



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

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Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly, Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers,
Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac,
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Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester

Branch 25 Regular Monthly Meeting

Feb 2, 2021 08:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82324909250>

Meeting ID: **823 2490 9250**

One tap mobile

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President's Message

I have been delaying writing my article for this month's Wake-Up! till the last possible minute. I have done so because I wanted to be able to communicate to you, the members, concrete information regarding vaccinations for Covid-19. Unfortunately, as of today, I don't have the concrete information that I desired. All I can say is that I am confident that before I have to write my NEXT article that the vaccine rollout for postal employees will have begun.

One need do no more than compare the CDC website guidelines with the mass.gov website guidelines to get thoroughly confused. The CDC language is:

Phase 1b

- *Frontline essential workers such as fire fighters, police officers, corrections officers, food and agricultural workers, United States Postal Service workers, manufacturing workers, grocery store workers, public transit workers, and those who work in the educational sector (teachers, support staff, and daycare workers.)*

While the language from the mass.gov website is:

First Responders (EMS, Fire, Police)

As far as I'm aware, the CDC makes the recommendation and it is ultimately up to the states to accept or modify based on each state's needs. The best advice that I can give at this time is to contact your local Department of Health to find out what may be available in your home town. At present, it does not appear that the vaccine will be provided at your workplace. Instead, you will have to make an appointment at a location that is listed on the mass.gov website unless your local board of health can provide more locations than are listed on the above mentioned site.

There has also been a policy issued by the White House. The "Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing". Fortunately, it was already a requirement to wear a mask at the Post Office, but this Executive Order certainly strengthens the requirement. As discussed at a prior Branch 25 Zoom meeting, we have obtained a couple hundred masks and gaiters for the members that would like them. I would ask the stewards in each office to make a list of individuals who may want a mask or gaiter. It will be more efficient to distribute them through the stewards than to send them out to individuals. At any rate, you can certainly contact the branch office if you would like one and one will be provided.

While on the subject of masks, I find it necessary to mention that I have been to offices as recently as last week and have observed people within 6 feet of each other conversing without face coverings properly affixed. I hope that is not the norm. Most locations that I visit I see almost all employees abiding by the policy, social distancing and wearing their masks. Keep it up!

Unfortunately, it isn't just us that we have to be concerned about. There are still those that are not taking the virus seriously, that aren't respecting the virus. I'm at a loss for words for this situation. I can only hope that everyone is educated to the fact that we are in a critical situation and as I stated so many months ago that they can respect those around them even if they don't respect the virus.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the carriers of the Bedford office. Recently, the carriers had decided that they had had enough and wrote statements detailing incidents of abuse and mistreatment by the Postmaster. The local steward forwarded information to the branch office and we in turn made the District Manager aware. An investigation was ordered and hopefully the results will be forthcoming soon. It takes courage to stand up and the Bedford carriers showed such courage. Hopefully I will be reporting positive results in a future issue of the Wake-Up!

Please, if there are circumstances in your office that are inappropriate, bring them to the attention of your steward AND the branch office. We will work together with your steward, and with you, to bring such activities to an end. However, if you remain silent and hope that things just get better on their own, there is nothing that we can do and you will most likely be sorely disappointed. Bullying behavior doesn't normally just "go away".

The last thing that I would like to touch upon is the fact that the district has reestablished the hubs. I could not disagree with this decision any more than I do. The week leading up to the "recoupling", I had spoken to a few postmasters who were apprehensive about the decision. On the Wednesday prior, I attended a telecon with District Manager Mike Rakes. Although he has made other decisions that have been beneficial to us in the past, he couldn't have been more off the mark than he was with this one. During the telecon he had just discussed the upticks in infections and quarantines that spiked beginning with the Thanksgiving holiday and continued to worsen shortly after Christmas. I asked him based on what he had just reported wouldn't this be the wrong time to reestablish the hubs? To parrot the words often found on a letter of discipline, "During this meeting, Mr. Rakes offered no plausible explanation for his actions."

All I can do is to advise you to take extra precautions if you have to work on Sundays in a hub. Be sure they have disinfectant and clean the vehicle before and after you use it. It is preferable not to enter the building but to instead retrieve the parcels outside. Be safe, take all precautions possible!

Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

Hopefully, by the time you read this you will have received your ballot for the ratification of our national agreement. I haven't received mine yet, so I assume there has been a delay of some kind or the mail is just slow. Please don't waste any time when filling it out and sending it back to Washington, it may take longer than expected to return to NALC Headquarters. I think it is a good agreement, especially considering the financial situation the Postal Service is currently in. The details of the tentative agreement are in the current edition of the Postal Record for your review. Most carriers go immediately to the financial provisions and I don't blame them, but there are other good provisions explained that deal with CCA conversions and Health Benefits etc. One interesting provision is that MSP scans will be eliminated no later than 60 days from ratification of the contract. We never really needed them anyway.

As of now we don't have any Spring schedule for route inspections, and I can't see any inspections happening until at least the Fall, but who knows. I can't see how any inspection could be done with social distancing requirements properly implemented, and the data from the inspections would probably be inaccurate anyway because of all the delays due to the plants, and some carrier units, being minimally staffed because of Covid. It should be the last concern right now for the Postal Service anyway. There will be negotiations for LMOUs beginning in late April, so feel free to take a look at the LMOU for your station and contact the Union office with any suggestions or to request a Zoom meeting for your station. The LMOUs are all on the branch website. Remember, it is a negotiation, so nothing is automatic.

The new Congress has a lot to handle immediately, from the Virus to the economy and climate, but hopefully the Postal Service and true reform will be in their crosshairs in the near future. There still is discussion on expanding our products, like grocery and alcohol delivery, and possibly even banking as we did years ago. The big thing will be to take care of the obligation to pre-fund the retirees health benefits in a way that doesn't ruin the Postal Service. It is absurd that we have to pre-fund these like no other agency. There has also been talk that the Postal workers will be in the next phase of Covid vaccinations but not much as far as details go. The last I heard is there is a wait for vaccines to be made available. Where the vaccines will be administered or how the appointments will be made are unknown right now, but it probably won't be on Postal property. If we do get the chance to get a vaccine due to our positions as essential workers, I will be glad to accept. I hope all others give a lot of consideration also. It doesn't appear that we will be meeting as a branch for

the next few months but that shouldn't stop you from joining the Zoom meetings we will be having every month until the governor allows us to meet. We had a good turnout last month and it would be good to see an increase this month. Obviously, not everyone can attend every month, but it is good to see attendance increasing. As long as you have internet access it is easier than actually attending a meeting in person. The Zoom info is in this Wakeup and on the branch website every month. Grab a drink and a snack and relax while attending a branch meeting.

As I write this the NBA, NHL and NFL are all somehow still actively playing, the NFL is winding down their playoffs - with Superbowl coming soon. Somehow these leagues have managed to get by without completely shutting down due to Covid, but they have cancelled many games, especially the NBA. Even though we have had many carriers that have had to quarantine we still have maintained the delivery everyday since this pandemic began. That is a tribute to the many employees that have taken this serious and hopefully we can maintain the safety protocols until we can get through this.

Keep your head up!
Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

February 2	Regular Monthly Zoom Meeting
February 2	Ground Hog Day
February 3	The Day the Music Died
February 4	Thank a Mailman Day
February 7	Superbowl Sunday
February 8	Boy Scout Day
February 12	Lincoln's Birthday Chinese New Years
February 14	Valentine's Day
February 15	President's Day
February 17	Ash Wednesday
February 22	Washington's Birthday

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Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.

Superbowl LV



Who's gonna come out on top? The image above says it all.

With a weekend fresh under my belt straight out of retirement, I just wanted an opportunity to say a few words to all I have worked with and retired before me as well as those who must continue on. Normally one is given a few minutes for a speech after receiving their award, pin and a few kind words. However I missed that chance because I was outside loading parcels into my truck ... So here it goes ready or not!

My last day working for the USPS in Danvers/Peabody, was a glorious day for me and many others I am sure. I started in 1995 having to start my life over at age 42. I chose the Postal Service because as a letter carrier the position was as secure as one could get from being laid-off again and not having a formal education.

That first year we had record snow falls and as a PTF, I spent most of that first Winter shoveling out blue mail boxes and there were plenty of them; as well as working many heavy park & loops in those conditions... My Poor Back! It wasn't all that bad though, we all received T-Shirts saying "We delivered through the record snow fall in Danvers". Those first few years management even gave us a ham or turkey for the holidays.

