



# ***WAKE UP!***

President/ Editor  
Daniel P. Wheeler

Publisher

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



***The BIG and SMALL of it***

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## President's Message

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Unfortunately, the branch's first route inspection training class scheduled for February 24 was postponed due to the Blizzard of 2026. We have rescheduled that date to Wednesday, March 18. Same time and location. We will still be holding two nights of training to accommodate as many carriers as we can. What was originally scheduled as the second class on March 3 will now be the first class. We have had a few carriers who work in other offices ask to attend these classes. The answer is absolutely! Although the Woburn S & DC is the only installation currently scheduled for route inspections, any carrier from any office who wishes to come for the training is welcome to do so.

Region 14 NBA Rick Dicecca has announced his 2026 Regional Training and Rap Session. This year's session will be held in North Falmouth from April 11-13. The weekend features multiple workshops covering various topics. Some of the topics that will be covered this year are workers' comp, Article 8 equitability, defending stationary event discipline, grieving attendance discipline, and the New Employee Experience, Retention Mentoring Program (NEERMP). National President Brian Renfroe is tentatively scheduled to be there as well. The Rap Session is a great opportunity not only to get valuable information from the region, but also to meet and talk with other Union activists from around New England. We will be deciding how many members to send at the March Branch meeting. If anyone is interested in attending, please reach out to me or the branch office and let us know.

Branch 25 Vice President Gilbert Paredes has completed his first week out of three at the NALC Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy was founded over 20 years ago and consists of three week-long sessions held over a 5-month period. During the classes, students discuss effective leadership skills and the union's legislative agenda. They learn about topics such as the Dispute Resolution Process, strategic planning, branch financial responsibilities, retirement issues, route protection, workers' compensation, effective negotiation techniques, and communicating through traditional and social media. Gilbert is the fourth Branch 25 member selected to attend. He follows Jim Cavaliere, former Branch 25 Safety officer, and Maynard Steward, who graduated in 2011, me, a 2015 graduate,

and Region 14 RAA Tony Bossi, who graduated in 2023. As part of his work between weeks one and two, he was tasked with putting together a project and presenting it. Gilbert chose to put together a presentation on a little bit of the history of Branch 25. He presented this at the February Branch meeting. The printed handout that he gave out at the meeting is included on page 10 of this issue of the *Wake Up!*

While helping Gilbert with his research on the branch, I realized how little history we actually have for a branch that has been around for over 120 years! If anyone reading this has any historical documentation or items related to letter carriers or the branch's offices and would like to donate them to the branch, please reach out. I would love to add some items to the branches collection that we currently have. Time really does fly by, and before you know it, the people involved in the past are gone, and having this historical material is great reference material for future generations.

I will end with a special thanks to retired Lowell carrier Ken Bonin. The two cartoons in this issue are from him. Ken is a great artist and has contributed many cartoons to *Wake Up!* over the years, for which we are always thankful!

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler



### ROUTE INSPECTION TRAINING

Branch 25 will hold two route inspection training sessions for the upcoming route inspections in the Woburn Installation (Burlington, Lynnfield, North Reading, Reading, Wakefield, Wilmington, & Winchester) on **March 3** and **March 18**, at **7:00 PM** at the Wilmington Knights of Columbus, 112 Middlesex Ave, Wilmington. Each session will last about 1 ½ hours. Both sessions will cover the same material. We are having two nights so that as many carriers as possible can attend. We hope to get a good turnout. Whether or not you have been through an inspection before, it will be valuable information to help protect your route! All carriers are encouraged to attend.

## Following Instructions Is Not Misconduct

One of the most common disciplinary charges carriers face is “failure to follow instructions.” On paper, it sounds serious. In practice, it is often misused to punish carriers for doing exactly what they were told — or for acting reasonably when management failed to give clear direction at all.

The National Agreement does not require carriers to guess what management meant. It requires carriers to follow clear, direct instructions. When those instructions are vague, contradictory, or nonexistent, the responsibility does not shift to the carrier to fill in the gaps. It remains with management.

