



News 56



A publication of National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 56, Grand Rapids MI





Branch President

Darrell Helsley

It's that time of year again to jot down a few notes and let everyone know what's been happening with the branch since our last newsletter.

Summer was a fun time as usual but super busy with Union events. I golfed with VP Dennis, HB Rep Mike and Sgt-at-Arms John at the Lansing Golf Outing and the MBA Golf Outing in June to start the summer off right raising money for MDA.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, I was sent to Florida for a week to learn about the new route adjustment process along with my counterpart, who is the Postmaster in Eaton Rapids. My partner and I have 4 teams that work with us doing adjustments for the MI 2 District. I will cover some things that the teams have uncovered during this 1st round of the adjustment process in a separate article.

Your Delegates travelled to Chicago in August to check out the windy city and for some, their 1st National Convention. The delegates tried to stay together as much as possible for dinner and after convention activities which included the KIM Region River Boat Cruise. Our current NBA David Mudd ran unopposed and was elected for another 4-year term. Congrats to David! Unfortunately for some of the delegates the convention turned into a COVID spreader, and a few caught the rona. Everyone was vaccinated, so recovery time was minimal for most. We all sat together and only a hand full tested positive upon our return.

Our annual golf outing was another success this year with a beautiful day at Boulder Creek. National Director of Retirees Dan Toth flew in and golfed with our NBA team; NBA David Mudd, RAA Ronnie Rosch and Retired NBA Pat Carrol. Special thanks to all that volunteered at the event and the committee during the year to help make the event another success. Carriers, please start reaching out to local businesses now to help secure hole tee sponsors for next year's event. This is an inexpensive way for a small business to get advertising.

September marked a celebration to acknowledge our retirees at a Luncheon held in their honor. National Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine flew in from DC and attended with our RAA Kyle Inosencio. Jeff Bartlett, David Knott and Kathy Beurkins all received their 50-year Gold card and pins. Congrats to all and a special thank you to VP Dennis Ryder and Trustee Joe Noel for setting up the event.

KIM training is being held in Covington, KY over the Columbus Day Weekend with many new members volunteering to attend this Region 6 Training.

Holiday Schedule and Annual Leave: This continues to be an ongoing problem with carriers and management not fully understanding what the National Agreement and our LMOU states. If a carrier is on Annual Leave leading into the Holiday weekend, then they are excused from being ordered in if their SDO is that upcoming weekend. Example: I am on Annual Leave Oct 3-8th. The Holiday Schedule is Saturday Oct 8th for the Monday Columbus Day Holiday. (**You will not**

be ordered in). If my Annual Leave starts Monday Oct 10th and my SDO weekend is Oct 7th and 8th then YES, (**You can be ordered in**). This has no bearing on if you are a lister or not. Article 8 violations may still occur during the day but the scheduling falls under Article 11.

Much of what is often considered "overtime" worked by full-time employees on their holiday or designated holiday is not overtime. Rather it is Holiday Worked Pay or Holiday Scheduling Premium. The only work that is contractually overtime for full-time employees working on a holiday or designated holidays is work beyond eight hours in a day (ELM Section 434.53). Furthermore, work up to eight hours on a non-scheduled day assigned under the provisions of Article 11.6 is not considered in determining equitability. This is because the employees assigned the overtime in such situations are not selected from the ODL under the provisions of Article 8.5.C.2.a. Rather, they are selected under the provisions of Article 11.6 and any applicable LMOU provisions.

The provisions of Article 11 only apply to scheduling full-time employees to work eight hours on their holiday, designated holiday, or nonscheduled day. The provisions of Article 8 apply to scheduling work beyond eight hours on those days. Therefore, only work over eight hours on a non-scheduled day, holiday, or designated holiday scheduled under the provisions of Article 11.6 is considered and counted toward determining equitability at the end of the quarter.

