



THE Mail Bag NEWS

★ SOLIDARITY

★ EDUCATION

★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

PROUDLY REPRESENTING: AGOURA, ARLETA, CALABASAS, CHATSWORTH, FILLMORE, GRANADA HILLS, MISSION HILLS, MOORPARK, NEWBURY PARK, NORTH HILLS, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, NORTHRIDGE, OJAI, OXNARD, PACOIMA, PORT HUENEME, RESEDA, SAN FERNANDO, SANTA PAULA, SIMI VALLEY, SYLMAR, THOUSAND OAKS, VENTURA, WESTLAKE AND WOODLAND HILLS

MEMBER: LOS ANGELES FEDERATION OF LABOR, AFL-CIO

MEMBER: TRI-COUNTIES CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

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Show Us the Money

By Ray Hill, President

As we begin a New Year, why not begin this column with some good news? We started earning the first of our “non-retroactive” general wage increases on November 20, 2021. You can find the new Letter Carrier Pay Schedule printed on page 22 of the December Postal Record, showing all the various pay rates. The 1.3% pay raise comes on the heels of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) we received on August 28, 2021, which boosted our annual wages by \$1,934. The history and importance of COLAs was the subject of NALC President Fred Rolando’s December Postal Record Column and I found it so interesting and informative we printed it in this issue of the *Mail Bag News*. Regarding the \$1,934 annual increase we received in the August 28 COLA, President Rolando wrote as follows, in part:

“...Over the past 12 months, prices in the United States have increased by 6.2 percent, triggering the largest COLA adjustment (in dollar terms, though not percentage terms) in our bargaining history: \$1,934 annually, effective August 28, 2021. Once again, the COLA clause has protected us against the impact of external events beyond anyone’s control...” So, the good news is that we received the money provided by the COLA; the bad news is that prices and inflation are sky rocketing, which is never good for our economy. I have been around a long time yet I was ignorant of the history of our COLA’s, which were explained in President Rolando’s December Column, printed in this issue of the *Mail Bag News*; I urge you all to read it.

Juneteenth Holiday

On November 30, NALC.ORG provided the following update on the Juneteenth Holiday:

“President Biden signed into law the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act on June 17, 2021, making June 19 a federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. However, the law did not apply to the Postal Service.

NALC is aware of an internal Postal Service communication indicating that the holiday will be observed beginning in 2022 for full-time and part-time career employees. We have had informal discussions about the Juneteenth holiday with the Postal Service and will continue to discuss additional issues related to the observance of this holiday for all city letter carriers.”

We have received calls from some members wanting to know if USPS will be granting a future day off with paid administrative leave for the 2021 Juneteenth Holiday, which has been done in the past when a U.S. President died. The answer to that question is no, because at the time President Biden signed the law last June, it did not apply to USPS and was not one of our ten contractually bargained Holidays. However, per the NALC.ORG update, it appears that this will become a Holiday for career employees (Regulars and PTFs) beginning in 2022.



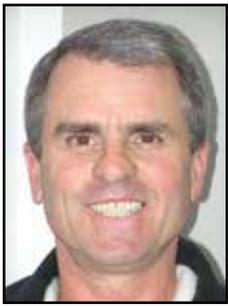
• H A P P Y • N E W • Y E A R •

What the Hell Are We Doing?

In the last issue of the *Mail Bag News*, I voiced my complaints about USPS loaning carriers from our understaffed offices to work in other offices, many miles away. Why are we allowing carriers to leave their assignments to work in other Installations when we need all the help we can get here? Recently, we have had Branch 2902 carriers loaned to work in the Sonora and Salinas Post offices, both hundreds of miles away.

On November 1, 2021, NALC Executive Vice President (EVP),

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Show Us the Money

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Brian Renfro, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with USPS re: Temporary Details to Other Installations – City Letter Carrier Craft. The MOU (M-01968) can be read at NALC.ORG, and reads as follows in part: “...The Postal Service will determine the number of carriers, location and duration of detail

needed. The Postal Service will solicit volunteers for a defined period. The parties at the Headquarters level will review those that volunteer for a detail and jointly select city letter carriers to be detailed. Full time, part-time flexible and city carrier assistant city letter carriers are eligible to volunteer. **Consideration will be given to the potential impact on staffing in the losing installations...**” Emphasis added).

In Region 1, the Presidents were upset when we read the MOU for many reasons. In our opinions, the MOU violated portions of the following provisions of our National Agreement: Article 8, Article 12 and Article 41. After reading the MOU, I sent an email to President Rolando, EVP Brian Renfro, NBA Bryant Almario and a few other NALC Resident Officers for the purpose of offering my negative opinion of the MOU.