This issue becomes especially clear during winter conditions in New England. Snowstorms, ice, reduced visibility, blocked mailboxes, and unsafe walking conditions routinely impact delivery. Carriers often notify management that conditions are slowing delivery or making full completion impossible. When management responds with phrases like “do your best,” “just keep moving,” or “we’ll deal with it later,” those are not instructions — they are acknowledgments that conditions are outside normal operations.

Phrases like “do your best,” “just keep moving,” or silence from management are not meaningful instructions. They are expressions of uncertainty. If a carrier reports hazardous conditions, delays, or an inability to complete delivery safely and management provides no specific direction, the carrier has still complied with their contractual obligation. Management’s ambiguity — especially during known weather emergencies — is a decision, not a trap waiting to be sprung later.

Carriers do not have the authority to reroute delivery, curtail mail, approve overtime, or override safety considerations on their own. Those decisions belong to management. During snow events, carriers cannot be disciplined for failing to “adjust” routes or delivery plans when management never gave authorization or guidance to do so. Discipline cannot be based on a carrier’s refusal to assume management’s role.

This is especially important when discipline is issued after the fact. Too often, management allows a snow-impacted day to unfold without providing direction, then later claims the carrier should have moved faster, skipped safety practices, or completed delivery despite hazardous conditions. The contract does not support discipline based on hindsight. If management wanted a different outcome, they had an obligation to give clear instructions at the time they were notified — particularly when safety and weather were involved.

That is why documentation is critical. Forms like the 3996, scanner messages, and written notes of conversations are not acts of defiance — they are evidence that the carrier communicated and sought guidance. During snow events, these records often show that the carrier did exactly what they were supposed to do: notify management of delays, unsafe conditions, or inability to complete delivery. If no clear instructions followed, that failure belongs to management.

The standard is simple: carriers must follow instructions that are clear, reasonable, timely, and safe. When they do, discipline does not stick. When instructions are unclear or absent — especially during severe New England weather — the failure is not the carrier’s. It is management’s.

Our job as a union is not to encourage confrontation. It is to ensure fairness. When carriers communicate delays, report hazardous conditions, request guidance, and perform the work as instructed, they are doing their job correctly. Following instructions is not misconduct — and it should never be treated as such.

Mike Pinto

### Calendar of Events

<b>March 8</b>	<b>Daylight Saving’s Time Begins</b>
<b>March 10</b>	<b>Regular Branch Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:15 PM</b>
<b>March 17</b>	<b>St. Patrick’s Day</b>
<b>March 18</b>	<b>Route Inspection Training K of C Wilmington 7:00 PM</b>
<b>March 20</b>	<b>First Day of Spring</b>



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## Walking the Walk

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*The following article was written by Paul Leighton and originally appeared in The Beverly Beat and is reprinted here with permission of the author*

One of the favorite stories I've ever written was about Rich Donlon, a letter carrier who took part in the Good Friday Walk in Beverly every year. One year, when he was going to be away on vacation on Good Friday, he walked the 13-mile route by himself the week before. I can still see the picture we had of Rich in The Salem News, walking past a big stone wall on Hale Street in Prides Crossing, alone and undeterred.

Rich reached out to me a couple of weeks ago to ask if I could do a story on a rally by the local letters carriers union that he was organizing in Beverly. I told him I'd be glad to get the word out, but only if I could write another story about him in the process.

So here's the Rich Donlon story, Part 2. He's now 84, retired for nearly two decades, with a full head of gray hair. I think he looks like the travel guy Rick Steeves, but he told me most people say he looks like Yaz (look him up, young people!). I've seen Rich around town over the years and I would describe him as perpetually positive.

One thing I remembered about him is how much he loved being a letter carrier. When we sat down for a cup of coffee at the Dunkin' Donuts in North Beverly this week, he used phrases like "my beloved Postal Service" and "my dream job."



Rich on his old route in North Beverly

So what was so great about it?

"People," he said. "It was the people, Paul."

