



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher

Volume 44 Issue 3

March 2020

Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly, Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers, Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



Rockport's newest retiree Glenn Anderson receives his plaque and retirement gratuity at the February Branch meeting. John McNulty, back left, with the involuntary photo bomb.

President's Message, "\$3700 Is Only The Beginning"

In early February it was announced that Arbitrator Dennis Nolan would serve as the neutral arbitrator in the interest arbitration between NALC and USPS (our new contract). Hearings will likely start "in the spring". Meanwhile, we all wait hoping that our leaders will be able to convince the arbitrator that we deserve a fair increase in pay. Let's face it, the money is the first thing we want to hear about whenever there is a new national agreement.

How much of a raise will we need to achieve in order to stay ahead of the game? Well, that depends on several factors. For instance, the 2020 Federal Budget proposed by Trump calls for an increase of 1% per year for the next six years of letter carriers' contributions to FERS. This would amount to an increase in our retirement contributions of \$3700. A top step letter carrier would have to receive a 5.7% pay raise to break even. To give you a point of reference, the 2011-2016 National Agreement yielded a total of 3.5% in general wage increases while the 2016-2019 National Agreement yielded a total of 4.6% in general wage increases. Think about that for a minute.

The budget also calls for calculating retirement based on a high 5 instead of a high 3. The math is simple, you made less 5 years ago than you did 3 years ago. Including the fourth and fifth year into a high "x" calculation serves to reduce your retirement benefit.

Thinking about retiring before age 62? If this budget passes you'll probably have to think again. The budget proposes eliminating the annuity supplement. The annuity supplement approximates your social security benefit if you have 30 years service and are at least 56 years old. It is what allows many carriers to retire "young". It is calculated as total years service/40 x ss benefit at age 62. Eliminating this supplement eliminates over \$1000/month in many instances. How many of you reading this right now are planning to take advantage of the annuity supplement? How many of you reading this could retire at 56 without it? Retiring at 56 with 30 years is one of the few bones that a letter carrier can hope for. You work your butts off, do you want to be forced to do that for six additional years?

The budget also calls for the immediate elimination of FERS retirement COLA's and the phasing out of CSRS retirement COLA's by .5% per year. A few months ago I wrote about Ovila Cote who has seen his CSRS retirement triple over the course of his retirement as a result of COLA's. Retirees' annuities would be frozen at the amount they are on the date of retirement. They would not be able to survive increases in the cost of living. For those of you that have been retired for say 10 years, how would you be doing financially now if you were still only receiving what you received 10 years ago?

The budget proposes changing the interest for the TSP G fund. You guessed it, it would be a reduction in the interest that the funds invested in the G fund receive.

All of the above items would immediately and directly affect letter carriers. There is one more item that would most likely have a delayed affect on us. The budget calls for federal employees to pay more into the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program. Our contributions are dictated by our National Agreement so although there would not be an immediate change, negotiating this benefit in the future would be far more difficult. Past proposals would cost the average worker approximately \$1400/year take-home pay.

As you can see, whether you're active or retired the current administration is trying to make your life far more difficult financially. And these are just the administration's budget proposals. There are still a litany of "recommendations" regarding the postal service from the Mnuchin task force that released its report in December 2018. Central to those recommendations was rolling back postal unions' ability to bargain collectively for compensation. Before letter carriers could bargain for compensation, letter carriers qualified for welfare. That was the level of wages that were "voluntarily" paid to letter carriers.

Walk through a parking lot of a postal facility today. You'll see shiny Cadillacs, BMW'S, Mercedes, Audis...and that's in the employee parking area. YOU DESERVE THEM. As I stated earlier, you work your butts off. If the current administration had their way, you wouldn't be able to afford these vehicles no matter how much overtime you worked.

Paramount to our future is fixing the USPS finances. That is why HR2382, the USPS Fairness Act is so necessary as it repeals the pre-funding mandate, the mandate that is responsible for the overwhelming majority of postal losses over the past decade. The bill passed the House by a 309-106 vote. Its Senate counterpart, S2965 may never see the light of day. It sits with roughly 400 other bills passed by the House on Mitch McConnell's desk. If the Senate passed this Bill, it would present a much better financial picture of the USPS. A better financial picture would make it easier for an arbitrator to grant us decent wage increases.

