



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
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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, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



Billerica carrier Ron McQuade punched out for his last time. Congrats on the 34 years of service! (left)



Brian McCarthy retired after 38 years of service in Peabody. His family has a long history of working with the post office. (right)

Tom Cash makes his last punch after 15 years as a carrier in Peabody. This is Tom's third round of federal service. Navy, Army and Post Office.



President's Message

If I were a Shop Steward (I am the Chief Steward for the branch) in one of Branch 25's offices, I would do everything I could to attend the next two regular Branch meetings. I'm gonna let you in on a little inside information, we are going to read a proposed amendment to the Branch by-laws that would provide compensation to our shop stewards. The proposed amendment will require that 15 members sign it as a sort of "sponsor" if you will. There will be no discussion on the proposed by-law change at the April meeting. The discussion, and the vote, will take place at the May meeting. So as I said, make every effort to attend the meetings and bring a few of your co-workers along as well.

On the back page of this edition of the Wake-Up! you will see a merger agreement that was negotiated between members of Branch 25 and members of Branch 212. President McColley and myself signed this agreement and now it will be up to the members to decide whether to approve the proposed merger prior to sending it to our National President, Fred Rolando, for approval. As with any other merger, the goal is to provide representation to all members of the current and future Branch 25. Further, hopefully we can expand our talent pool and develop current and future members to be the future leaders of their offices and of the Branch as well.

At the end of April, NBA Rick DiCecca will be conducting a RAP Session that will go from April 30 - May 2. Both National President Fred Rolando and National Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe will be there. There will be a motion at the April meeting to determine who from the Branch will attend this RAP session. This is yet another reason to attend the April meeting, so that you can have input into this decision.

It's time for the obligatory mention of Workers' Compensation and ECOMP. New rules were recently passed which require ALL CLAIMS TO BE SUBMITTED ONLINE THROUGH ECOMP. There is both positive and negative with this change. The positive is that if you are computer savvy, it really is a piece of cake and it is much faster with much less chance of delay. The negative is that many of our members are not computer savvy.

For those that struggle with computers, there are options. You can still fill out a form hardcopy, but then you will have to rely on someone else to enter the form for you. Your supervisor can do it, a co-worker or family member can help you, or you can come to the Union office and we can get your claim filed online for you. Personally, I would choose to come to the Union office to get it taken care of but I'm biased. Just remember, we have a greater stake in your success than your supervisor does.

If you are one of the people that has a claim filed through ECOMP and you haven't heard anything for some time, get in touch with us at the office. Although I

have nothing but good things to say about the people that are working in Injury Comp right now, they are understaffed and overworked and overwhelmed. Most times, a carrier contacts me, I contact them, and the carrier gets notified the same day that their case has gone to the next level or their payroll adjustment is done that day.

In the case of COVID claims, local management has been instructed to pay continuation of pay (COP) provided the carrier has filed timely and provided an actual PCR test or a home test that has been confirmed by an MD's diagnosis. If you are out and you have supplied the above information and are not receiving COP, contact us immediately so that we can get it taken care of. There is still a backlog of cases, but it is getting smaller as the new infections are slowing down.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone that has the NALC Health Benefits Plan to take advantage of Hinge Health. Hinge Health is a proactive program of exercises designed to improve your quality of life. If you sign up, you will receive an Android tablet free of charge along with sensors that you put on your body to measure your activity and progress and a yoga mat. You complete a survey about your concerns, whether it's back pain, shoulder pain, knee pain, you get it. A stretching routine will be designed based on your answers to the survey. You put the tablet on the supplied stand, and there are videos that demonstrate each of the exercises that have been selected for you. The sensors measure whether you are stretching enough or too much.

Both my wife and I have been following the lower back plan for about a month now and have seen improvement. Sure, there is still pain getting up in the morning or getting up out of a chair after awhile, but the pain isn't as bad and it doesn't last as long. Anyone that deals with chronic pain can tell you that if you can reduce the severity of the pain and the duration of the pain, that's a huge win-win. Hinge is a huge win-win!

Mark your calendars for "late 2023". That is when we should start seeing the new fleet of postal vehicles in an office near you. According to Postal News, the Next Generation Delivery Vehicle (NGDV) will feature air conditioning, improved ergonomics, and some of the most advanced vehicle and safety technology — including 360-degree cameras, advanced braking and traction control, air bags, a front-and rear-collision avoidance system that includes visual, audio warning, and automatic braking. The vehicles will also have increased cargo capacity to maximize efficiency and better accommodate higher mail and package volumes.