Rich didn't become a letter carrier until he was 38 years old, after he and his wife, Gail, both got laid off as

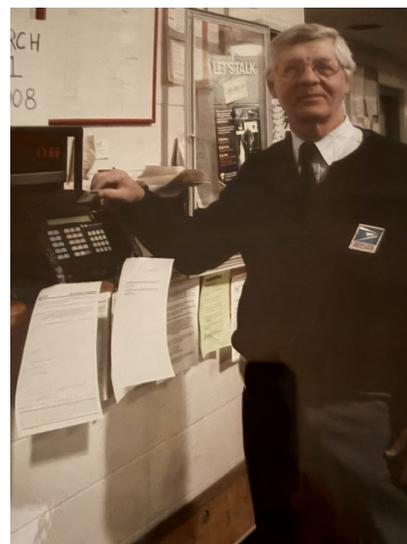
teachers at Timberlane Regional High School in New Hampshire after a teachers strike. He bounced around to three or four jobs before former Beverly Postmaster John Condon appointed him as a letter carrier in 1981.

Rich's first route was in Gloucester Crossing, where he grew up. The first time he delivered the mail to 26 Grant St. — his old house — he started crying.

He later got a route in the neighborhoods on either side of Dodge Street, and that's where he stayed for the next 22 years. I remember interviewing Ray Battistelli, the founder of the Good Friday Walk, at Ray's house on Butterworth Road one year, and here came Mr. Good Friday Walk himself, Rich Donlon, delivering the mail.

Speaking of walking, Rich lived close enough to the Postal Service building on Tozer Road that he would walk there to pick up his deliveries for the day, then of course walk his route — 256 houses, nine miles. (Gail, by the way, would walk to work at North Beverly Elementary School, where she taught first grade. They saved a lot on gas.)

Rich is a talker, in a good way. He kept asking me if he was going on too long. "I do tend to prattle or palaver," he said. And since he got to know just about everybody on his route, I wondered how he could possibly stop and talk to everyone and still get it done on time.



Rich punches out on his last day of work in March 2008

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## Secretary's Report

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This month I want to talk about what you are reading right now Branch 25's **"WAKE UP"**.

Every month this publication comes out with information to help and assist the carriers in this branch, both active and retired. Sometimes it is important information on something going on or advice on how to handle situations. It might be giving updates on both contractual and legislative issues. It might be things you should look out for in your daily job or updates on what you should be doing and not doing. You might see pictures of branch events like our MDA cornhole tournament or some of us attending regional and national events like RAP sessions and conventions. You could see pictures of carriers receiving membership pins or newly retired members receiving their plaques. Also, a list of the newest members that have joined the NALC. Bottom line is that the Wake Up is about and for you!!!!

Now the reason I am giving you this information is because the same few people write articles and make sure you are getting the correct details. These individuals do a great job and work hard at getting it right. It is not just sitting at the computer and writing out an article. A lot of research and fact checking is done to make sure everything is correct.

The bottom line is this is your "Wake Up"!!!! So, I am letting you know – no I am asking for your help in producing this newsletter. If you have the ability to write an article, then write one and submit it to the branch. If you have a carrier retiring from your office snap a photo of their last punch or should I say last scan now. Then send it in with their name and years of service and maybe even a little info on the retiree, so we can show them off. If you have a story you want to share with the branch, maybe an incident that you can't believe happened that will make everyone laugh and smile or a fellow carrier having a life event worth sharing. If this isn't your thing then you could also submit ideas of things you would like to see written about and we can do our best to get them out to everyone.

The reason I am writing about this is because I would like to get as many people reading this as possible. I know a lot carriers that don't even look at this and just toss it aside. Maybe if there are more items that can pique more interest than more will read the Wake Up. If these people read about something they are interested in

then they might read an article that can help them as well. If you would like to do anything I mentioned above you can email the branch at [nalcbranch25@gmail.com](mailto:nalcbranch25@gmail.com) or send them to me at [jesbr25@gmail.com](mailto:jesbr25@gmail.com). Thank you for reading this and I hope to hear from you.

March is here and the first day of spring is the 20<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully the snow will start to subside. Although as I type this they are talking about a coating to an inch on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, let's hope this is the last of it. We finally start to get some time back on March 8<sup>th</sup> when we turn the clocks ahead one hour. Also, Happy St. Patrick's Day to all the Irish out there.