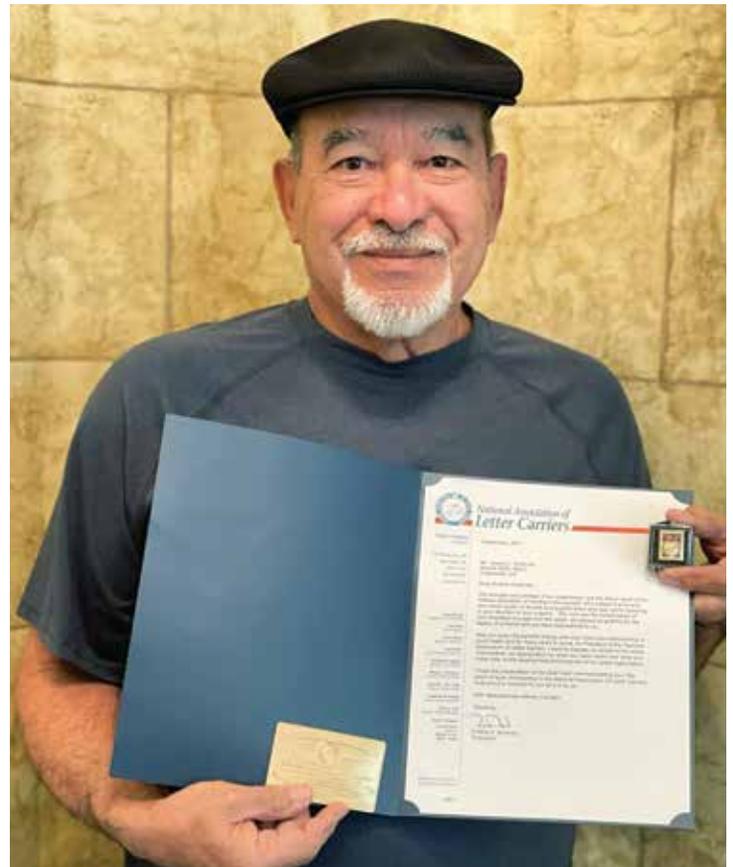
In response to the negative Region 1 reaction, EVP Renfro held a Web Meeting with the Presidents on November 9 to explain why the MOU was signed and why it was good for the membership. NALC National would now have a say in the details and local branches would also have a say in the matter; if a local said no to a potential detail, that would be the end of it. Although I was still opposed to the MOU, at least we now had some clarity regarding NALC’s intent when agreeing to it. On November 30, one of our stewards called me to tell me that he had been on annual the prior week and when he returned to work, he discovered that a carrier from his office had just been detailed outside the Installation to an office in Los Angeles (LA). The steward said that his station manager told him that there was an MOU now, so it was OK to detail the carrier to LA. I explained that the MOU required the parties at the headquarters level to review the names of volunteers and jointly select carriers to be detailed. I also explained that, per EVP Renfro, the local branches were to have input and if we said no to a potential volunteer, that would be the end of it. I found out later that day (November 30) that 2 other carriers from the same installation had been detailed to LA. Locally, we were never asked for input as to whether we would agree to the details and, had I been asked, I would have simply said, **HELL NO, THEY CAN’T GO!** These three carriers come from a poorly staffed installation where non-odl carriers are routinely required to work their non-scheduled days. I requested the names of carriers from our branch that had been approved by headquarters for details and, as expected, the answer was that there were no approvals. As of December 9, NALC headquarters had not agreed to any details however, as written above, at least three of our carriers have been detailed without NALC approval. The ink was not yet dry on the MOU before USPS began violating its terms. What about the MOU requirement that headquarters jointly reviews volunteers and selects them? What about input from the local branches? What about consideration being given to potential impact on staffing in the losing installations? Of course, we are filing grievances locally in response to these details, and

I am hopeful that NALC at the National Level will respond swiftly to USPS violating the MOU with impunity while thumbing their collective noses at us as they do so. The second to last sentence of the MOU reads as follows: “...**This agreement is effective from the date of signature, however, either party may terminate this agreement by providing 30 days written notice to the other party...**” My wish is for NALC to invoke this clause and terminate the agreement. I will provide an update on this matter when one is available. To be continued...

Dues Increase

There will be a biweekly dues increase for the year 2022 due to the increases in letter carrier wages negotiated in the 2019-2023 collective bargaining agreement – including the November 2019, November 2020 and November 2021 general wage increases and the January 2020, July 2020, January 2021 and July 2021 COLA’s. The dues changes took place in Pay Period 1 of 2022 (Dec. 18, 2021 - Dec 31, 2021) and will be reflected beginning with the January 7, 2022, paycheck. Our dues will be increased \$2.13 per Pay Period, from \$27.72 to 29.85. Please be aware that I am reinforcing my suit of armor, the better to absorb the anticipated slings and arrows that will be directed my way as a result of this news.

In closing, thanks to all of you for toughing it out through another peak season and for all you do for the customers you serve. NALC truly appreciates your efforts. Happy New Year to you all.



Pictured above is Joe Gutierrez, retiree from Woodland Hills (and still currently Branch 2902 Health Benefits Representative), as presented with his 50-year Gold Card. Congratulations Joe and thanks for your years of union membership and support.

Understanding our COLA clause



**Fredric V.
Rolando**

This past summer marked the 50th anniversary of postal collective bargaining. In our first contract, we negotiated a very modest cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) clause that accounted for just 12 percent of that agreement's overall wage increase, because it was capped at a fixed amount. In the following 1973-1975 contract, we negotiated an improved COLA clause that remains in our contract to this day. It provided twice-a-year inflation adjustments that made up slightly more than half the wage increases provided by that agreement—which protected us against a

spike in inflation caused by an unforeseeable war in the Middle East that disrupted world oil markets.

By the end of the 1970s, the COLA clause really proved its value to NALC members when the country experienced inflation averaging 10.7 percent annually between 1979 and 1981. COLAs accounted for more than 70 percent of our total pay increases in the 1978-81 National Agreement. All told, COLAs account for about half of all of the wage increases we've earned since 1971.

I give you this little history lesson because most active members have never experienced that kind of inflation and may not have fully appreciated the COLA clause in our contract—until now. Over the past 12 months, prices in the United States have increased by 6.2 percent, triggering the largest COLA adjustment (in dollar terms, though not percentage terms) in our bargaining history: \$1,934 annually, effective Aug. 28, 2021. Once again, the COLA clause has protected us against the impact of external events beyond anyone's control.

The COVID-19 pandemic has so disrupted the global economy (and the international supply chains that make it work) that prices for oil, semiconductors, foodstuffs and shipping services have soared. In the latter case, the cost of sending a single container of goods or parts from Asian manufacturing hubs to the United States has increased from \$3,000 last fall to \$25,000 today. Making matters worse, there are widespread labor shortages in the trucking and warehousing industries, causing a pileup of con-

tainers in our ports and a backlog of ships waiting offshore to unload their cargoes. The lack of parts for domestic companies is causing a shortage of all sorts of goods, but especially of cars and other manufactured goods. So as our economy has recovered—we've added 5 million jobs this year and unemployment has plunged to below five percent—demand for goods is far outstripping supplies. That means higher prices for virtually everything.