Then 9/11 came along and with a local Anthrax scare, we found ourselves evacuated out to the parking lot while carrier Tommy Karolidis was being hosed down in the men's room by the fire department for coming in contact with some mysterious white powder. Afterwards management had to call the POOM "Kusiak" down from the district because the carriers were refusing to re-enter the building unless we were assured it was safe and would be going forward.

Now it's the VIRUS, Covid-19 wreaking havoc on everyone; long hours with parcels and smalls up the Ying-Yang, yet through it all we letter carriers carried on. The post card we all received in the mail from the district really said it all; you all really do "MAKE A DIFFERENCE" in people's lives!

I am truly proud to have worked for an institution invented by founding father and first Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin. I am sincerely grateful for this job because it provided food on the table, clothes over our backs and a roof over my family's heads. So going forward; I sincerely hope **ALL** of you the best!

Having said all that, I'd like to quote a fellow letter carrier who use to remind us all once in a while with a little shout out ... "THIS PLACE SUCKS". Remember: Try and stick together, do the best you can, stay beyond reproach, obey and grieve, make them pay, make no mistake who your friends are and until the day the culture changes hold both management and the union accountable.

"Live Long and Prosper" ... Eddie V.

Check It Out

If you read last month's Wakeup and/or were at January's monthly Zoom meeting you'd know there have been some LLVs seen around the branch with only one working headlight. So, I thought it might be a good time to review the process of checking our vehicles in the morning. As we all know, when you set up your scanner for the day a screen comes up that asks if you have performed the Notice 76 expanded vehicle safety check. After hitting yes every morning for a while now I thought I better find out what the heck the expanded safety check is!

To find the vehicle safety check list I decided to do the smart thing and ask my Shop Steward. Sure enough my Steward came through. I can pass on that you can find it on the NALC Branch 25 website in section 832 of the M-41 Handbook. The M-41 is the City Delivery Carriers Duties and Responsibilities. Since we asked about it, our Postmaster is going to provide our office with a hard copy version of the notice. If you want a copy, ask your Steward or Postmaster.

When you find Notice 76 you will see 27 items on the checklist! Don't panic. Some of these could be condensed. For example 4 items are used to check for body damage. The 4 cover front, back, and 2 sides. 2 are used for leaks, front and back. 2 for door locks, etc. Let's look at the most important ones. Make sure the engine starts. Nothing is worse than finding out the engine doesn't start after you've loaded up. Check gages* (this spelling can be gage or gauge), most importantly check the gas gage. I would add to make sure you have a gas card too.. Notice 76 makes a point that the gas gage takes 30 seconds to warm up. Make sure the horn is working. Make sure the seat belt works.

Now for the lights. It's much better to get a fellow carrier to help you. Check headlights, tail lights, brake lights, directionals and flashers. Here, I would add check dome light, especially in fall and winter when it gets dark early. The Notice says to use assistance to check lights but if not possible, do it yourself. Good luck checking brake lights alone!

Since this checklist is in our duties handbook, management must allow sufficient time to get it done. Remember that come route inspection time. Don't forget about the 30 seconds for the gas gage. Of course, if you didn't use the vehicle yourself the day before, be sure to sanitize it.

Stay Safe,
Jim Salvati

Lyrics Trivia " He's making a list and checking it twice"
Who sang it first on the radio in 1934?
Name 10 popular artists who have recorded it.

My goal for this month's issue of the Wake-Up! is two-fold: 1) To encourage NALC plan members to take our health assessment. In my view this is best achieved by referring you to page 85 in the plan brochure. It's a quick read, clear and concise. 2) To help guide you through the step-by-step process. Below is the guide.

1. Log on to the NALC website (nalc.org)
2. Go to Member Benefits - click on to NALC Health Benefit Plan.
3. Go to HBP website.
4. Click on ot the Health Assessment
5. A) If registered (took a previous assessment) enter user name and password.
B) If new, click on Register and follow the prompts.
6. Log in.
7. Click on Take Your Health Assessment.

Note 1 - Helpful information - height, weight, blood pressure, cholesterol readings, and body mass index.

Note 2 - The sooner you take the Assessment, the sooner the incentives kick in.



Note 3 - The whole process takes about 20 minutes.