As I always end this, if you have moved, please update your address with the branch. You can call, write, or email me at [JESBR25@gmail.com](mailto:JESBR25@gmail.com). See you at the branch meeting on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Snapple Fact # 1525 – The tiny pocket in jeans was made for pocket watches.

Joe Stearns, Secretary

Marblehead Carriers showing their support for the Pats before the Super Bowl



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## Treasurer's Report

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By the time you're reading this, it will be March, meaning price increase limitations for the Postal Service have once again gone into effect. In mid-January, the Postal Regulatory Commission ruled that USPS would be required to raise its prices no more than once per year, directly limiting its ability to keep up with inflation and further hamstringing attempts by the service to combat declining revenue and fiscal losses.

If you read my smaller-scale breakdown of the USPS K-10 filing, you'll remember USPS posted nearly \$9B in losses last year which were largely attributed to non-controllable losses, like injury compensation and amortization payments. Revenue for physical letter mailing and flats actually showed a minor increase in the last fiscal year, which was a direct result of the Service's ability to liberally adjust price models as needed. The good news is that inflation currently has stabilized to a degree, stagnating around 2.4%, the lowest it's been since May of 2025. However, Postmaster General David Steiner continues to voice his concern of this decision, as well as the current financial health, stating USPS could be cashless to start out 2027. While this has been a trope many Postmaster Generals have stated, even during COVID, this has yet to happen.

Some of you guys have probably seen a recent Supreme Court ruling regarding the curtailment of mail, stating that USPS cannot be sued for willful curtailment of delivery. The decision, which came with a 5-4 vote, stated federal law generally protects the Postal Service from lawsuits regarding intentional curtailment of mail, as well as lost and missing mail. Many of us have read articles, have seen the story. The constituent of the Service stated mail was being maliciously held due to racial profiling, the Service claims the constituent had failed to provide evidence of residency, and under the 1946 Federal Tort Claims Act, a lawsuit was filed against the service.

Another big change is on the way this year as well. On March 3, the primaries will begin for the midterm elections. While midterms aren't anything new to any of us, the process in which the Postal Service will postmark mail will be different. Starting this year, USPS no longer postmarks mail the day it is received, rather, it will now postmark mail on the date it is processed. This seems like a minor change, yet it could have larger effects, like how

it will affect mail-in ballots.

Laws vary drastically state by state, but look at California for instance. In order for a mail-in ballot to be counted, it must be postmarked on or prior to Election Day. In most circumstances, if you were to drop a ballot off in a collection box, it would be postmarked that day and then sent for processing to its arrival destination. Now, it could very well see an extra day or two before it is postmarked and processed, essentially nullifying that ballot. With the Postal Service's continuation of its *Delivering for America 2.0* plan, it aims to reduce processing plants and installations, effectively creating additional travel days for mail. While this action isn't being done to directly inhibit the processing and transportation of ballots, it will affect them.

We're almost out of the winter, hopefully much less snow as we get closer to spring. If anyone is unsure if they were supposed to be paid administrative leave for the most recent storm, contact the hall.

Lastly, I just wanted to thank both our State Association and Rich Donlon for their continued faith and encouragement in me. As of March, I'll be joining the state board's audit committee. I look forward to serving the members and representing Branch 25.

James Metilinos

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## 204Bs in the Union?