When we were bargaining for a new contract in 2019, the rate of inflation was hovering around 2.0 percent annually. Since then, it has tripled. Based on our long collective-bargaining history, we knew two years ago that this kind of unexpected development can happen. So, as we have for 50 years, we fought to defend and extend Article 9, Section 3 of our National Agreement—the COLA clause—during the 2019 interest arbitration. Then we renewed the clause when the arbitration was halted and bargaining for a voluntary agreement resumed.

Although we value COLAs, we do not welcome high inflation for two reasons. First, currently a fifth of our active membership—non-career city carrier assistants (CCAs)—do not receive COLAs. Since 2013, CCAs have received an extra 1 percent general wage increase instead of COLAs—which only works well when inflation is modest. Second, while our COLA clause protects all career city letter carriers against inflation, it is applied proportionally by Step, and it does not offset 100 percent of inflation. It usually offsets about 55 percent of general price increases. For these reasons, we are generally better off with low inflation.

But the bottom line of 15 rounds of collective bargaining is clear: The regular combination of negotiated general wage increases and flexible COLA adjustments, which serve to take the sting out of unexpected inflation and to prevent sudden losses of purchasing power, has served the membership and the Postal Service well.

Our experience over the past six months demonstrates in stark fashion not only the value of COLA clauses, but also the value of collective bargaining itself. It gives workers a way to protect themselves against unforeseen developments such as a pandemic. Without a COLA clause, a surge in inflation could significantly damage the standard of living of letter carriers.

In this, our 50th year of collective bargaining, let us celebrate the power it gives us to have a seat at the table so we can help shape our working lives. And as we navigate another period of high inflation, let us recognize the importance of the humble COLA clause in our National Agreement.



Things Have Changed Over The Years

By James Perryman, Executive Vice President

I have been a Letter Carrier since May 3, 1986, and in my over 35 years of experience I have never seen it this bad. Usually I try to keep it positive but things are changing rapidly and getting worse. When I started my career we didn't have Delivery Point Sequencing (DPS) or Flat Sequencing System (FSS) machines. Mail was cased manually, letters vertically, flats horizontally and routed in sequence when pulling down. Most carriers in my office had stacks of trays of mail on their letter tray racks that looked like the "Skittles Rainbow Candy" which had color tags representing each day of the week that the mail was scheduled for delivery.

Back in the good old days the Post Offices were better staffed and overtime was available. However, mandatory overtime was far less frequent. We started work earlier, usually from 6:00-6:30 am, and completed our deliveries by 5:00 pm with overtime in some cases. I was able to go to Junior College and take night courses. Additionally, I was able to play basketball in the Van Nuys District Postal Basketball League (now California 3), along with other after work social activities. Even though the work was hard, having money to play hard was quite enjoyable. Believe it or not, Letter Carriers actually had enough time to have a life after work, even those who worked overtime, including me. What happened to the quality of life for Letter Carriers? And, what should the USPS do now?

COVID-19, Poor Planning, Unreasonable Future Man-date

One can argue that the combination of all the above may have contributed to the negative impact and issues that the Postal Service is now facing. Although, COVID-19 did not affect the United States of America until about March 2020, it adds to the problems of poor staffing at some delivery units throughout the Postal Service. You would think that management had an emergency plan of action to deal with the adverse impact caused by the pandemic.

First, let's take a look and consider the decision by the Postal Service to roll back service standards. The work of Letter Carriers is vital to the American people. It is essential that the Postal Service maintains a safe and healthy work environment for its employees while having the resources necessary to function and fulfill its service to the public. The USPS is an essential service provider that is mandated by federal law to deliver all mail to the American people during the pandemic. While many people are forced to stay home, including Postal workers due to the crisis, USPS is experiencing an increase in package volume. The Postal Service is required to deliver and collect mail regardless of adequate staffing or not. One may ask, is this the reason why the Postal Service rolled back service standards, which delays the delivery of mail to many Americans throughout this nation. And, why would the Postal Service compromise the