Note 4 - Last month's article, while certainly not necessary, may be worth rereading.

Note 5 - Need help or want to know more? Contact Ken or me through the branch office.

Keep on truckin'

Rich Donlon

 **BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER** 


Name: _____
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: _____

Phone number: _____

Retirement date: _____

Please note: Retiree must be a member is good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876



Vice President's Report

By the time you read this you should have received, and hopefully returned, your ballot for our tentative national agreement. Once ratified by the membership this will be the 15th agreement in the 131-year history of the NALC. The NALC first gained some collective bargaining rights in 1962 but those did not include the ability to negotiate over compensation. The 1970 strike led to the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 which gave the NALC full collective bargaining rights: 81 years after its chartering. The NALC now had rights to bargain on the issues of wages, hours and working conditions for its membership. The provisions of the current contract have been outlined in the January issue of *The Wake Up* and at our last branch meeting. I will cover a little bit of the history of our agreements this month.

There have been 14 collective bargaining agreements, with 8 of them having been negotiated and 6 having been arbitrated.

1971: The first negotiated contract covered the years 1971-73. The negotiations were held jointly by 7 unions, including the NALC. This contract provided a wage increase of \$1250 annually, a single Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of \$160 and a \$300 lump-sum payment. The most important provision was a no layoff clause for letter carriers. Many carriers, emboldened by the strike of 1970, felt this agreement did not go far enough regarding limiting management's powers and more clearly separating carrier and clerk work among other issues.

1973: The second agreement covered the years 1973-75 and was done jointly with 3 other unions. Carriers received a \$1100 wage increase annually, biannual uncapped COLAs and added overtime rules and provisions against subcontracting.

1975: Covering the years 1975-78 this agreement gave \$1400 wage increases annually and biannual uncapped COLAs.

1978: The 1978-81 agreement ended the streak of negotiated contracts and was the first time the NALC membership rejected a proposed contract. The bargaining was done with the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) and National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU). The membership voted the proposed agreement down due to the proposed cap on COLAs. Mediation failed and the result was the Healy Award. Arbitrator Healy ruled for the NALC on the

COLA issue, but management got a partial win with the no layoff clause being reduced to employees with a minimum of 6 years.

1981: The 1981-84 agreement was again negotiated, this time just with the APWU. This contract ended mandatory yearly route inspections and gave \$300 annual wage increases as well as \$350 per year cash payments and a \$150 ratification bonus.

1984: The 1984-87 agreement was the second arbitrated agreement and the largest interest arbitration case ever in the United States at the time. This was the first agreement overseen under NALC President Vince Sombratto. Arbitrator Kent rejected the Postal Service's proposed two-tier pay scales and reduced COLAs. However, starting salaries were reduced by 10%. A tenth national holiday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, was also added.

1987: Covering the years 1987-90 this agreement gave 6 wage increases and 7 COLAs,

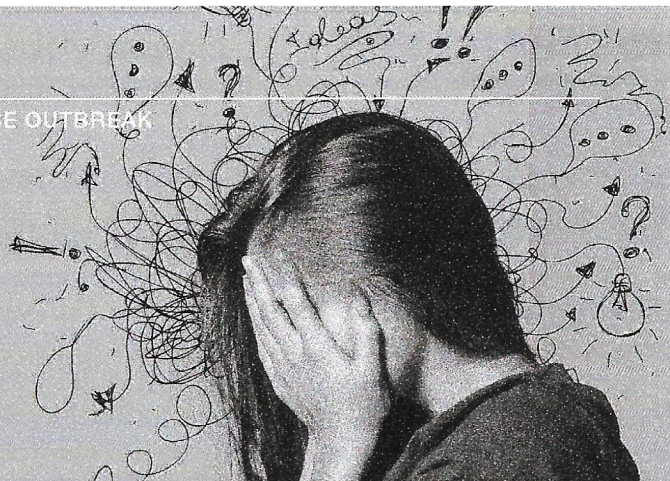
1990: The 1990-94 agreement was again arbitrated. The USPS wanted wage freezes and health benefit give-backs, more part timers and a temporary workforce due to upcoming automation. The arbitrator gave wage increases of 1.2%, 1.5%, 1.5%, 1.6% and uncapped COLAs over the life of the agreement. Mediation with a second arbitrator got no agreement on health benefit issues and in the end, the award reduced the USPS portion of health benefit expenses from 90% to 85%. The ability to have pre-tax health care spending was also added.

