

H USTON LETTER CARRIER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS, AFL-CIO - BRANCH 283

VOL. XLV, No. 30
January 2017

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HEALTH BENEFITS REPORT



2017 Health Plan

NALC has a new and improved Health plan for the year of 2017. Our new, and our returned members will benefit from the quality of the High option health plan, and the price. The price is generally cheaper than any other High option or Standard option health plan in the FEHB system.

Always call your doctor in advance to verify he or she are in your PPO network. By doing so it will assure you get the lower rate of 15% after a 300 dollar deductible at the start of the year, and co-pay is \$20.00 for every office visit. Non-network doctors are 30 to 35% after 300 deductible. Hospitalization is \$200 copayment per admission.

If your doctor is not familiar with NALC Health plan, then he or she should be familiar with the CIGNA PPO OAP network. I would recommend when you call your doctor to make an appointment and, do it early in the day so the paperwork can be ready when you arrive for your appointment. Some doctors' offices will email you the necessary paperwork to fill out prior to you coming in for your appointment. This makes it so much easier, and you won't be bombarded with all that paperwork.

Keep in mind; if you require a specialized CT/CAT, MRI, MRA, NC, or a PET scan make sure these type of radiology/imaging are pre-certified. By doing so, it will keep you from having to pay for more of the bill.

Make sure before you are being admitted into the Hospital for surgery or illness that the doctor pre-certifies you. It would be wise to carry your Health Benefit card with you at all times. It is important to inform a family member or a friend of what your wishes are in case of an emergency!

You might consider putting I.C.E on your phone. I.C.E stands for "In Case Emergency". This allows a paramedic, police officer or whoever is assisting you at the time of your crisis to be able to notify your family or a friend of your emergency. All you do is add I.C.E to your contacts. Make sure you put I.C.E first under contacts and then place the name after it, and then the phone number. It will make it easier for the person who is assisting you to find your emergency contact.

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The Houston Letter Carrier is published monthly by Branch 283, National Association of Letter Carriers, affiliated with AFL-CIO and International Labor Press Association.

Articles must be submitted by the 10th of each month, double spaced typed or printed, 400 words or less. ALL ARTICLES ARE SUBJECT TO EDITING.

OPINIONS AND VIEWS PUBLISHED IN THIS PUBLICATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY SHARED BY BRANCH 283 or represent the official views of USPS.

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RICKY'S CONTRACT TALK



WOUNDED WARRIERS FEDERAL LEAVE ACT OF 2015

On November 5, 2015, the President signed the *Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015*. The act provides a separate new leave category, to be known as “disabled veteran leave,” to any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30% or more for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability for which sick leave could regularly be used.

Disabled veteran leave is available during the first 12 months of employment, and may not exceed 104 hours. Any “disabled veteran leave” not used during the first 12 months of employment may not be carried over to subsequent years, and will be forfeited. Disabled veteran leave is also available to employees of the United States Postal Service.

This means that newly hired CCA's with a disability rating of 30% or more will have 104 hours of leave to use for medical treatment. An eligible employee receives 104 hours of disabled veteran leave all at once upon being hired into the Postal Service. It is not a leave category that is accrued from one pay period to another. In order to

verify that disabled veteran leave is used for treatment of a service-connected disability, an eligible employee must submit certification issued by a health care provider that the employee used such leave for purposes of receiving treatment for the service-connected disability.

The 104 hours for Disabled veteran leave is in addition to the annual leave a new CCA will earn each pay period. The annual leave cannot be carried over from one 360 day term to another. The annual leave is paid out at the end of the term in the form of a lump sum payment. CCAs earn 1 hour of annual leave for each 20 hours they are in a pay status in each pay period. A CCA will earn a maximum of 4 hours of annual for 80 hours of work in a pay period.

Know your rights, knowledge is power
Ricky Dueboay
Vice-President, NALC Branch 283

HEALTH BENEFITS REPORT

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It is a good Idea to read the NALC Health Benefit Plan brochure so you can get the most out of your insurance. If you are in need of a brochure here are some ways you will be able to obtain one. You can pick one up at our local Branch 283- 2414 Broadway St. Houston, Texas 77012 or call 1-888-636-6252 and they will send you one, or check the website www.nalchbp.org

For prescription drugs you can use almost any place that has a drug store; Target, Walgreens etc. for up to a 30 day

supply up to 2 fills. If you need continuous medication usually filled in a 90 day supplies, you are required to use CVS pharmacy or use the CVS/caremark mail program.