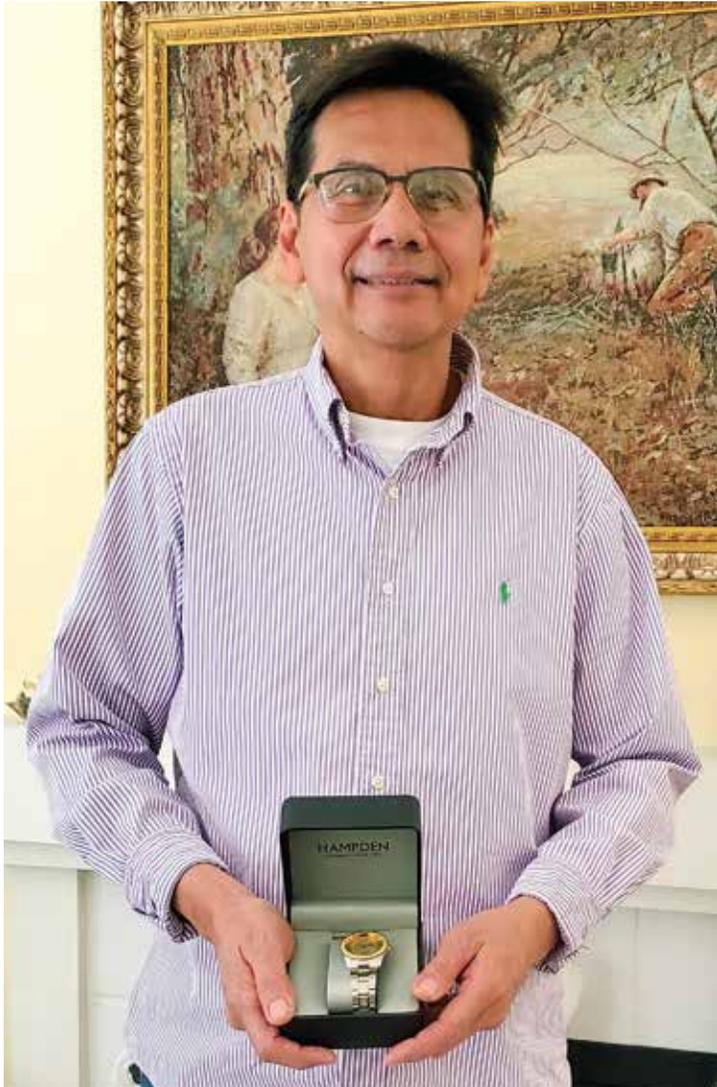
quality of service that we provide to our customers in a way identical to when UPS delayed the delivery of many holiday parcels and packages for their customers about two seasons ago? Furthermore, I have to ask, did the Postal Service consider the hiring shortage in the decision making when rolling back service standards and what it would cost in over-time hours? I think not. In my opinion this is an ass-backward way of doing business. It appears that rolling back delivery standards is making it difficult for the service to follow the above mentioned federal mandate without a severe cost to the operation, employees, and customers.

Second, why would a new hire want to work for the Postal Service? Unlike Amazon, which pays about \$20 per hour and pays for college tuitions (in some cases), the Postal Service pays less than \$19 per hour and offers the following incentives: Disrespect from management, long routes, unrealistic expectations, long hours, and wait for it, **NO DAYS OFF!** And let's not forget about the other benefits the Service has to offer such as: Expensive health care benefits or none, earned annual leave hours which **cannot** be used to take off work, and no retirement benefits. I'm sure these types of incentives will attract many applicants to the Postal Job Fairs...**NOT**. Now, I'm not implying that the Postal Service doesn't have some incentives to offer new hires. Rather, I'm just pointing out what we hear at the local branch office when most CCAs inform us their reasons for quitting. I'm aware that not every new applicant may qualify to work at the Postal Service, especially in the Letter Carrier craft. However, most new hires that recently worked at the Post Office within our branch have quit and did not have a positive experience that made them inclined them to stay. We don't expect these ex-employees to run out and tell their friends and family to apply for a Postal position, again, especially in the Letter Carrier Craft; which will make it difficult for the service to recruit new employees. You know the old saying, "What you put out is what you get back in return." If you offer nothing and treat employees like shit, you'll get it right back in return. Am I right? It seems that everyone understands these clichés, but not the Postal Service. In my opinion, this is one of the reasons for the lack of CCAs and poor staffing at some of the Post Offices, especially where? Answer: **In the Letter Carrier Craft.**

How will the above-mentioned self-destruction affect the Postal Service and Letter Carriers? Well, for many, the answer is on your paycheck stub, lots of **overtime pay**. Carriers are being mandated to work overtime, whether desired or not due to overburden routes and staffing issues. While it's a welcome sight for some on the Overtime Desire List, Non-OT Carriers are growing frustrated when constantly being mandated. Please believe me; I understand the negative impact and frustration of Carriers when required to work undesired overtime and/or required to work on non-scheduled days continuously, and how it can affect the quality way of life outside of work. Many carriers

are getting burned out. In fact, Carriers with years of experience are retiring earlier than expected or just quitting out of frustration. I empathize with those who are upset about the current situation and I don't know how long the service can sustain the operational cost of paying so much in overtime hours without going bankrupt. However, the union is doing everything in its power to address this concern, which will be discussed further in this article. In the meantime, and I'm sorry to be blunt, but the mail still has to be delivered and collected by Letter Carriers, it's our job. So please continue to be patient, and hang in there.

The union has shouted from the mountain tops that the USPS's current game plan on hiring and/or the employee retention has failed miserably by their own numbers. Since 2016, USPS employee attrition rates have been around and/or in excess of 50%. With management's unrealistic projections, and unrealistic route adjustments, this poor planning is not rocket science nor should the Postal Service look to the stars for answers. If what you have been doing doesn't work, change it rather than continuing to run endless circles around the rings of Saturn. The NALC will continue to monitor and navigate through the incompetence to find solutions that protect the well-being of Letter Carriers while sustaining the success of the United



Pictured above is Jose Lara, retiree from the Sylmar P.O. as he is presented with his Union Retiree Watch. Congratulations Jose and wear that watch in good health for many years to come.

States Postal Service. In order to obtain success it starts with co-operation from the Service to comply within the 2019-2023 National Agreement as follows (in-part): "Complement and Staffing" on page 167; "City Carrier Assistant Conversion to Career Status" on pages 160-161; "Part-time Flexible Conversions" on page 159; and the "City Delivery and Workplace Improvement Task Force" on pages 232-234.

Third, The USPS has net losses on its balance sheets, but not because of its operation costs. The underlying financial problem was the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act, implemented by congress in 2006, which put an absurd, onerous, and unheard-of burden that no other company and no other agency has to face. The Postal Service actually makes a modest profit based on its current operating revenue and costs, but the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act forced the USPS to start funding retirees' health benefits in advance for the next 75 years, funding for employees who are not even born yet.

These retirement savings were also mandated to be invested in low-yielding Treasury bonds, which have earned less interest than even the standard Thrift Savings G-fund plan. This law also makes the USPS the third-largest creditor of the U.S. Treasury, which can force the USPS into bankruptcy and null and void all **Collective Bargaining Unit Contracts**.