Uniforms: I have been working with Michelle to ensure CCAs are getting their Uniform Vouchers timely after getting through their probation, but I continue to see CCAs and regulars not in uniform. CCAs need to go online as soon as they get the voucher and order uniforms. Wearing a proper uniform is part of the job requirement and carriers should be in an appropriate postal authorized uniform. They can go online and order their uniforms and have the invoice emailed to Michelle and she will pay for them to be shipped. Michelle.L.Scully@usps.gov We have carriers who have converted to regular who still wear whatever they feel like coming to work in. We are still having issues getting credit cards through Citibank but HR has been notified and at last email they are working with Citibank to process the cards.

Penalty Overtime Exclusion Period (Dec 3rd thru Dec 30th, 2022): The branch has always argued (to include last year) that during the month of December, carriers on the 8-hour non-ODL could not work over 8 hours in a day since there is no penalty overtime in December. We, as the branch, interpreted that language in conjunction with the Letter Carrier Paragraph meant that all 8-hour carriers could not work past 8 hours even on their own routes. A change was made to the 2019-2023 National Agreement regarding this. Contractual language: Article 8.5.G provides that employees on the ODL may be required to work up to 12 hours per day and 60 hours per week. It further provides that the 12-hour and 60-hour restrictions do not apply to employees on the ODL during the penalty overtime exclusion period (December). **NEW LANGUAGE: Accordingly, management MAY, but is NOT REQUIRED to, assign ODL Letter Carriers to work in excess of the Article 8.5.G limits during the penalty overtime exclusion period (December).**

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The simplest way to explain this issue is: Management **CAN** now make 8-hour carriers work over 8 hours during the Penalty Overtime Exclusion Period on their own routes. They still need to satisfy the requirements of The Letter Carrier Paragraph before requiring any 8-hour carrier to work the overtime.

Until Next Time,
Darrell Helsley
President Branch 56
616-328-9750



BRANCH 56 HOLIDAY PARTY

NOVEMBER 19TH, 2022
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
BANQUET CENTER
5830 CLYDE PARK AVE SW,
WYOMING 49509

COCKTAILS 6-7 PM
DINNER 7-8 PM
DANCING 8-MIDNIGHT

ALL BRANCH MEMBERS ARE
FREE
MAY BRING 1 GUEST FOR
\$10.00

Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP)

Route Adjustments: The teams started with smaller offices throughout the District to get their feet wet and to gain a better understanding of the program and how to adjust routes. The entire 32 page signed MOU can be located at NALC.ORG under WORKPLACE RESOURCES in the MRS program (M-01983). Here is a Quick breakdown of the agreed M-01983 process.

1. The Office – Zones are selected during selected periods. October marks the second selection period for the upcoming Spring. NALC gets to choose, and USPS gets to choose (We are now selecting for Jan-April adjustments). My partner cannot remove NALC selections and I cannot remove the USPS selections.
2. Wyoming - 09 & 19 have been selected because of the Consolidated Casing (USPS)
3. NW – 34 has been selected (USPS)
4. EastParis -12 has been selected (USPS)
5. The teams will pull data from DOIS as far back as May of 2021
6. 7 Random weeks have been jointly selected for the review of this data. Each week selected is during the months pulled. (Basically 7 different months) excluding June, July, August and December.
7. The data is reviewed and scrubbed by the team that is assigned to adjust the zone.
8. This data is entered into an excel spreadsheet which has all the time and volumes used to analyze each route during the selected period.
9. Only the street portion times for the regular or most knowledgeable carrier (absent the regular) will be used. All volumes are considered when computing office time and percent to standard.
10. The teams will reach out to the offices to find local contacts to help explain the entire process to the carriers.
11. The communication with the team and office is generally conducted via telephones and video platforms. The teams are not to drive to the office. Carrier consultations are also done via video. The teams share their screens with the carriers.
12. The team will select a Live Week in which they will review the carrier on the street via the Digital Street Review program. This eliminates the need for management to stand behind carriers in the office and then ride with the carrier conducting a 3999.
13. Each day during the Live week, the team will consult with the carrier about what they did the day before or day before that day. The team is trying to find the best representative day to build a 3999.
14. Once the team has picked the representative day, they will process the data and send it over to DOIS to build a 3999.
15. The teams will inform AMS and prepare to lock out the zone.
16. The data will then be sent to the COR techs to build routes based on all information plus from consultations from carriers and the local contacts.
17. Once the COR Techs have built the routes, everything is then discussed with the locals to allow for any minor tweaks.