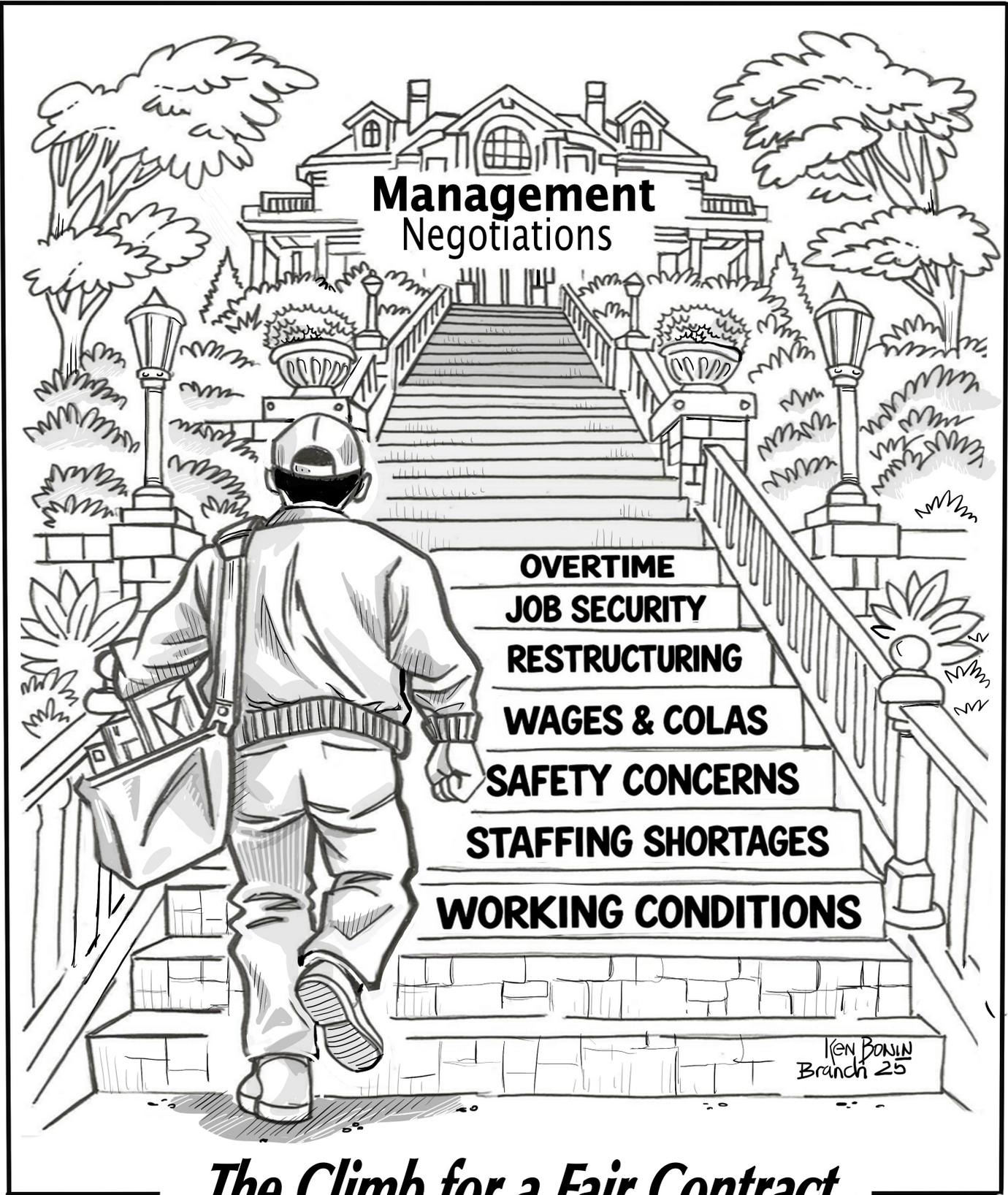
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Why are 204B's still allowed to keep their NALC membership? They made the choice to work for management! No one put a gun to their heads. It was THEIR decision. When they made that decision, our Union should be automatically terminating their right to be in our Union. It is a clear conflict of interest to have management figures in our craft's Union. What other ono-postal Union in the country allows management figures in their craft's Union? The answer is NONE! Get them the hell out of the NALC ASAP!

Ed Bioren

Amesbury



# Management Negotiations

- OVERTIME
- JOB SECURITY
- RESTRUCTURING
- WAGES & COLAS
- SAFETY CONCERNS
- STAFFING SHORTAGES
- WORKING CONDITIONS

*The Climb for a Fair Contract  
Every Step Matters*

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## Escalating Prescription Costs and the Urgent Need for NALC Action

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Brothers and Sisters, I'm writing as a retired letter carrier under the NALC High Option PSHB plan administered by Cigna, with Medicare Parts A, B, and Part D through SilverScript. What I'm about to lay out should concern every active and retired member — because this is not an isolated problem, it is a systemic one.