Moreover, the current laws that govern the operations of the Postal Service hinder its ability to raise the price of goods and service needed to sustain the overhead cost of running the actual operation. The ridiculous pre-funding mandate for future retiree health care, which the Postal Service does not have the funds to pay, along with the governing restrictions placed on the service contributes to limited incentives for new hires, out-dated equipment including vehicles such as LLVs that are being held together with duct-tape.

Lastly, the NALC believe there are many creative and proactive ways to expand on the Post Office services and add streams of revenue. The Post Office could return to offering Postal banking that can cash checks, provide international money transfers, facilitate bill payments, and offer American's a simple bank account.

The USPS has additional possible roads for expansion, including participating in the growing demand for vote-by-mail ballots, offering printing services and wire-less internet, and in some locations approve hunting and fishing licenses or electric-car charging stations. If the Postal Service is willing to apply the above-mentioned possibilities, it could provide a path to success. Moreover, the Postal Service would have the necessary resources to hire with realistic incentives, and reduce excessive use of overtime. However, the implementation of these ideas rest on the willingness of the Postmaster General, the Postal Board of Governors, and the political leaders in Washington D.C.

Letter Carrier Political Fund

The House of Representatives and the Senate have reached an important phase with regard to Postal re-form. The House advanced the Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076) out of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, as reported in the Postal Record. The Senate companion bill (S. 1720), which

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Things Have Changed

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mirrors (H.R. 3076) is being led by Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committees (HSGAC) Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH). The bill includes three important provisions: a reform of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program that would allow the Postal Service and its employees and retirees to maximize savings on health insurance costs via integration with Medicare on a prospective basis; a repeal of the retiree health pre-funding mandate (as provided by the USPS Fairness Act); and a provision to make six-day delivery of mail and packages a statutory obligation (currently, it is enforced by an appropriations bill that must be renewed annually). With the partisan makeup of the Senate evenly split 50-50 and the legislation needing 60 votes to overcome a filibuster, having ten Republicans as co-sponsors is an important accomplishment. If all the Democrats support this critical legislation, it could be signed into law.

The Letter Carrier Political Fund contribution pays for the NALC to lobby Congress to prevent the Postal Service from bankruptcy, which includes lobbying for the passing of bi-partisan bills such as H.R. 3076 and S. 1720. This will help secure the rights of Letter Carriers to have good paying jobs, health benefits, and retirement benefits. All of the gains that the union has fought for, for Letter Carriers can be taken away with the stroke of a political pen.

It is up to us to have a seat at the political table, to fight for the jobs and rights of Letter Carriers. This is why it is important for every active and non-active Letter Carrier to make small campaign contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund. It

provides a path to reach out to political figures that will protect the interest and concerns of Letter Carriers.

The Letter Carrier Political Fund contributes to candidates, regardless of political affiliation, who support issues important to Letter Carriers such as H.R. 3076 and S. 1720. Only NALC members can contribute to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, it's our Political Action Committee (PAC).

Letter Carrier Political Fund contributions cannot be taken from union dues, it is prohibited by federal campaign laws. We only ask that you donate \$5.00 per pay period or \$10.00 per month, which is a very inexpensive way to insure a great future and way of life for Letter Carriers and their families. Active, retired, and CCA Letter Carriers can make campaign contributions to the LCPF by using PostalEASE, Electronic Funds Transfer, OPM Annuity, Check and Cash.

There are applications available online that are user friendly to help you set up to make campaign contributions. If you have any question or need my assistance, please contact me. I am the LCPF coordinator for our branch and I will be happy to help you get started.

Our political involvement can save the USPS from privatization, bankruptcy, and the loss of jobs for Letter Carriers. The **LCPF** provides the vehicle to secure our future and the success of the United States Postal Service and return Letter Carriers to a quality way of life outside of work.

Thanks, to all who make campaign contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund. Stay well, Happy New Year, and God Bless you all.



Pictured above is Manuel (Manny) Feliciano, retiree from Studio City as he is pictured accepting his 50-year Gold Card. Enjoy that free membership Manny for many years to come.



Pictured above is Everardo Perez, retiree out of the Pacoima P.O. as he accepts his 50-year Gold Card. Enjoy that free lifetime membership for many years to come Everardo.



New for 2022, IDI

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

Happy New year Brothers and Sisters, The new insurance plan by your MBA called **Individual Disability Income (IDI)** has just been rolled out for our active members of the NALC. This plan has been coming for many years. The last time we had this plan was in the early 90s.

This insurance helps ensure that you have money you need to continue the lifestyle that you worked for if you become too sick or too hurt to work. IDI is available for our active members from age 18 to 59. Spouses and family members are not eligible.

This policy will pay a monthly benefit amount of \$650, \$1,350, or \$2,000 for a period of six months or 12 months, based on your choice and need at the time of purchase. There is a 14-day elimination period before benefits start, and you must have a total disability, which means you can not perform your normal material duties of your occupation and you are under a doctor's care and that you are not working for any wage or profit.

There is a pre-existing condition limitation that benefits will not be paid unless you have gone for a period of one year while the

policy is in force without receiving any medical advice or treatment for that condition. Some of the exclusions that this policy will not cover are; act of war, normal pregnancy, alcoholism, drug addiction, illegal occupation or activity, attempt to commit a felony, aviation other than as a fare-paying passenger on a scheduled or charter flight operated by a scheduled airline, suicide or self-inflicted injury or cosmetic surgery unless deemed medically necessary by a doctor.

IDI is guaranteed to be renewable until age 65. The MBA cannot change any benefits or refuse to renew your policy as long as your premiums are paid on time. You can acquire this insurance for as little as \$8.25 biweekly.

You can go on the NALC web site and click on member services scroll down to the MBA and you can view and download the brochures and applications.