- 18.If the adjustment is ready to go then everything is turned over to AMS to implement the adjustment. This will include changing line of travels and getting new edit sheets and labels printed.
- 19.The waiting game begins until the Saturday that has been selected for the adjustment to become effective.
- 20.The team will go back and look at the office again between 60-90 days and make any tweaks to the adjustment to ensure the route adjustment worked at making 8-hour routes.

I just broke everything down for you and it probably makes no sense to you at this point. It is a lot of data to review but if you ever saw the DSR program work, you would be amazed at what the teams see carriers doing every day. The DSR program pings your MDD device every second and updates to what you are doing during the day. The teams cannot flat out tell management you are doing something wrong, but I guarantee you that the USPS team member sends out an email or text indicating they need to be observing a carrier that has developed what we will just call, some bad habits. We've heard every reason under the sun when asking a carrier, "what did you do here"? Carriers need to take their lunch and 2 ten-minute breaks daily. The times are not negotiable. If you take a 12-minute break, then 2 minutes will be removed from the time. If you fail to take a break or lunch, then time will not automatically be added to your route as in the past adjustment process. The teams CAN add your breaks into the program but after all these years of you skipping your breaks, what makes anyone believe you will start now? The teams will not build in basically 20 minutes of time and have you still not taking the breaks. That's built-in downtime and the object is so that all carriers have as close to an 8-hour route as possible. You are hurting yourself by skipping lunch and breaks.

One of the other things we see is a carrier will load up and travel to their route and stop for no reason. When asked, they will usually respond with, "I was moving my parcels up front to start delivering or oh, that's me stopping to get a coffee, pop or snack to get started". You contractually get 2 10-minute breaks, but the carrier doesn't see this coffee, pop or snack stop as a break. The carrier physically just finished loading and left the post office but needs to stop a mile down the road to move parcels up front? Carriers are to stop during their line of travel during delivery and that's when their 10 min break begins. Once your 10 minutes ends, you move to the next box and begin delivery. If you drive to the gas station to grab a snack or something, then that travel is all part of your 10-minute break. Typically for the carrier(s) that we do see take their lunch, it's usually around 40 minutes. When asked they will generally say they have to drive somewhere. Your 30-minute lunch starts as soon as you break your line of travel from delivering and ends once you arrive back on your line of travel to begin delivering. It's 30 minutes TOTAL. Many of the carriers we have seen will blow the Live week up by doing their routes correctly. Actually, doing them in the correct order. The teams can see that you are expanding your street time compared to your previous 7 weeks of data. The Live week is really used to build a representative 3999. Even though the times are being expanded during this Live week, they still are thrown into the 7 weeks of data to

give an 8-week analysis which is what the carrier has been demonstrating regularly. Your routes will be adjusted accordingly.

A team was tasked with evaluating and adjusting a zone and the results are shocking. The office has 3 city routes and a 3 plus hour Aux route. 3 Fulltime carriers, 1 PTF and 1 CCA. After analyzing the 7-week data and doing a full live week with the carriers. The data shows that the office only rates 2 – 8-hour assignments and a 7-hour Aux. The carriers used 7.01 daily during the peak of COVID and then either took LWOP or Annual on any other given day. The result of this adjustment will be that 1 Full-time Regular City Carrier will be excessed out. The carrier will be given a choice to revert to a PTF or transferred to another unit within a 50-mile radius. When this happens, the junior carrier is selected. The junior carrier being excessed has over 27 years seniority! This is a prime example of why you should be doing your routes the same way every single day. Delivering routes is not a sprint – it is a Marathon. It takes what it takes to preform your job safely and efficiently as you can. Accurately deliver to the best of your ability and stop rushing to get done.