Remember this when you vote. I could care less about Democrat or Republican. I care about whether you voted in favor of my well-being. I care about whether your budget damages my quality of life. 2020 is a crucial year for our financial well-being. Please, make educated decisions.

Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

Well, we had route inspections conducted in one of our stations at the beginning of February and some of the people on the inspection team did exactly as we expected. A lot of instructions from the street that were both unnecessary, and violations of the M-39, the manual that is the guideline for route inspections. If management feels that the carriers in a particular station need constant instruction during the week of inspection, then I would suggest that the unit was not ready to be inspected. That is management's duty to make sure proper procedures are followed year-round. I would also suggest that maybe some on the inspection team were not properly trained. The only proper instruction during an inspection is that the carrier perform his/her duty as they do every other day of the year. It's as simple as that and any other instruction from the street should be documented on your break and possibly grieved. I do suggest that if you are being inspected that you make an effort to get to the branch training for your office, to get a better understanding of your rights and obligations.

The White House released their budget proposal for fiscal year 2021 and there are many things in it that would have a negative effect on our members if passed. I won't list the entire package, but a few of the proposals include cuts to pay for Postal Workers, increased payroll contributions to pension, using a high-5 average instead of high-3 year average, to determine retirement annuity, and eliminating the FERS annuity supplement. Every one of these is basically either a cut in pay while active or retired. Hopefully, we have enough friends in Congress to defeat the Budget Proposal. At the last branch meeting we had a Political Organizer from NALC headquarters, who gave a very good presentation of the importance of the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF). His explanation was clear and to the point as to how the fund is used to protect letter carrier's jobs and our benefits. It is not about a small percentage of carriers contributing a lot, but a large percentage of carriers contributing a small amount to preserve our jobs and retirement benefits. Another proposal of the White House budget is to eliminate collective bargaining for Federal Employees. If this happened, the Postal Service would simply tell us how much they will pay us and what kind of benefits we would get. No negotiation.

I just want to mention a quick thing about workers compensation. We have a lot of calls come into the Union office about comp cases. Sometimes carriers get a minor injury that requires a doctor's visit or a trip to the emergency room. In a lot of instances, the carrier sees either a Nurse Practitioner or Physician's Assistant. These are fine if you are being treated for something that occurred off the clock. Anything that is being treated as an on-the-job injury, there needs to be a signature from a medical doctor (MD) on the paperwork. Even if you are treated by a NP, a signature is also required by an MD,

for the Department of Labor to approve the case. It doesn't matter if you miss no time at work or have no more doctor's visits, the forms must have an MD's signature, for the medical bills to be covered. If the case is denied for this reason you still have appeal rights and should be able to remedy that. If you get a denial of a claim or a letter from the DOL looking for more information in order to approve the claim, call the Union office immediately so we can help you.

Congratulations to the CCAs that will be converted to career status in March as a result of having 30 months of service on February 15th. Don't forget to sign up for a health plan within 60 days and take advantage of the Thrift Savings Plan.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

March 1	Peace Corps Day
March 3	Regular Monthly Meeting Wilmington K of C 27 School Street Extension Food Served 7:00 PM Meeting Begins 8:00 PM
March 4	Hug a GI Day
March 6	Employee Appreciation Day
March 8	Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 12	Girl Scouts Day
March 17	St Patrick's Day

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

Veterans' Corner

A new law provides eligible Veterans and Primary Family Caregivers with access to DoD and Coast Guard commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare, and recreation retail services.

According to the Department of Defense, starting January 1, 2020, all service-connected Veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war (POW), and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible Veterans under the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) can use commissaries, exchanges, and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.

For more information regarding these privileges and access to military installations, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/expanding-access>.

Who is eligible on January 1, 2020?

Veterans
Purple Heart recipients
Former prisoners of war
Veterans with 0-90% service-connected disability ratings.

Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are already eligible under existing DOD policy.

Semper Fi, Andie Coulter

Do yourself and your fellow carriers a favor, perform vehicle safety checks daily! As professional letter carriers you are given the time to perform the check itself as well as the time it takes to walk to and from the vehicle. Here are just a few good reasons to perform the check.

1. Safety. Any employee driving a USPS owned vehicle is REQUIRED to perform the vehicle safety check before driving the vehicle. Not just for your safety, for your brother and sister carriers as well as the public.