Stay well and stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

As the weather gets better, a little at a time now, the district has directed local managers to conduct 3999s in many stations. Rumor has it that the walks are initiated because the routes qualify for a special inspection in accordance with the provisions of the M-39. Essentially, if a route shows 30 minutes OT or auxiliary assistance for 3 days per week over 6 consecutive weeks, it qualifies for a special inspection. I'm guessing there are many routes that would qualify in the district. There is no requirement that a carrier request a special inspection, but management can initiate one. The one-day walks can not be used to evaluate or adjust a route, but the 3999 should be discussed with the carrier as soon as possible, and any deductions should be identified and explained. You should always request a copy of the 3999 and all notes taken by the examiner. If management balks on the request, call the union office and let us know. Also, there should not be a manager in the LLVs with you unless they are in the back separated by a plastic shield, and only using the rear door. That is a Covid precaution. As of now there are no full office inspections scheduled in the branch and we are expecting the parties at the national level to eventually agree to some evaluation process developed using clock rings. Please be mindful of this and make the proper punches when doing assistance in the office or on the street. We all want the proper credit going to each route.

We talk a lot about getting FMLA certification for illness or chronic conditions that could keep you out of work for more than 3 days either all at once or intermittently. It is important because any FMLA certified absence can not be used against you, basically for discipline related to attendance. Giving the paperwork to your doctor does not end your obligation. You must make sure the paperwork is complete and returned to the FMLA office in Greensboro within the proper timeframe. If you are having difficulty getting the paperwork completed in time, you can call Greensboro in advance, and they will give you an extension, as long as the timeframe hasn't already expired. The phone number is on the paperwork you receive. Too many claims to FMLA have been rejected because the paperwork never got sent to Greensboro or were sent late. Unfortunately, we can't control when or if a doctor fills out paperwork, but we have to remain vigilant in order to have absences protected under the FMLA.

We should be at the time when all prime-time annual leave calendars are complete. Most stations have a completion date of April 1 to complete the annual leave picks, and then post the calendar. This is a good time for the PTFs and CCAs to check the calendars for temporary vacancies in prime-time. The vacancies will be an opt or what is referred to as a "hold down" assignment for the week or 2 or 3 that will be available during prime-time. There is no limit to how many hold downs you can choose during the leave period. The hold downs are

awarded by seniority and relative standing. Most annual leave calendars go from early June until after Labor Day, but varies in each station. The procedure to request hold downs is usually verbal but some stations have other processes. Ask your steward or call the union office if any questions.

We are going back to in person monthly branch meetings beginning in April and hopefully for the foreseeable future. It would be great to get as many members there as possible. We have a significant number of new members since the pandemic hit and we went to Zoom meetings. Hopefully, some new members can make plans to come and find out what is going on with your Union. The meetings begin at 8pm, but food is served around 7:15pm and there is a cash bar. The branch officers give quick reports and then the meeting is open to the members to ask questions. I realize it is difficult to make every meeting, but it would be great if every member tried to make a few every year. Most meetings end at about 9pm.

Now that baseball season is here let's enjoy it and the playoffs for the NHL and NBA.

Keep your head up and stay safe.

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

April 5	Regular Monthly Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:00Pm
April 1	April Fools Day
April 6	New Beer Day
April 10	National Siblings Day
April 15	Good Friday
April 17	Easter Sunday
April 18	National Stress Awareness Day
April 22	Earth Day
April 27	Babe Ruth Day
April 29	Arbor Day

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Chris Bruno	Wake-Up Publisher
Bob Cronin	MBA-NSBA Rep
Jeremy Provost	Assistant Safety Officer
Richard Donlon	Asst Health Benefits Rep

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

"If you want to play lumberjack, you've got to hold up your end of the log." Other classic quotes from actor Clint Eastwood in this mega-starring role as Inspector "Dirty Harry" Callahan of the San Francisco Police Department: "A man's gotta know his limits," and "Go ahead make my day." Okay, you're asking yourself, where's this column going? Answer- back to the first quote. In order to "hold up your end of the log" as a medical care recipient you've got to do your homework.

This, among other responsibilities, involves the financial aspect: miscoding services not performed and overbilling. In my forty-one years as a member of the NALC Health Benefit Plan I've experienced all three, overbilling happening recently to the tune of \$35.09. The figure looked familiar to me. I checked with my wife, an excellent manager of our finances and sure enough, we already paid that bill. I took it from there. The usual explanation? The billing and payment crossed in the mail. I'll make no judgment on that.