Darrell Helsley
MI2 TIAREAP District Lead

National Association of Letter Carriers – Region 6
National Business Agent
September 2022 Report



Brothers and Sisters,

I hope this letter finds you feeling well after the National Convention in Chicago. I heard a bug was going around, and some delegates felt a little under the weather during and after the gathering of over 5,000 letter carriers. I was glad to have been able to get together in person again and handled the business of the NALC with the approval and disapproval of several amendments and resolutions. It is always great to hear the voices of our branches and members across the country.

One big issue was a common theme during the debate over the amendments and resolutions: STAFFING or the lack of staffing in some locations. As you all are aware, staffing in the last few years has created numerous problems within the USPS. In some

places, we do not have enough carriers to get the mail delivered or work carriers over their contractual limits to get the mail delivered. The NALC and the USPS are working towards trying to fix the staffing issues, but it is a slow process, and we still need the help of the stewards and branches across the region. I will first discuss some initiatives to help with staffing and then describe how you can help.

The first initiative is M-1986 and M-1988. M-1986 and M-1988 can be found on the materials reference system page at nalc.org and was started by the USPS. It allows the postal service to hire directly to PTF instead of the non-career CCA position. In some cities across the country and our region, the postal service was struggling to find and keep enough part-time employees based on the local job markets and decided to hire as PTFs. These career PTF positions have a higher starting wage and better benefit options versus the non-career CCA positions. Region 6 currently has five installations that are hiring directly to PTF. The parties at the headquarters level are closely monitoring the hiring of PTFs in these installations to gauge the impact on staffing and determine if hiring as PTFs will allow us to retain more new employees.

The New Employee Experience and Retention Program (NEERP) is the second initiative. The NEERP started in Region 6 at the Warren, MI installation. Effective September 10, 2022, it will be implemented across the entire Michigan 1 district (old Detroit district). The NEERP program, in short, allows for a reduced work schedule for the new employees while they learn the job of a letter carrier and allow for a non-scheduled day each week. The NEERP program also addresses the treatment of the new employees and allows for joint retention teams that will travel from office to office interviewing new employees to ensure management is keeping up their end of the deal. I understand the frustration from some carriers who will continue to be forced to work initially while a CCA gets a day off, but if we don't keep these new employees and give them a chance to learn the job, we will not be able to change this problem, and we will continue to mandate carriers to work overtime. The goal is to stop mandating letter carriers and allow all our employees to enjoy their non-scheduled days. The current process does not work, and we must change. To quote Ronnie Roush, "short-term pain for long-term gain".

How can you help? Our office is asking each branch to report to us where there are any full or partial routes not being delivered and where management is violating the NEERP program. As a member of the region, just let your steward and/or branch leadership know when mail is brought back so we can report that to NALC headquarters. The delayed mail reports have been essential in adding installations to M-1986 and M-1988 and allowing them to hire directly as PTF. I would like to see every installation be added to the list and be allowed to hire directly as PTF. An all-career workforce, what a concept!

Regarding the NEERP program, please look out for our new employees and hold management to the schedule restrictions of the NEERP program. If management is violating the program, let your branch leadership be aware so it can be fixed. If your local leadership can't get it fixed, they can reach out to the Region 6 office, and we will address the issue with the district manager or elevate it to postal headquarters.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your support in the past and in the future. Together we can continue the great successes of Region 6, and I look forward to seeing you at the KIM training in October. KIM training this year will be in Covington, KY, at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center.

David L Mudd
National Business Agent – Region 6
Kentucky – Indiana – Michigan (KIM)

VICE PRESIDENT:

How did summer go so fast? Seems like a month ago I was receiving the to do list for the back yard this summer. Now, I am embarrassed of how little has been checked off that list. Since our last Newsletter a lot has happened. Another Golf Outing success, a National Convention, a Retiree Dinner, a Kim training, this list probably explains the lack of checks on the honey do! I would like to thank everyone who attended the Retiree Dinner, I enjoy seeing the ones who paved the way. We had National Secretary-Treasurer Nicole Rhine in attendance along with Kyle Inosencio from the National Business Agent. So special thanks to them for their company. A special thanks to President Darrell Helsley and retired President Joe Noel for making the dinner possible.