In closing I wish all of our members and their families a Very Good Year Ahead, GOD BLESS YOU.





National Association of Letter Carriers

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Director, Retired Members

Board of Trustees:

Larry Brown Jr.
Chairman

Michael J. Gill
Mack I. Julion

December 6, 2021

Re: Extension of dispensation for branch and state meetings and elections due to coronavirus

Dear branch or state president:

On December 10, 2020, I issued a letter granting dispensation to all branches to utilize alternative electronic meeting methods, such as video conferencing, through calendar year 2021. This letter recognized that the ongoing coronavirus pandemic had not abated; if anything, it had gotten worse. I also acknowledged the possibility that postponement of in-person events might continue to be necessary to protect the health and safety of our members.

Although there has been some improvement in the overall situation, the pandemic continues to pose significant risks to safety and health. Accordingly, in order to adhere to the requirement to hold monthly meetings, this letter extends the previous dispensation for all branches to utilize alternative electronic meeting methods through calendar year 2022. Branches may also consider other options, which would be consistent with this dispensation. For example, Branches can conduct in-person meetings for those who show proof of vaccination, while allowing all other members to participate by video conference. Alternatively, the Branch may conduct an in-person meeting for everyone, while enforcing COVID protocols such as distancing and masks and may also allow exemptions from masking requirements for members who provide proof of vaccination.

As stated in my previous letter, alternative electronic meeting methods may be used for approval of branch expenditures, deciding appeals, addressing merger proposals, amending By-laws, and conducting other routine branch business that doesn't require secret voting. Alternative electronic meeting methods should include call in features to ensure all members are able to participate. In all instances, appropriate notification should be provided to the members.

Branches and state associations that have postponed nominations and elections that normally are conducted at in-person meetings should implement alternative procedures for conducting nominations and elections expeditiously. This letter extends my previous grant of dispensation to all branches and state associations to conduct nominations and balloting by mail. Branches must send appropriate and timely notice of the procedures to be followed in nominating and electing officers and delegates by mail to all active and retired members.

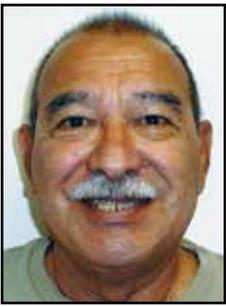
Branches and state associations may continue to request dispensation from me to implement different procedures. Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Paul Barner may be contacted for advice on using alternative methods of conducting nominations and elections.

Finally, we are continuing to monitor the overall situation, and I may modify this dispensation letter at some point in the future.

Once again, on behalf of the entire NALC Executive Council, I want to thank you for everything you do representing our members.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Fredric V. Rolando
President



Telehealth Virtual Visits, Access to Medical Help, Anywhere, Anytime

By Joe Gutierrez, Health Benefits Representative

Hello everyone and Happy New Year. I know this is a little late, but that is what happens every year we have a Health Benefits Seminar. This year the Health Benefits Seminar was done virtually. I was unable to view it until it became available at a later date. This being my first virtual seminar I didn't know what to expect. It turns out it was very well done and easy to follow.

In today's article I will speak on one subject the Seminar covered and I will follow up with more in future articles. This year you will be able to enroll in virtual Telehealth. You fill out your application online and no matter where you are in the U.S., you call the toll-free phone number and within a few minutes, you will be connected to a medical person to discuss your illness. This service is for minor injuries or cold and flu symptoms, sinus problems and minor wounds and abrasions. The cost is \$10 dollars per visit. The

great thing about this program is you can be visiting family or on vacation away from home and if you have a medical problem, it can be addressed on an immediate basis. As an example, you may be camping and get an insect bite such as that of a tick and need advice on exactly what to do. With the Telehealth service, you can be connected with a medical professional who will advise you on what to do. If you need medication, a prescription can be sent to a pharmacy near your location. You will also be advised if you should go to the hospital or urgent care, all for \$10.

I encourage all NALC members to join. There is no cost to join. Now no matter where you are you have a medical doctor just a phone call away within 24 hours. Just one of the many features that the plan has for our members. Now that open season is over I hope you made a wise decision. Hopefully you joined our union, non-profit plan which is owned and operated for all union members.

Letter Carrier Political Fund

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 per calendar year. Any guideline amount is merely a suggestion, and an individual is free to contribute more or less than the guideline suggests and the Union will not favor or disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount of their contribution or their decision not to contribute.



Pictured above is Michael Loisodes, retiree from the North Hollywood P.O. as he accepts his 50-year Gold Card from the NALC.

Management & Employee Responsibilities Regarding Weingarten Rights

M-01667 USPS Letter
October 24, 2007 (abbreviated)

USPS Supervisor Responsibilities Under Weingarten When Interviewing an Employee Where Discipline Might Result Under the Weingarten rule, you must allow each employee the following rights in conducting an investigatory interview:

1. Each employee has a right to be represented by a union steward during an investigatory interview (but not during an Article 16 "discussion"). If, before or at any time during the interview, an employee requests a union steward or in any other way indicates that he or she wants representation, you must do one of three things: (1) you must provide a steward, or (2) you must end the interview, or (3) you must offer the employee the choice of continuing the interview without a steward, or of having no interview at all and therefore losing the benefit that the interview might have given to him or her. When in doubt, it is better to provide a steward or contact Labor Relations immediately.
2. The supervisor must tell the employee and steward the purpose and subject of the meeting before the meeting begins. Then, if either the steward or the employee requests, adequate time must be given to them to talk privately before (or during) the interview.
3. During the interview, you must permit the steward to participate. He or she may ask questions, clarify the employee's answers, comment about the questions, discuss favorable facts, suggest others who have information, and advise the employee. The steward is not allowed to disrupt the meeting or tell the employee not to answer the question. If that happens, postpone the remainder of the meeting and consult you manager or Labor Relations immediately.