To guard your financial well-being when it comes to your medical care, match your explanation of benefits with the statement from the billing agency. The statements, while containing a great deal of gobbledegook, does provide some semblance of an explanation of what you're paying for. This helps to protect you from the other previously mentioned errors- miscoding and non-services. Don't hesitate to question the agency when you feel there is a need to. This in turn benefits not only you but also our health benefit plan itself.

Our HBR Ken Dusombre gave a fine presentation at the March (Zoom) meeting regarding the new Hinge Health Program being offered by the NALCHBP. This is another example of the wealth of information provided by the branch officers and members each month. Want to learn and gain insight? Come to the branch meetings!

Have you used your TASC card yet? So far our household had realized \$61.71 in savings.

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



As letter carriers, the odds are pretty good that we have all taken a fall at some point. Most of the time we bruise our egos more than anything else. But due to a recent headline, it might be a good time to talk about head injuries. I'm referring to the recent death of Comedian Bob Saget. Saget fell in his hotel room and was found dead the next day. Although this particular situation is rare, it is something to be aware of.

Saget died after what appeared to be a significant blow to the head, one that fractured his skull in several places and caused bleeding across both sides of his brain. Because he was alone it's hard to know just what happened. He probably became very confused and was in pain. He then fell asleep which is something you don't want to do in that situation. According to Dr. Jeffrey Bazarian, an emergency physician and concussion expert at the University of Rochester Medical Center, "It's like an egg cracking," you hit it in one spot, and it can crack from the back to the front."

For most young, healthy people, the occasional bump to the head shouldn't be cause for alarm, experts say. But people 65 years old and up are at higher risk of falling and having complications. Also people who are taking blood thinners or have a medical condition that impairs blood clotting may be at increased risk of rare but fatal complications from a minor injury, such as brain bleeds.

If you do bump your head and have a headache you can take Tylenol. It is recommended avoiding taking aspirin, which is a blood thinner, for pain or consuming alcohol or sedating drugs. David Hafler is chairman of the department of neurology at Yale School of Medicine and says that after a head injury, "it's all about observation," It's best to have someone with you who can watch for concerning symptoms and take you to a hospital if necessary. "With head injuries, we can fix it before it's too late," he said.

There are also important symptoms to be aware of that can help determine what to do if you have a head injury and whether urgent medical attention is needed. Some symptoms of mild traumatic brain injuries are headache, nausea, dizziness and blurred vision. Moderate to severe injuries include loss of consciousness for several minutes to an hour or more, persistent headache, and repeated vomiting. When in doubt, check it out!

If you have a head injury, you never — and I mean never — should be by yourself for the first 24 hours," said Dr. Gavin Britz, the chair in neurosurgery at Houston Methodist. Dr. Britz said that he would counsel people who get a significant knock to the head to see a doctor or, short of that, to ask someone to track their symptoms and even wake them up occasionally at night for monitoring.

Stay Safe,
Jim Salvati

Lyrics Trivia
Got a good reason
For taking the easy way out

I Thought That's How It Is

All too frequently stewards hear these words from letter carriers who have continually had their contractual rights violated and finally get pushed to requesting union time. While discussing the situation with their steward, many carriers explain they have been dealing with this issue multiple times a week, daily, or even since they began their career. Our union is here to investigate potential grievances and to stop the ones that are violations of the National Agreement. We as carriers must make the union aware!

When you walk into work in the morning does your stomach begin to turn to knots because of how a member of management talks to you? Are you a non-overtime desired list carrier who gets anxious to look at the pivot sheet for fear your name will be on it again when you go to begin tour in the morning? Did you receive a letter of warning for calling in sick for the first time in as long as you can remember? These are all potentially grievances. Many problems won't get better unless they are addressed.

We must strive to help our brother and sister carriers; we must watch out for each other. There is also personal responsibility regarding our contractual rights. Many carriers who request union time and discover their rights are being violated are relieved to hear the union is going to do something about it. However, many ask how they are supposed to know when another issue in the future would be a violation. There are many options for carriers to become familiar with their own rights. Your office steward and the Branch office are always a good place to start. You can also visit the Branch Website nalcbranch25.com and the National Website nalc.org to research articles and resources. The monthly WAKE UP contains invaluable information about current issues the Branch is handling and other information to support carriers. I know personal time is limited, and we all have busy lives, but doing some research is an investment in yourself and can improve your quality of life at work. In my opinion the best thing you can do to stay informed is to attend the Branch meetings.

The Branch holds meetings at least 10 times a year and typically breaks during the months of July and August. The meetings start at 8:00 P.M. with food served around 7:15 unless of course they are via ZOOM. Hopefully our time meeting on ZOOM is coming to an end but when we do meet remotely one upside is the convenience of being at home. There is no substitute for the knowledge you can gain at these meetings. There are reports given by the Branch Officers, and the topics are current and relevant issues affecting the hundreds of members in the Branch. You can finally put faces to the names you see in the WAKE UP or the voice on the other end of the phone. You may be surprised to find out something being done routinely in your office is part of an Officer's report and being grieved in another office. Make an effort to attend, get informed, and protect your rights!

In Solidarity,

Tony Bossi

Vice President's Report

Last month I wrote that I was holding out until the last minute, hoping to have good news about Postal Reform. This month I am happy to report that the passing of H.R. 3076, Postal Service Reform Act of 2022, in the Senate on March 8. NALC President Fred Rolando expressed his thankfulness in a statement saying “America’s letter carriers applaud the 79 members of the U.S. Senate who voted to pass the Postal Reform Act last night, following its adoption by the House of Representatives with a massive bipartisan majority in February.....H.R. 3076 was a sensible set of reforms that all four corners of Congress could enthusiastically support.....The successful adoption of the bill reflects years of steady work by NALC members and staff to build consensus among postal stakeholders and members of Congress – as well as the overwhelming support of the American people who have long embraced the Postal Service as a national treasure.”

The bill now heads to President Biden’s desk where he will officially sign it into law. Postal Reform has been talked about, at length, previously. To recap, the core parts of the legislation will repeal the mandate to pre-fund retiree health care benefits decades in advance and codify a minimum of six-day delivery of mail and packages into federal law. This will eliminate the need to renew the six-day requirement every year through the congressional appropriations process. The bill also maximizes the integration of future postal annuitants into Medicare. While this bill does not, magically, fix all the Postal Service’s problems, it is a reform that has been a long time coming and the culmination of years of arduous work by the NALC and our supporters in Congress.

On May 14, for the first time Since 2019, the Letter Carrier’s Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive will be happening as a full-on in-person food drive. Due to the pandemic, the food drive had switched gears for the last couple of years to an online/monetary donation operation. Although it was good to be able to adjust to conditions and be able to still support those in need despite the pandemic, it will be great to be able get back to a traditional food drive. The Letter Carrier’s Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is the largest single-day food drive in the country and hopefully after a 2-year hiatus, will be one of the biggest ever for us. Look for more information about the food drive in your office over the coming weeks.

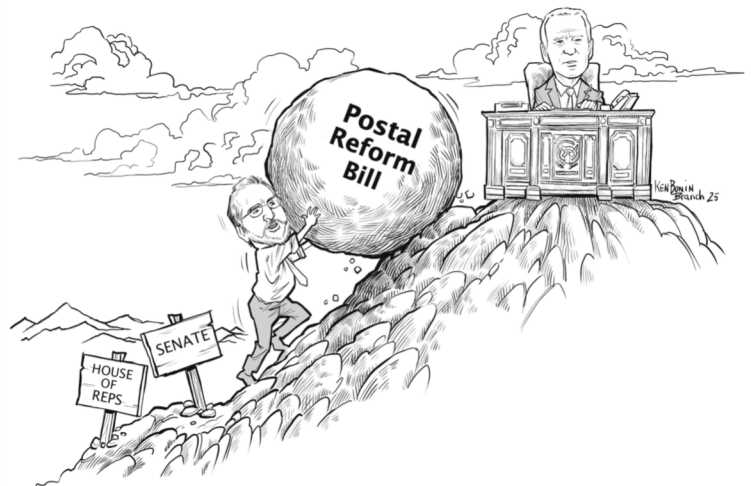
I wanted to finish this month’s report by talking a little bit about the new route adjustment method for the rural carriers. Although the rural carriers are separate from city letter carriers, it is interesting to see what they are doing for their route evaluations and what it may mean for us in the future. The new rural adjustment process is the RRECS (Rural Route Evaluated Compensation System). It has been in the works for

years and makes use of the MDD scanners to compile much of the information including driving speeds and times. This stands out to me because, historically, rural counts have been tedious. We have a few rural routes in my office, and I have witnessed them over the years. They typically measure everything right down to the second. They even break out the measuring wheel to get exact distances from the carrier’s case to the throwback case or other locations. The fact that they are now integrating the MDD scanners into their adjustment process so heavily is, I think, a sign of the future for all carriers.