2. Covering your butt. You'll breathe a sigh of relief when you perform a vehicle check and discover body damage to your truck and realize you were non-service the previous day. If you didn't see that damage first thing in the morning good luck explaining this to management later in the day. In my station trucks are used seven days a week and by carriers from several different stations. This can only increase the probability of mishaps and miscommunication regarding any vehicle damage. So be on alert for damage more than ever!

3. Time credit. Sooner or later you'll have a form 3999 performed on you. It's one thing to perform the vehicle check and your supervisor who knows your work habits is aware that you perform a full check daily. It's another thing when it's a route examiner from Ops looking at you skeptically. If you're pulled in the office during inspections you want to be the carrier who your steward (or supervisor if they are half decent) can legitimately inform the examiner, "Yeah that's Mary. She's professional and checks her truck daily." Which leads to my last reason...

4. Credibility. Eventually every carrier driving these ancient trucks will experience this situation; Despite performing a full vehicle check at the start of your tour, the truck will fail to start when you leave for the street. It's easier for you to walk back into the office and give the bad news to your supervisor when you know that you perform the vehicle check daily. "Remember me Boss, the carrier that actually checks their truck daily." "Oh yeah, you're *THAT* guy."

Even though I'm finishing up my postal life as a custodian, I still find myself in the driver's seat daily. It's almost a daily given fact that an LLV will breakdown and I will ferry another truck out to a carrier. As much as I know the unfortunate carrier is having a bad day, I have to stop myself before I drive away and perform the vehicle check. There's no use of giving the carrier another bum truck. The LLVs are especially beat up and even the newer ProMasters and 2-Tons take a beating six and seven days a week. Cover yourself and your brother and sisters by doing the vehicle check daily and fill out Form 4556 if you find any defects.

Andy Coan, Secretary

Guide To Route Inspection Carrier Consultations

There are two different consultations that must take place as part of route inspections. The first is the Route Evaluation Consultation. This consultation is the carrier's opportunity to review the data that has been collected from the week of inspection. This data is collected on forms PS 1838 (Carrier's Count of Mail) and PS 1840 (Carrier Delivery Route - Summary of Count and Inspection).

Route Evaluation Consultation:

Form 1838 must be provided to each letter carrier 5 calendar days before the consultation. Form 1840 must be provided to each letter carrier 1 day before the consultation (M-39 Section 241.4). All time disallowances and related comments on the 1840 will be provided to each letter carrier 1 day before the consultation (M-39 Section 242.347). **If you are having a consultation and you didn't get Form 1838 five days prior and/or Form 1840 one day prior than you shouldn't be having a consultation.**

Any adjustments to a carrier's base street time due to identified improper practices or operational changes (elimination of park points, relays ...) must be documented by Comments on the reverse of form 1840. These adjustments must be discussed' with the carrier at the consultation. "If the carrier, at the time of the consultation, notes the absence of such documentation in writing on the Form 1840 or attachment thereto, and initials and dates the Form 1840 or attachments thereto, and management does not supply such documentation within one week, with a copy to the carrier, the time adjustment shall be disallowed." (M-39 Section 242.345). **If management takes time away from your route and does not explain why it's up to each carrier to note that and if management can't document why within 1 week then the deduction is no good.**

"If management excludes a day(s) from the 8 week analysis, the reasons must be documented and discussed with the carrier during the consultation. If management does not have comments documenting the change, the carrier may note this absence of documentation on the 1840 or an attachment. If management does not provide the documentation within a week, the exclusion of the day(s) is disallowed" (M-39 Section 242.346). **If management throws out days from the 8 week analysis because the time didn't fit into what they want it's up to each carrier to note this. If management can't document their reasoning within 1 week then they can't exclude the day(s).**

Route Adjustment Consultation:

When relief or addition to a route is considered, the carrier should be consulted regarding the adjustment. The reasons should be discussed and the carrier's comments and recommendations should be recorded on the 1840. The carrier is not required to sign a statement (M-39 243.11a).

Management must talk with each carrier about their proposed route adjustment. Each carrier has the right to tell management their thoughts about the adjustments. The carrier does not have to sign anything.

The carrier's comments cannot be just dismissed. They must be considered by the postmaster or designee (M-39 243.11c). **Just listening to the carrier is not enough. Management must actually hear what the carrier is saying. These consultations are mandatory. Management is not allowed to simply meet with the carrier and tell him or her what they came up with and what adjustment management intends to make. To consult means to seek an opinion as a guide to one's own judgment.**

You, the regular carrier, have an important role in determining the evaluated time of, and adjustment to, your assigned route. Do not allow management to pretend to consult, with a wink and nod, and simply go through the motions. Postal regulations are very explicit about what is required regarding consultations.