Over the last month I have had the opportunity to speak with the incoming ccas in orientation. Coupled with talking to ccas that meander through zones 08/12, I feel I am always trying to answer questions, which is fabulous, that's what I am here for. One of the top questions seems to be "does this time count towards retirement?" As most who are reading this article know that the answer is no. If there was only a way we could attempt to change this ridiculous answer. Oh wait, there is. I encourage everyone but especially those who have non-career time to join **The Letter Carrier Political Fund**. For those that do not know, city carrier assistants are not the first non-career positions in the Post Office. Many a carrier started as a casual who could only work a certain number of days every six months or transitional employees who could work the year, neither would lead to a career position. A TE who had been already working, who even took the entrance exam, could be hired after someone that had not been working for the Post Office that took the exam before the TE or the TE would not even have to be hired. In 2013, an arbitrator made the cca position, the TEs at the time lost significant wages but the union did negotiate relative standing so that as career positions became available, they would be converted from the cca relative standing. The majority of letter carriers now have entered the workforce as a cca then converting to career. The Letter Carrier Political fund is the only way we can collectively change the ears of Congress. Our union dues can not be used for Pac funds. We need to influence both sides of the isle! Carriers voices need to be heard on many issues from buying back non-career time to fairness in social security benefits for the civil servant retirees. The last stat I saw, Grand Rapids is contributing below 10 percent of carriers. Legislation will affect us all, our jobs as well as our benefits depend on Congressional support. Contributing \$5 a paycheck for a better tomorrow seems reasonable. Please go to Nalc.org or contact a branch officer to start contributing.

Best regards,
Dennis Ryder

Bob Pearson:

As this will be my last article before I retire, I thought this might be a good time to reminisce on the overview of my postal career. I guess the very first thing would be Management is not your friend ever. It is kind of like living with a Tiger as Roy of the famous Las Vegas magician Siegfried & Roy learned. Never Trust the Tiger no matter how the relationship is. Management, at some level will always find a way to bite you, no matter how hard or how much you support them. You will hear forever the words-Get to the Street, and You need to go faster.

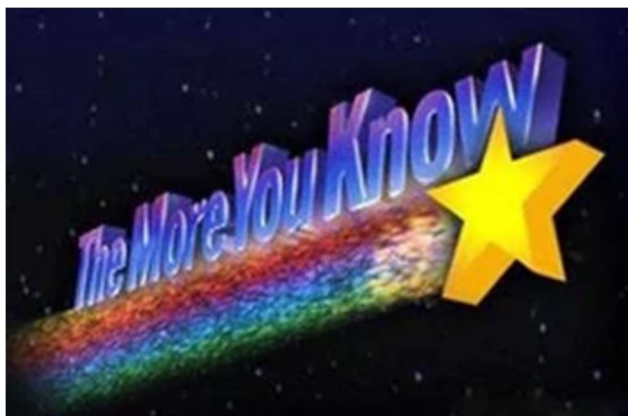
If you gave management an extra nickel, they would try to squeeze another dime out of it. By the way YOU are the Nickle, and they will squeeze you until you use the assets available to you. The Contract for your protection. I started with the USPS and thought I could make a difference if I worked in management. I thought my experience of command in the Army would afford me some level of opportunity to make sound

decisions and choices. I was told by Gary Smith he wished me luck but the USPS doesn't work like that. To move up they sell their souls to the levels above them, and the only salvation they have is making no sound choices. Not all but too many. Remember the Contract is your only friend. Period. You can wish for changes but ONLY the contract can give any opportunity for those changes, and that is only when the carriers afford the union to stand and fight. Learn some of the rules. There are some smart and dedicated people in Branch 56. There are some REALLY Smart representatives supporting in District 6 of KIM. I hear many stories of other branches around the state and district, and I can say without a doubt Branch 56 is one of the most highly regarded and respected around. I didn't learn that until I left the Union, as a young carrier not understanding how lucky I was to be in Branch 56.