Our 90-day brand-name prescription costs through Caremark have skyrocketed under the new 30% co-insurance structure:

- Trelegy jumped from \$75 to \$375
- Jardiance increased from \$40 to \$125

These are not luxury medications. They are modern, life-sustaining drugs that treat Type II diabetes, heart disease, and pulmonary conditions, while also improving overall long-term health outcomes. There are no generic alternatives. These are exactly the kinds of medications that allow retirees to live longer, more functional lives.

Drug prices have reportedly come down (Google it), in many areas nationwide, yet somehow not for these medications under our plan. Why? Because pricing is being negotiated at the plan level through OPM and carriers — and it is painfully clear that the impact on NALC members was not adequately protected, explained, or even communicated.

At the same time, members are being forced to navigate a new NALC health benefits website system, requiring new logins and passwords, while Local branches, NBAs, and the national health line often redirect members elsewhere instead of resolving concerns. The Benefits site now allows written tickets, which is helpful — but that does not replace advocacy, transparency, or leadership accountability. I personal never received an NALC Health Benefits Book or Brochure with highlights and Overview for 2026!

I was also told directly by the NALC Health Benefits Help Line that many members are calling in to complain about prescription costs and the new payment structure. This confirms the problem is widespread.

Now add this reality for FERS retirees:

- We receive reduced COLA adjustments compared to CSRS
- Insurance premiums have increased about \$60 per month
- My annuity has effectively dropped by nearly the same amount
- Prescription costs have surged

The math does not work. Fixed incomes are being squeezed from every direction, and healthcare — the very benefit we depend on most in retirement — is becoming less affordable, not more. This is where frustration turns into responsibility.

If members stay silent, nothing changes. If leadership does not hear sustained, organized pressure from the membership, these cost shifts will continue. We have a National NALC Convention approaching, and this issue belongs in a formal resolution demanding:

- Transparency in drug pricing negotiations
- Stronger protection against extreme co-insurance spikes
- Clear communication before benefit structure changes
- Active advocacy for retirees facing disproportionate cost burdens

NALC leadership has influence — but influence only matters when it is used. Members have a voice — but it only counts when exercised.

If you are feeling this financial strain, speak up. Contact your Local. Contact your NBA. Demand that this issue be elevated to the national level. Remember, the one power every member always has is their voice and their vote. Silence guarantees more of the same. Collective pressure creates change.

In solidarity,  
Retiree,  
Eddie Velosa

## Mergers Through The Years

First merger took place in 1981 with Massachusetts Northeast Wakefield Branch 341 merged which included 13 cities: Winchester, Reading, Chelmsford, Lynnfield, Wilmington, Billerica, Wakefield, Burlington, Concord, Sudbury, Andover, Bedford, & Tewksbury

Wake up started in 1978.



"Postmen in front of Newburyport Post Office on Inn Street circa 1925"

### Mergers 1982 to 1985

During this period the following offices merged into the Branch: North Chelmsford, Holliston, Wayland, & Amesbury.

During this period a building fund was started to purchase our current union hall

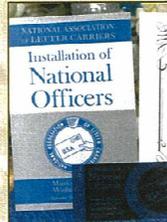


### Mergers in the 1990s

In the 1990s we merged with two more cities: Newburyport & Acton.

A committee to explore having a full time position was started.

In 1991 we purchased our current union hall. Price at the time was \$70,000.



## Branch 25 Through the Years



Branch 25 as we know it today was established on April 11, 1890.

Two cities were part of Branch 25 back then: Lowell & Draut.

The office of Branch 25 has been located in 2500 Main Street in Tewksbury since 1991.

Created by  
Gilbert  
Paredes  
2026

### Mergers in the 2000s

In the 2000s the following cities merged with Branch 25: Haverhill, Salem, Marblehead, Manchester, & Merrimac



### Mergers in the 2000s

In 2013, We merged with North Shore Merged Branch 33 which included the following cities: Beverly, Danvers, Peabody, Gloucester, Ipswich, Rockport, South Hamilton, & Topsfield.

Branch 25 previously tried to merge with Branch 33 in 1986.