As with everything, when it comes to route inspections knowledge is important! Management is required to do the following:

1) Consultations must be done within the 52 day period from the completion of the count that they have to implement the adjustments (M-39 Section 211.3)

2) Management must record each carrier's recommendations and comments (M-39 Section 243.11) Management may not make the carrier sign anything (M-39 Section 243.11a).

3) Management must consult with a carrier a second time if adjustments are proposed (M-39 Section 243.11a) Management must consider your suggestions (M-39 Section 243.11c)

4) Permit carrier's notation of absence of documentation of street time and disallow adjustments if no documentation is provided within 1 week of notation (M-39 Sections 242.345 and .346)

5) Management must provide a completed copy of reverse of 1840 promptly after consultation (M-39 Section 243.11a)

It's up to each carrier to arm themselves with the knowledge they need during consultations. Don't take the attitude that whatever will happen is going to happen. There is no guarantee that everything goes perfect but if you do your part it will make things easier even if violations need to be grieved later.

In Solidarity,
Dan Wheeler, Vice President

I used to work on a clean up crew on a construction site. Once in a while one of the guys would walk by and say, "How's business, picking up?" Yeah, I didn't laugh either. Of course, safety is not a laughing matter. One of the carriers in my office tripped on a newspaper bundle strap in the parking lot and took a pretty hard fall. Luckily he was not hurt. If you see a potential tripping hazard during your work day, pick it up. It might save one of your fellow carriers from injury.

On a different subject, if you or your family and friends are still enjoying outdoor Winter activities please use extreme caution near or on frozen ponds or lakes. The saying goes, the only safe ice is at the ice rink. Ice often has different thicknesses in different areas so use caution. The only way to be sure is to drill a hole in the ice and measure the thickness. Then, drill holes as you go, just to make sure that it's safe.

The rule of thumb for ice thickness is if you are walking on it, you need at least 4 inches of ice. If you are on a snowmobile or ATV you need 8 inches. Driving a car or light truck you would need 12 inches, and if you are in a heavy truck more than 12 inches is the best.

Stay safe,

Jim Salvati

Lyrics trivia (if you haven't heard the song, you might be able to guess)

I'm so hot for her, I'm so hot for her
I'm so hot for her and _____



In past times, either through articles in the Wake Up! or presentations at our monthly branch meetings, I've touched upon the importance of us being our own best advocates when it comes to our health care. I was sharply reminded of this reality after having recently read a report from the Institute of Medicine, a well-respected organization in the health care industry.

According to the Institute it is estimated that up to 250,000 Americans *die every year* from medical mistakes *in hospitals alone!* This is the supreme tragedy but medical mistakes cause many other problems as well. We all know the drill: an incorrect diagnosis, the wrong limb amputated, the wrong prescription administered, etc. I'm not writing to condemn the health care industry, but doctors are not gods and the industry is not infallible. If you're involved in health care treatment, learning and understanding the situation can improve your safety and that of your family members. Here are some steps you can take in the process:

1. Ask questions of the provider if you have doubts or concerns.
2. Bring a list of the medicines you take to the provider.
3. Be sure to get the results of any test or procedure.
4. Talk to your doctor about which facility best suits your needs.
5. Make sure you understand all the ramifications if surgery is involved.


I have literature available for you to help you get the proper health care you deserve:

1. How to talk to your doctor.
2. Questions to ask your doctor about any medicine.
3. Taking the health assessment. (For NALC Plan Members)

If you're interested in receiving any or all of this literature, get in touch with 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 in 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



Coaching for Self-Care

Mind, body and spirit

You have to take care of yourself before you can care for others

Do you find it difficult to focus on your own self-care while you continue to put other people first? While this may seem like the right thing to do, in reality, you cannot take care of others if you fail to take care yourself. However, many people find it hard to take their focus off others and put it on themselves.

If this sounds like you, a call to the Employee Assistance Program should be your next phone call.

By taking advantage of the coaching services offered, your EAP can help you understand the importance of taking care of yourself, aid you in setting goals to improve yourself and help you find the time and the way to make the changes necessary to take care of yourself — mind, body, and spirit.