1994: The 1994-98 agreement was the first in which the NALC bargained all by itself, having jointly bargained with the APWU since 1984. The NALC demanded a higher pay level, but Arbitrator Stark called these demands "premature". 2 wage increases of 1.2% and 2 lump sum payments of \$400 and \$950 were given.

1998: The 1998-2001 agreement was the third consecutive arbitration award. The Fleischi Award provided for an upgrade of levels worth from 2.5% to 3.1% and a cash payment of between \$725 and \$1034.

(continued on back page)

Everyone experiences anxiety from time to time. With a novel virus now impacting the world, it's understandable to be even more anxious. The following information may help.



Coronavirus

Anxiety

When fear and nervousness surrounding COVID-19 become overwhelming and keep us from doing everyday things, the anxiety may need to be addressed with the help of a mental health professional. You may experience some of the common symptoms below:

- Feelings of dread
- Restlessness or irritability
- Feeling on edge or jumpy
- Expecting the worst to happen
- Racing heartbeat
- Upset stomach
- Headaches, fatigue, insomnia
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty falling or staying sleep

The physical symptoms of anxiety can easily overlap with other medical conditions. It is important to talk with your doctor to rule out a medical illness. Your doctor may also recommend seeing a mental health professional.

Stress and relaxation techniques are also incredibly helpful in managing anxiety related to COVID-19. The following are common techniques to try:

Deep breathing

The way we breathe is linked to how we feel. When we are relaxed, we breathe slowly. When we are anxious, we breathe more quickly. Try breathing slowly and steadily, inhaling through your nose and exhaling slowly through your mouth.

Progressive muscle relaxation

Our bodies respond automatically to stress by becoming tense. Purposefully relaxing your body influences your mind to do the same. Try slowly tensing and relaxing different muscle groups in your body. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.

Mindfulness

Most anxiety we experience is focused on the past or the future. Try focusing on the here and now. Mindfulness encourages us to pay attention to the present moment without judging ourselves, others or circumstances. Try noticing your thoughts for 1 minute, but without attaching judgment to them. Let them pass by.

Distraction

While ignoring a problem is never helpful, it can be helpful to simply take a break. Schedule time in your day to focus on activities that relax you. Try watching a movie, listening to a podcast, or going for a walk with a friend.

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, 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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WAKE UP

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I WANT YOU...

at the next meeting

February 2

via

ZOOM Meeting

2001: The 2001-2006 agreement was the first 5-year contract and broke the string of arbitration awards. Delayed for months due to the 9/11 attacks and following anthrax scare this agreement gave 5 wage increases and 8 COLAs.

2006: The big issue in the 2006-11 agreement was subcontracting. The NALC pushed back hard against subcontracting and held nationwide rallies to make the public aware. The result was a limit on subcontracting and wage increases of 8.85% over 5 years. Casuals were abolished for Transitional Employees (TE) and employee health benefit costs increased by 5%.

2011: The 2011-16 agreement, also known as the Das Award, broke 13 years of negotiated agreements. This arbitrated contract saw wage increases of 1%, 1% and 1.5%. The 5-year-old TE position was replaced by the current City Carrier Assistant position (CCA). All Part-Time Flexible carriers (PTFs) were converted to regular. Management's demand to eliminate the no layoff clause was rejected.

2016: The 2016-19 agreement was again negotiated. Wage increases of 1.2% and 1.3% and the upgrade from Grade 1 to Grade 2 were negotiated.

This brings us up to our current proposed agreement. Negotiating these agreements never really ends. The next agreement will run until May 20, 2023 and official negotiations seem a long way away, but preparation and planning begin almost immediately. More contracts have been negotiated than arbitrated and that is a good thing. Once it is in the hands of an arbitrator the outcome is always in doubt. Sometimes letter carriers benefit in keeping uncapped COLAs, like in 1978 or in rejecting management's demand for the elimination of the layoff clause in 2011. Sometimes management wins as well, like in 1978 when the layoff clause time was reduced or in 2011 when then-current CCAs had to lose \$6 per hour to stay on. Here's to smooth future negotiations.

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler