan Tangherlini and Derek Kan to serve on the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors (BOG). If confirmed by the Senate, Tangherlini and Kan would serve on the BOG until 2028. The nominees would replace BOG members John Barger and Ron Bloom, the current BOG chairman.

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**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT**

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**VICE PRESIDENT**

*Zulma Betancourt . . . . . (813) 597-8363*

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*Eric Short. . . . . (727) 251-9846*

## STEWARDS OF BRANCH 1477

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Alt	Jody Dodd	
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<b>Euclid</b>	(Branch Hall)	(727) 531-1477
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<b>Gulfwinds 7</b>	Christina Johnson	(727) 564-0620
<b>Gulfwinds 15</b>	" "	(727) 564-0620
<b>Gulfwinds 11</b>	(Branch Hall)	(727) 531-1477
Alt 7,11,15	Zulma Betancourt	(813) 597-8363
<b>Madeira Beach</b>	Patrick Jacques	(727) 218-2721
<b>Midtown 5</b>	Shiela Bradley	(813) 335-7783
<b>Midtown 12</b>	Harry Nieves	(787) 564-4993
<b>Northside 2</b>	Tiffany Naughton	(727) 642-5466
<b>Northside 16</b>	Tonya Lee	(813) 270-2918
<b>Open Air</b>	Chris Hubble	(727) 641-8396
<b>St. Pete Beach</b>	Cheryl Anderson	(727) 531-1477
<b>St. Pete Main 13</b>	Anthony Roger	(813) 574-9971
Alt	Scott Holderbaum	(813) 777-7626
<b>St. Pete Main 14</b>	Alan Pollard	(727) 667-4254
Alt	Dee Grant	(727) 225-9272

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Alt	Kris Beal	(813) 500-0841
<b>Indian Rocks Bch</b>	Denise Clark	(407) 474-9038
<b>Largo 70/71</b>	Jennifer Cohill	(727) 742-6161
<b>Largo 73/78</b>	Eric Short	(727) 251-9846
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<b>Seminole 76/77</b>	Donny DeMilta	(727) 430-4413

<b>Auxiliary 181</b>		
<b>President</b>	<b>Joyce Keller</b>	<b>(727) 541-2194</b>

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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, 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Executive Board	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Pinellas Park Retiree BK	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> General Membership (at the Hall)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Steward's Meeting	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> President's Day	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>					