4. You may begin the interview, if appropriate, by saying:
 - A. You are going to be asked a number of specific questions concerning (specify the issue causing the interview);
 - B. You are subject to disciplinary action if you refuse to answer or fail to respond truthfully to any questions; Your steward may advise you and participate in the interview (assuming the employee has requested a steward).

Weingarten Rights

Federal labor law, in what is known as the Weingarten rule, gives each employee the right to representation during any investigatory interview which he or she reasonably believes may lead to discipline. (NLRB v. J. Weingarten, U.S. Supreme Court, 1975) (M-01789)

The Weingarten rule does not apply to other types of meetings, such as:

- Discussions.
- Employees do not have the right to union representation during fitness-for-duty physical examinations.

An employee has Weingarten representation rights only where he or she reasonably believes that discipline could result from the investigatory interview. Whether or not an employee's belief is "reasonable" depends on the circumstances of each case.

The steward cannot exercise Weingarten rights on the employee's behalf. And unlike "Miranda rights," which involve criminal investigations, the employer is not required to inform the employee of the Weingarten right to representation.



**We are happy to announce that
The Mail Bag News was awarded 3rd place for
General Excellence, Large Branch at the
(canceled) August 2020 NALC National Convention.**

**The 2020 award for General Excellence
will be presented to the Branch at the
2022 National Convention in Chicago.**

Coronavirus

How to Talk to Your Children

It's not always easy to protect our kids from troubling news. Now with the flurry of stories about coronavirus hitting the media on every device, along with schools temporarily closing to help halt the spread, there's no hiding from reality. It's time for parents to talk honestly to kids about the pandemic. Psychologists and health experts suggest several tips for starting the conversation. **Here are a few to keep in mind during this crisis:**

- **Get your facts straight.** We're all being bombarded with information; it's a lot to process & comprehend even as adults. Before you try to explain things to your child, be sure you have a clear understanding of the scope and risks. The Center for Disease Control ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)) is a great place to find reliable, up-to-date info.
- **Talk to your child at their age level.** The best advice for kids of all ages is to begin the conversation by asking questions. Find out what they've already heard at school and what they're worried about. Then try to speak just to their specific concerns and questions. Avoid filling them with details they don't need to hear that may cause more worry. Some kids want to talk it all out, others not so much. Don't force the conversation but let them know you're ready to listen and talk when they are.
- **Help your child take control.** Nothing is more stressful to a child than feeling helpless. While it's important to reassure your child that you, along with doctors, nurses and other professionals, are working hard to help keep everyone safe, it's also important to also teach your child how to help themselves. Simple lessons like proper hand washing (singing Happy Birthday two times while they soap and rinse), being a good germ catcher (cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm instead of your hand), and practicing healthy habits like eating good foods and getting plenty of rest, give children a sense that they can be part of the solution.
- **Try not to stray from the family routine.** This may be a challenge as school districts, restaurants and other venues close temporarily as a precaution. Still make an effort to do all you can to keep to your family's regular routine. Even if your child is off school, keep the days structured, and maintain the same mealtimes and bedtimes. And, of course, keeping busy and active keeps little minds off worrisome things.
- **Above all, keep calm and carry on.** As the adult, your job is to be a calming and reassuring presence in your child's life. When you talk to them about coronavirus, be honest but try not to let your inner worries come out. In that same calm voice, let your child know that they can always come to you if they feel afraid of what they hear or see...and that they can count on you for honest answers.

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. For the latest information visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

As always, your EAP is here for you and your family. Whether you are staying home or continuing your routine, there are a variety of ways to connect with your EAP including: by telephone 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341, online at [EAP4YOU.com](https://www.EAP4YOU.com), through video, by live chat or text message. Reach out to us to learn more about the many options you have to receive support from your Employee Assistance Program.



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[WWW.EAP4YOU.COM](https://www.EAP4YOU.COM)



PMG on Thin Ice?

By David Hyman, Branch 2902 Trustee & Political Liaison

Greetings Sisters & Brothers! Hopefully Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's days are numbered. President Biden has nominated Daniel Tangherlini and Derek

Kan to replace two current Board of Governors members that had recent terms expire. Pending Senate approval of these two nominees, the board will consist of five Biden appointees and the nine-member bi-partisan Board will continue to have four Democrats, four Republicans and one independent. The President is committed to the Postal Service and these two new members will not be as supportive of the current PMG as the members they are replacing.

Congress recently passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and it was signed by President Biden. This \$1.2 trillion investment in our infrastructure will create more jobs for Americans to rebuild our country. There will be \$110 billion to rebuild 173,000 miles of roads and 45,000 bridges. Also included is \$65 billion to expand broadband internet access, mostly in rural areas. Safe and clean water is also included with \$55 billion and there is \$15 billion to replace lead pipes. This is a big deal for the AFL-CIO since most of these jobs will be good union jobs.

Labor is hoping to finish the job by also passing the Build Back Better Act. This legislation potentially will include an

extension of the Child Tax Credit, \$2.5 billion for the USPS to get electric vehicles, expanding the Affordable Care Act (ACA), funds to help solve the climate crisis, closing the Medicaid coverage gap (in the 12 states that have not already expanded it), paid family and medical leave of up to four weeks, bringing down prescription drug cost, fund home care and hearing aids. Potentially it will be funded by establishing a 15% corporate minimum tax for businesses earning more than a \$1 billion and increase taxes on higher income households. The House has passed this measure and it is now seeking passage in the Senate. Chances are the Senate will tweak the House version so there most likely will be changes made to the bill should the Senate pass it.

Congress passed a bi-partisan resolution that will fund the government until February 18, 2022. House members voted 221-212 and Senators voted 69-28. This February 18 deadline gives Congress time to focus on moving the Build Back Better Act.