I am the first person to say that I do not think that all the information management gets from the scanners is 100% accurate and I do not believe that unilateral use of that information by management is a good thing. The traditional route inspection is costly and uses a lot of resources on the Postal Service’s side. It is also stressful for many letter carriers and often requires more work by the Union to make it right. The MDD scanners are mini, computerized data collectors that go everywhere we go all day long. Although any new route examination and adjustment methods would have to be agreed upon, I think the fact that the rural carriers have implemented this is the sign of things to come at some point down the road.... I look forward to seeing everyone in-person at the April branch meeting after our 2-month Zoom hiatus due to the COVID spike!

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler



WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Managing Stress to Maintain Strength

— Keys to Promoting a Healthy Balance —

Women are often expected to do it all; work, maintain a household, raise children, and take care of family members. Falling short in any of these areas may make women feel as if they are failing. If they already struggle with anxiety or depression, this can easily lead to them feeling overwhelmed. Learning how to manage stress and encouraging others to use stress management techniques can lead to improved responses to stressful situations and build resilience. These are key to promoting a healthy balance. It is important to take a personal inventory now and again to see what is going well and what can be improved upon.

The following tips provide a good place to start stress reduction:

- **Take care of yourself physically.** Eat a well-balanced diet, exercise for 30 minutes, 2-3 times per week, practice relaxation techniques such as yoga, guided meditation, mindfulness or listen to relaxing music and aim for 8-9 hours of sleep per night.
- **Take care of yourself emotionally.** Work toward building a healthy self-esteem. Learn to express emotions in a healthy way, do not bottle them up.
- **Take care of yourself mentally.** Maintain a positive outlook and a resilient attitude. Set realistic goals for yourself at work and at home to avoid setting yourself up for failure.
- **Take care of yourself socially.** Set limits and boundaries with others. It is okay to say, “No”. Spend time with and stay connected to those who love and support you.
- **Take care of yourself spiritually.** Be present in the moment. Take time out of each day to focus on gratitude. Set time aside to practice your spiritual or religious beliefs.

It is important for women to recognize the sources of stress in their lives in order to help reduce it. If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance, your EAP is here to help. Contact us today at 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU), TTY: 877-492-7341 or online at EAP4YOU.com.

WAKE UP

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at the next meeting

April 5

K of C Wilmington

8:00 PM

The below agreement will be voted on at the May regular monthly Branch 25 meeting.

The following represents a merger agreement between NALC Branch 25, Lowell, MA and NALC Branch 212, Lawrence, MA.

The name of the merged branch shall be NE Merged Branch 25, MA.

The by-laws of Branch 25 will become the by-laws of the merged Branch.

The current officers of Branch 25 will remain the officers of the merged Branch until the next election cycle in October 2024.

Presently, Branch 212 by-laws call for a death benefit of \$500 to be paid to the survivor of all Branch 212 members, both active and retired. Prior to the completion of the merger, Branch 212 will ensure that all current members as of the date of the signing of this agreement will receive a check in the amount of \$500 to satisfy the obligation created by the by-laws.

Upon completion of the merger, President of Branch 25 will request dispensation to allow three members of current Branch 212 to attend as delegates the 2022 Convention in Chicago. If dispensation is granted, these three members will be funded at Branch 25 levels that were voted on at the November 2021 Branch 25 monthly meeting.

Branch 25 will ensure that at least two current members of Branch 212 are funded delegates to the 2024 and 2026 National Conventions provided they meet the attendance requirements as outlined in Branch 25 by-laws.

Branch 25 will set aside \$6,000.00 of Branch 212 current treasury for a period of two years to distribute (up to) \$500.00 scholarships to any active member's son or daughter who graduates and is accepted to attend a continuation education program the same year. This will cover years 2022 and 2023. During this same time period, if the children of former Branch 212 opt to request the non-competitive scholarship from the monies put aside, they will not be eligible to apply for or receive the current Branch 25 scholarships.

Branch 212 will liquidate \$15,000.00 of their current cash assets by distributing said funds amongst the current members as of the date of the signing of this agreement.

Branch 212 will not make any other purchases, donations, or payments that are not required by their by-laws upon the date of the signing of this agreement.

The merger shall take effect as expeditiously as possible upon the signing of this agreement and approval of the members of each branch.