Hector Salinas
Branch 283,
Health Benefit Rep. 713-591-0674

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

If you can't stop thinking about it, don't stop working for it. **Martin Luther King**

FWI CORNER

Q. When an employee is injured on the job should they report their injury immediately to their supervisor?

A. Yes, if you are injured on the job you should report your injury to your supervisor immediately even if you feel it is not traumatic. In some incidences after an injury has occurred the employee may feel as if they are not hurt; only to feel the pain later. It is always wise to report your injury in order to cover yourself from later having to prove your injury happened on the job.

Q. When an employee is injury on the job they should fill out a CA-1?

A. Yes, a CA-1, Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury, is used to report factors that occur (*during the courses of one work shift or work-day*).

Q. When an employee is injury on the job they should fill out a CA-2?

A. Yes, a CA-2 Federal Employee's Notice of Occupational Disease, is used to report injuries caused by work factors that occurred (*over the course of more than one work shift or workday*).

Q. If an employee has a recurrence of a previous accepted injury should they fill out a CA-2a?

A. Yes, a CA-2a, of Recurrence, is used to report (*recurrences of previously accepted injuries*). What is a CA-2a according to the 20 CFR 10.5 (x) it is an inability to work after an employee has returned to work caused by *a spontaneous change in a medical condition* which had resulted from a previous injury or illness *without an intervening injury or new exposure to work environment that caused the illness*.

Q. Do I need to fill out a CA-16?

A. No, a CA-16 Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment is the form used in traumatic injuries to authorize medical treatment and provide an initial medical report. Management must normally issue Form CA-16 within 4 hours of the claimed injury. If management gives oral authorization for the treatment care, then the CA-16 must be issued within 48 hours.

Q. If an employee has a traumatic injury can the employee request a CA-16?

A. Yes, nothing in the manuals requires an employee to request a CA-16 from the supervisor. Nevertheless, employees should specifically request it from their supervisor whenever they submit a CA-1 and seek medical attention.

Q. Can the Postal Service write to your physician?

A. Yes, OWCP regulations allow an employer to contact an injured worker's physician, in writing, regarding work limitations and possible job assignments. The same regulations specifically prohibit the employer from contacting the physicians by telephone or in person.

Q. Is the Postal Service required to send the employee a copy of the written contact made to the employees 'physician'?

A. Yes (20 CFR 10.506) states: When (written) contact is made, the employer shall send a copy of any such correspondence to OWCP and the employee as well as a copy to the physician's response when received.

Q. Does an employee have the right to choose a physician?

A. Yes, by law the injured letter carrier has a choice in their initial selection of physicians. Management is also required to advise you of that right. The regulations do permit the Postal Service to require an injured employee to be examined by a contract physician- but only so long as the examination does not interfere with or delay the employee's appointment with his/her chosen physician. However this does not mean you have to go back to their doctor. Keep in mind once you go to their doctor after your initial injury and you go back for a follow up; you will be obligated to stay with their doctor. The employer can only require the employee to be examined by the postal physician. The employee has exclusive rights to choose the physician who will provide treatment.

Q. Once I see my physician can see a specialist?

A. Yes, the Department of Labor states if that physician refers you to a specialist, we will honor that referral as long as it is for the work-related condition.

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR LUNCH

Have you ever heard a CCA or your fellow carrier make this statement? I don't have time for lunch! Seasoned carriers as well as CCAs have made this statement way too often.

You have a lot of seasoned carriers who are harassed by management on a daily basis because their route is over standard. Then you have the new CCAs who may be unfamiliar with the route they are on, and are being harassed because management thinks they're doing a poor job. A lot of these carriers are intimidated by management, and will do whatever it takes to avoid conflict. So in order to avoid conflict they will not take a lunch or their breaks!

This kind of retaliation by management is wrong. If you know one of your fellow brothers, or sisters who might be going through this kind of retaliation. You should inform them to seek help, and file a grievance! By doing so, this will allow them to discuss their situation with their station steward.

If you are a regular carrier or CCA, and you work more than 6 hours in a day a lunch break will automatically be taken out of your pay check. There are some incidences when an employee will work more than 6 hours, but may not have worked 8 hours. They will need to inform management that they did not take a lunch period. Management will be able

to go into TACs, and make a correction. **Take note: Taking a lunch should be done daily!** Not taking a lunch should only happen on emergency situations, and not done on a regular basis.

However, if an emergency situation does occur remember to fill out a PS Form 3971, and notate in the comment section "No Lunch". Make sure you sign and date the PS Form 3971 and have management sign it, and date it, and **KEEP A COPY!** Always get a copy of any documents you turn over to management that requires a signature. It will be your word against theirs if they argue the point that they never received it!!

Working through a required lunch break isn't financially beneficial since you won't be paid for the hours worked. Working during a lunch break means you are working for **FREE!** Your lunch break falls under the Federal Law, and our NALC

National Agreement. Make sure you sit and enjoy the 30 minutes you get paid for lunch.