### Merger 2022

In 2022 Lawrence Branch 212 merged with Branch 25. The cities included in this merger were: Lawrence, North Andover, & Methuen.

### Branch Meeting Locations Through The Years

We have 9 different locations for our Branch Meetings throughout the years:

- VFW Hall in Wilmington
- Knickerbocker
- VFW Hall in North Andover
- Billerica Irish American Club
- Lord Wakefield
- Holiday Inn in Tewksbury
- Bunting Club
- Knights of Columbus in Tewksbury
- Knights of Columbus in Wilmington

### Branch Presidents Through The Years

We have had six Branch Presidents during the history of our Branch. List of presidents:

- Charlie Gettings - Before the Merger
- Dick Sawyer - Until Merger in 1981
- John Barry 1975 - 1990
- Randall Keller 1990 - 2010
- Dave Barbuzzo 2011 - 2022
- Daniel Wheeler 2022 - Present

## Branch 25 Today

As of February 2026, the membership numbers for Branch 25 are:

- Total members: 1573
- Active members: 1,007
- Retired members: 426
- Lifetime members: 100

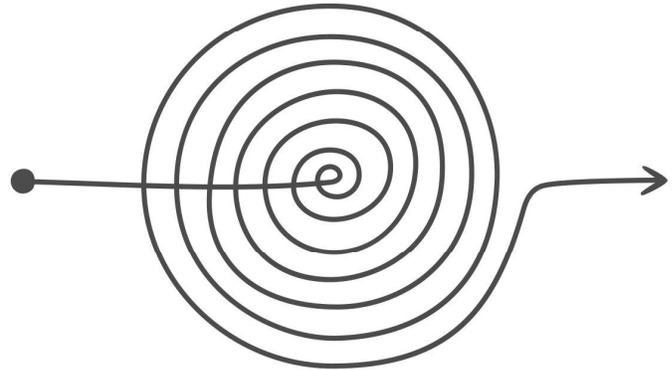
Branch 25 currently represents members in 39 cities & towns.



Created by  
Gilbert  
Paredes  
2026

# Understanding and Managing Rumination

Rumination is a pattern of repeatedly thinking about the same negative thoughts, memories, or worries without reaching a solution. It is a form of unhelpful, repetitive thinking that can keep people feeling stressed, low, or anxious.



## Rumination can:

- Increase feelings of sadness, anxiety, guilt, and self-criticism
- Make it harder to solve problems or move forward
- Contribute to ongoing or worsening depression and anxiety
- Become a mental habit that feels automatic and difficult to stop

## Common Signs of Rumination:

- Replaying past events or conversations over and over
- Repeated thoughts such as, “Why did I do that?” or “What’s wrong with me?”
- Feeling mentally stuck or unable to let go of a thought
- Going in circles without gaining new insight or relief

## Why Rumination Happens:

- Rumination is often triggered by stress, conflict, mistakes, or strong emotions
- Rumination begins as an attempt to understand or fix a problem
- Rumination develops into a habitual response to stress over time

## Strategies to Reduce Rumination:

- Noticing the thought pattern and gently redirecting your attention
- Challenging unhelpful thoughts by looking for a more balanced perspective
- Setting aside a brief, scheduled “worry time” rather than worrying all day
- Interrupting the cycle with an engaging activity such as exercise, hobbies, or conversation
- Using grounding techniques to bring attention back to the present moment
- Reaching out to the EAP for support if rumination is affecting daily life

Rumination is common, but when it becomes repetitive and unproductive, it can negatively impact well-being. With awareness and practical tools, it is possible to interrupt the cycle and regain mental clarity. For additional support and resources, reach out to the EAP or visit [EAP4YOU.com](http://EAP4YOU.com).

# WAKE UP

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*at the next meeting*  
**March 10**  
**K of C Wilmington**  
**8:00 PM**



As part of his work at the NALC Leadership Academy, Gilbert Paredes was tasked with doing a project between weeks 1 and 2 of class. Gilbert chose create a presentation on the history of Branch 25 which he presented to the members at the February meeting. It was interesting and informative. Great job, Gilbert!