The healthier, happier and more in-focus you are about yourself, the better you are able to help others.

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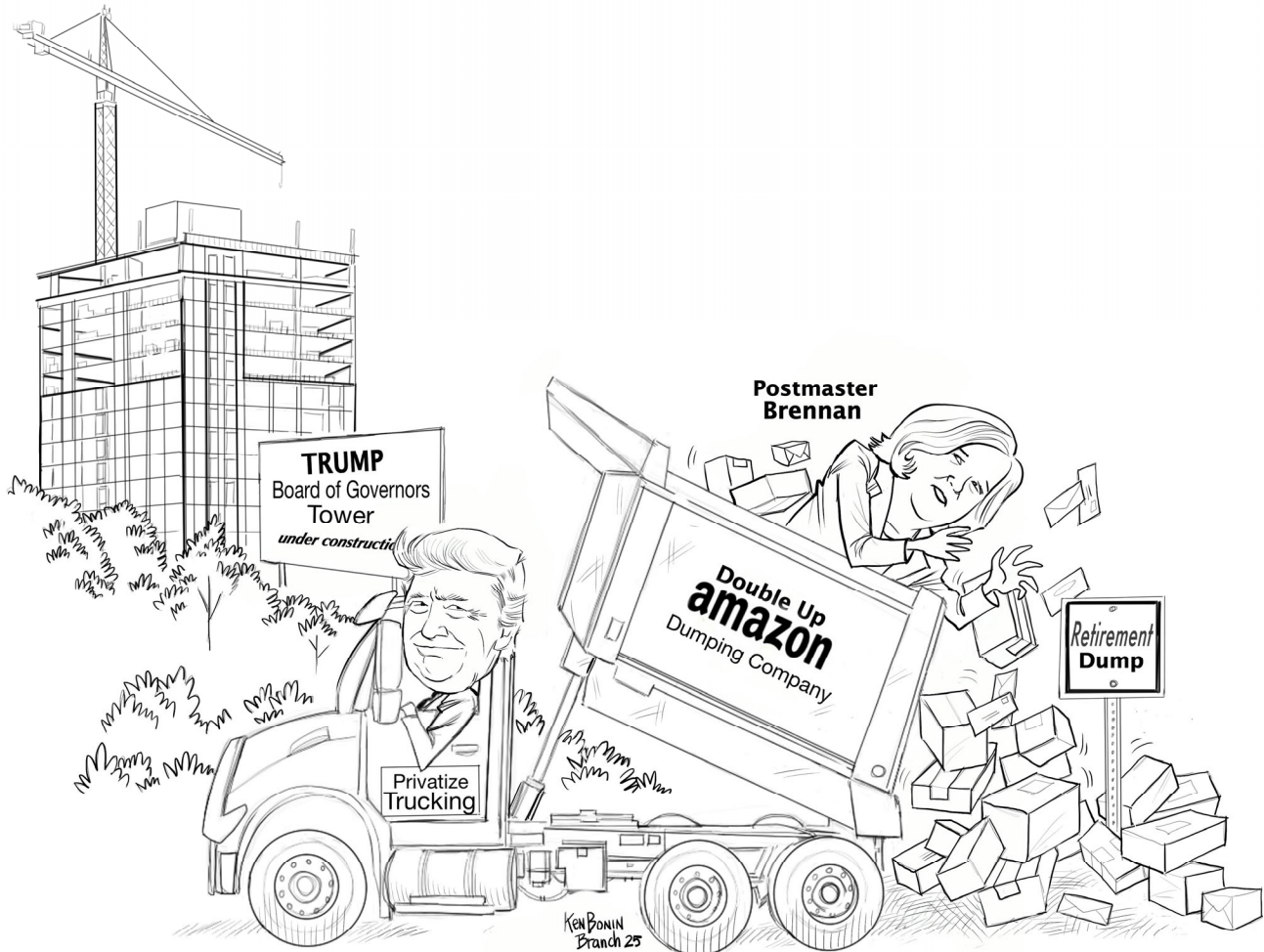
WAKE UP

2500 Main Street
Suite # 201
Tewksbury, MA 01876
Phone: (978) 658-5820
Fax: (978) 658-0888
Web: www.nalcbranch25.com

First Class Mail
U.S. POSTAGE
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at the next meeting
March 3, 2020



“Postal employees will never know what I’m planning for them...will they?”