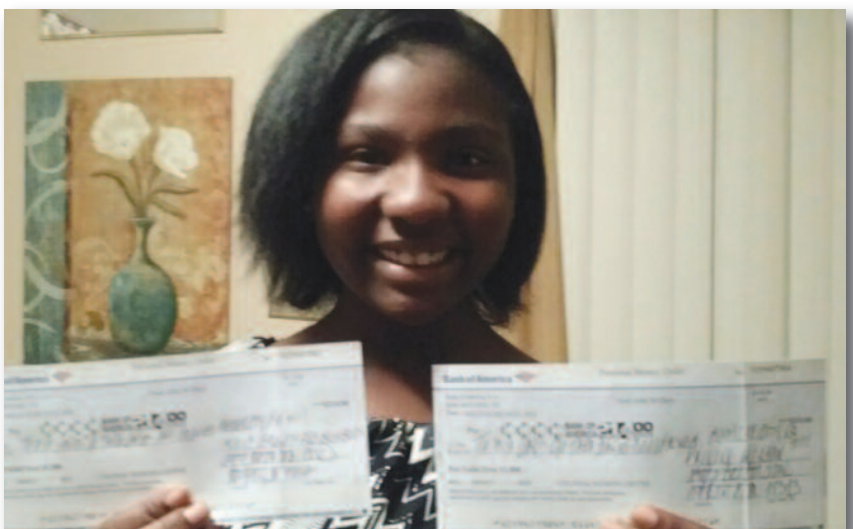
If this new employee is a CCA and they are still on probation have this employee call the hall, and talk to one of the local branch officers 713-641-2366. Remember some CCAs don't know all the procedures, and are not aware of the process.



WITH GRATEFUL THANKS

I would like to thank my Aunt Pauline and all the kind hearts of NALC that have so graciously donated to help my dream come true. When I asked my Aunt Pauline to help I knew she would help with no problem, but I never imagined the generosity that you have poured into my future. I felt honored to be asked by my school to attend such a momentous historical event, but now I see the honor is not in just to be asked. The honor is having people like my Aunt and coworkers to care that I am able to attend such an event. Thank you and I will make the most out of this opportunity and I will never forget to pay it forward.

Feeling Blessed, Ta'Mya Davis



LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

Happy New Year!

Yes, carriers worked long, hard, and demanding hours but we survived Amazon! We survived the large amount of parcels sent by our customers and Amazon. In fact, we thrived because of your incredible hard work and dedication.

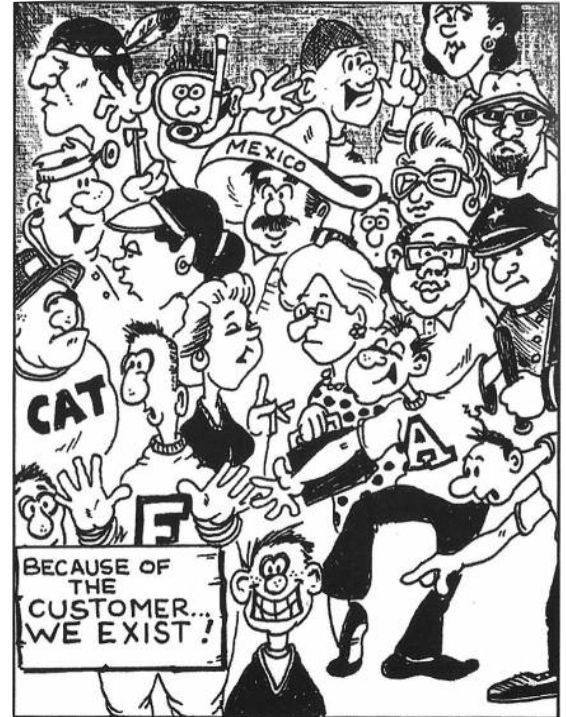
The U.S. Postal Service delivers to 155 million homes and businesses. We deliver six, and increasingly seven days a week, and we deliver 47 percent of the world's mail!

If you have watched the different news reports, they made it appear as if the Post Office was going under; these reports are far from the truth! The Postal Service may have lost a portion of the first class letter mail, but we are actually in the **BLACK!**

With consumers going on line and purchasing any where from diapers to paper towels to dog food, our package revenue has gone up 16 % in 2016.

For the physical year of 2016 the USPS revenue exceeded operating expenses by \$610 million. The total operating profit for the past 3 years is \$3.2 billion. This is all earned revenue, the USPS gets no tax dollars. Remember a lot of our customers have the misconception their tax dollars pay our salary.