The NALC Lobby trip is scheduled for February to help persuade our House members to co-sponsor our bills and resolutions if they have not already done so. Congressman Brad Sherman is on all our bills and Congress members Julia Brownley, Tony Cardenas and Mike Garcia are only on a couple bills each, so Bob Golden and I will have our work cut out for us.

Be well and booster up!

Treasurer's Report

11/15/2021 - 12/14/2021

General Account

Previous Balance	\$164,118.33
Receipts	<u>\$35,031.74</u>
Sub-Total	\$199,150.07
Disbursements	<u>(\$35,598.34)</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$163,551.73</u>

Payroll Account

Previous Balance	\$162,314.23
Receipts	<u>\$21,000.00</u>
Sub-Total	\$183,314.23
Disbursements	<u>(\$22,327.86)</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$160,986.37</u>

Convention Fund

Previous Balance	\$144,188.27
Checking Acct #7 .15% rate-USPS-C.U. (Active & Retirees 1675 x \$2 per By-Laws)	\$3,350.00
Total of Convention Fund	<u>\$147,538.27</u>

C.D. 6 mos .350% rate-Premier C.U.-#1	\$88,841.77
C.D. 6 mos .250% rate-Premier C.U.-#2	\$12,012.91
C.D. (1) year .598% rate Premier C.U.- #3	\$113,225.71
MM Cert #21 26 wks .200% rate-USPS-C.U.	\$25,663.30
MM Cert #18 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-C.U.	\$23,506.50
MM Cert #19 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-C.U.	\$69,157.78
MM Checking #8 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-C.U.	\$46,628.62
C.D. 6 mos .380% Priority One C.U.	\$33,864.01
Shares acct USPS-C.U.	<u>\$7.11</u>

Total of Contingency Fund **\$412,887.71**

Retiree Fund **\$12,881.60**

Mary Stanley
Financial Secretary-Treasurer



Hermance Law

ESTATE PLANNING & CRISIS PLANNING ATTORNEYS



Daughter of a Letter Carrier

THE TRUTH ABOUT ESTATE PLANNING, WILLS, TRUSTS & PROBATE

- A Will alone does **NOT** avoid probate court. A Trust **DOES** avoid probate court.
- Probate is **VERY** expensive and the fees are set by statute. Example, an estate of \$500,000 (FMV Home \$490,000 and \$10,000 in bank accounts) has **statutory fees of \$26,000**. This can be avoided with proper planning including a Trust.
- If you don't have a legal plan, everything **does not** automatically go to your spouse or kids. It passes via intestate law which may not be what you would want.
- If you don't have a legal plan and you can't make decisions for yourself, a judge will decide who gets to make decisions for you and it is expensive to go through.

WILLS | TRUSTS | PROBATE (SOMEONE PASSES AWAY) | TRUST ADMINISTRATION

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- David Hyman
- Louie Rodriguez
- Rochelle Harvey
- Walter Williams

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- Larry Orcutt

The *Mail Bag News* is the official publication of Tri-Valley Branch 2902 (Chatsworth, California) of the National Association of Letter Carriers. All opinions expressed are those of the individual author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NALC or its officers. The *Mail Bag News* welcomes articles and letters to the editor; however the editorial staff of *The Mail Bag News* assumes complete authority to decide which letters are presented for publication. Anonymous articles are not accepted. Permission is hereby granted to re-print articles. We just ask that you give the author and the publication appropriate credit.

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Fillmore Chief S.S.	Connie Ramirez
Moorpark Chief S.S.	Adriana Serrano
No. Hollywood Chief S.S.	Louie Rodriguez
Chandler	Greg Gaddis
Laurel Canyon	Louie Rodriguez
Studio City	Greg Gaddis
Valley Village	Louie Rodriguez
Northridge Chief S.S.	Call Office
Porter Ranch	Call Office
Ojai Chief S.S.	Call Office
Oxnard Chief S.S.	Johnny Boyd
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	Pablo Galvan
Alternate S.S.	Louie Tanglao
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Call Office
Reseda Chief S.S.	Oscar Cortez
San Fernando Chief S.S.	Albert Reyes
M.C.A.	Albert Reyes
North Hills	Albert Reyes
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Where: Golden Panda
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When: Tuesday, January 18, 2022
Time: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

FEBRUARY

Where: Golden Panda
1825 Madera Rd., Simi Valley
When: Tuesday, February 15, 2022
Time: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

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Calendar of Events

- | | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| JAN 17 | Martin Luther King Jr Day - Holiday | |
| JAN 18 | Retiree Lunch 11:00 am
Golden Panda - Simi Valley |  |
| JAN 20 | Regular Branch Meeting 7:00 pm
Union Hall - Chatsworth
(Subject to COVID-19 restrictions) | |
| FEB 3 | Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm
Executive Council Meeting 7:00 pm
(Subject to COVID-19 restrictions) | |
| FEB 14 | Valentines Day | |
| FEB 15 | Retiree Lunch 11:00 am
Golden Panda - Simi Valley | |
| FEB 17 | Regular Branch Meeting 7:00 pm
Union Hall - Chatsworth
(Subject to COVID-19 restrictions) | |
| FEB 21 | Presidents' Day -
Holiday |  |
| MAR 3 | Executive Board Meeting 6:00 pm
Executive Council Meeting 7:00 pm
(Subject to COVID-19 restrictions) | |
| MAR 13 | Daylight Savings Time Begins-
Set clocks ahead one hour | |
| MAR 15 | Retiree Lunch 11:00 am
Golden Panda - Simi Valley | |
| MAR 17 | Regular Branch Meeting 7:00 pm
Union Hall - Chatsworth
(Subject to COVID-19 restrictions) | |