The only **RED** ink the USPS has to account for would be congressional politics. In 2006 a, lame-duck Congress mandated that the Postal Service pre-fund future retiree health benefits. No other public agency or private company has ever had to do this. Basically what this means is the Postal Service has had to pre-fund for future carriers way in advance. The \$5.8 billion dollars paid annually to the pre-funding for future retiree is the **RED** ink, and it makes it appear the Postal Service has not profited. In actuality, the Postal Service is thriving and postal employees should be applauded for their continued hard work! Now let's move forward and make 2017 an even a better and prosperous year!



POLITICAL FACTS

With the New Year and the new president there could be troubling times ahead. We are looking out for “YOU” the everyday common letter carrier. There are several issue that could be adverse to our current working conditions.

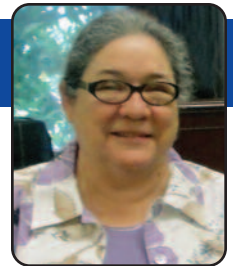
1. **Chipping away at our retirement.** The government is constantly trying to use federal employees retirement savings as a “piggy bank” to fund all sorts of other government projects.
2. **Shutting down union business.** If you didn't know, last year congress introduced eight separate bills trying to strip federal employees right to union representation. In the 115th congress a resolution has already been reintroduced that newly hired federal employees will not have a right to be represented by a union.
3. **Shifting benefit contributions to workers.** Our health care benefits are a big reason most of the public has always said the Postal Service is a great place to work. But congress is increasingly trying to shift more of the cost to be paid by us rather then our employer.
4. **Reducing pay.** Specifically our benefits and our wages are things the NALC negotiates for with the Postal Service. We are currently in negotiations now and with congress looking to cut benefits and pay for federal employees this could have an immediate impact on us as letter carriers.
5. **Shrinking the federal workforce.** President Trump has already made a promise to reduce the size of the federal workforce by implementing a hiring freeze and by not filling vacancies.

The NALC anticipates a very busy year for defending federal employees. We need your help and are asking you to get with your local steward and provide your Name, Address, Phone number, and Email so when trouble arises and representatives need to be contacted you can do your part and have your voice heard.

Arturo G. Ramirez
TSALC Board One Member

JANUARY 2017 - STEWARD MEETING

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ASTRODOME - F. Helaire

BAYTOWN MAIN - L. Rivera, S. Talley

BEECHNUT -

BELLAIRE - J. Butler

CLEVELAND -

CONROE -

CORNERSTONE - K. Jones, N. Parks

CROCKETT -

COLUMBUS -

D.S. SCHATZ - K. Ware

DAYTON -

DEMOSS - S. Perry, P. de Vera

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EASTWOOD - W. Thomas

EL CAMPO -

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FLEETWOOD -

FOSTER PLACE -

FRIENDSWOOD - J. Evans, D. Torres

GALENA PARK -

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GRANVILLE ELDER - O. Herrera, C. Siner, L. Garcia

GREENBRIAR - K. Phillips

GREENS NORTH - A. Smith, B. Nwoko

HIGHLANDS -

HEMPSTEAD - L. Sandifer

HUMBLE -

HUNTSVILLE -

JAMES GRIFFITH - T. Abbott, L. Mitchell

JASPER -

JENSEN - G. Morgart, A. Mitchell

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JULIUS MELCHER - C. Thomas, M. Moore

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KATY PARK ROW - L. Lindsey

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KLEIN - R. Bruce, K. Moten

LAMARQUE - S. Lopez

LEAGUE CITY - W. Brown

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LIVINGSTON -

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PANTHER CREEK - M. Garcia

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RICHMOND -

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ROSENBERG -

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SAM HOUSTON (PTRS) - M. Singleton

SANTA FE - C. Cobbs

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SEABROOK -

SEALY -

SILSBEE -

SMITHVILLE -

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LAST PUNCH BUNCH



Dennis Brantley worked for the Postal Service for 36 years. He decided to call it quits on December the 30th of 2016. He also retired from the military after 4 years. Mr. Brantley plans on enjoying his new home built in Huntsville Texas. Enjoying his family and teaching his granddaughter Zoe how to fish! Hats off to Mr. Brantley.....we wish you the best in the years to come!!



Wanda Godine started her career as a letter carrier at the William Rice Station back in 1981. After 35 years of service she decided to call it quits on January the 2nd of 2017, and will be retiring from the Sam Houston post office. Wanda wants to thank GOD for this milestone in her life.... Hats off to Ms. Wanda.....we wish you the best in the years to come!!



Craig R. Walker first started working at the Fairbanks Station in October of 1983. He was a mailman for 32 years and 8 months. His future plans are to go back to school, and become a Chaplain! Mr. Walker stated: the post office has been good to me, and I never missed a check!! Hats off to Mr. Walker.....we wish you the best in the years to come!!

DATED MATERIAL



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SPACE CITY U.S.A. BRANCH 283

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