I found that out on Nov 8, 2008. That was the date that the USPS, Greater Michigan District, and Northwest Station made NATIONAL NEWS. I was part of that date, and this branch showed me how Honorable and Respectable they were. I had left this union in anger and on that date the USPS tried to Terminate 37 Carriers, threatening criminal charges. The union stood hand in hand with me, and all those carriers walked out in shame, and I had left them. The union brought me back and saved my job and I had left them. Branch 56 did that, not the national union, not the district, but BRANCH 56. Fifteen years after it happened, and I still have nightmares and wake up at night. It was the Contract and Branch 56 that beat the USPS. When all is done you only have the ones that stand behind you and take the blows meant for you. Branch 56 did that. When carriers complain about what has the union done for me and when will the branch fix those problems, remember Branch 56 fights the USPS every day for the members. Protection against discipline, ensuring respect for every carrier, fighting for proper compensation for contract violation, and for the greed of mismanagement by the USPS. What have I learned and want to pass on to those carriers still working in the rain and snow and heat and when disrespected, you have one of the best teams working for you that I have worked with in my 42 years of Federal service!

Thank you all.

Bob Pearson, 04



- Did You know you have 28 minutes of fixed office time in the am, and 5 minutes in the pm? That is not including any mail that needs to be cased in.
- Did you know that it takes what it takes? Management can TRY to rush you out of the office.
- Did you know management has the burden of proof for a discipline case. And we, the union, have the burden of proof for contractual violations?
- Did you know written statements are gold!? It is extremely hard to prove something if its just he said, she said. Give your stewards statements if you can.
- Did you know the NALC now offers disability insurance? Go to nalc.org/mba to download an application.
- Did you know the Postal Service is the second largest employer of veterans in America? Only the Department of Defense employs more.
- Did you know the NALC has a political fund similar to UPS and the teamsters? Only NALC members can contribute. Funds are used for candidates who support issues important to letter carriers. Email: Anna Mudd at amudd@nalc.org for more information and to sign up.

Sarah Lower-Marlatt
Northwest Station

Hello one and all from the East Paris station.

I just want to plant a seed in the back of your mind. In about another year or so the branch will have nominations for the Branch Officers. The reason I'm bringing this up so far in advance is because the body of Branch 56 needs to start planning ahead the best we can to protect the branch and all of the members. Due to retirements, we will be losing 5 Executive board members after this term. So, everyone is clear there will be 5 important positions that will have to be filled: **President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Trustee.**

As some of you already these are some of the most important jobs on the Executive Board. Well, all are important, but 4 of them are extremely important. So, it's imperative the body starts looking at the future of the branch. We have one of the Strongest Unions out there, and because of that it's been possible to keep bad management (such as the management at NW, EP, Grca, you get the idea) at bay. We all need to get involved and step out of our comfort zone and make a difference. If not, those Bad managers won't have anyone to stop them from doing what they want whenever they want. So, keep that in mind going forward.

We must come together to show them even though we are going to lose some awesome people, we have the next group of awesome people standing by to step up and continue the legacy of BRANCH 56. Otherwise, there will only be a couple of people trying to hold together this whole branch and we all know that won't work or suffice. So, I'm pleading with you BRANCH 56 let's STAND UNITED TOGETHER to continue to let this management know we're not going to stand by and let them destroy what we **All** have worked so hard to **BUILD AND PROTECT**. Since there are a lot of stewards that just started or not too long ago started their journey protecting the contract and our fellow brothers and sisters. We must work harder than ever to make damn sure we were prepared for the fight ahead of our branch. Let's show them we have the **BEST DAMN STEWARDS, WE'RE PROUD AND KNOWLEDGEABLE AND LET OUR MEMBERS AND MANAGEMENT KNOW WE'RE HERE TO STAY.**

I know it takes a lot of work on and off the clock to do what is expected of us, but when you love this branch, your brothers and sisters and take pride in what we do, we can accomplish anything we set out to do. So, I will finish with this: I challenge all members to strive to be the best Steward, best mentor and friends to one another. We all need to continue to work at getting better and more knowledgeable as stewards, as well as Branch 56 members overall. So, who is going to be the next Darrell Helsley, Chris Smith, Mindy Dekker, Amy Helsley, Jim Burns. Now is the time to start to learn from them and for them to start training the next generation. Yes, I know they're here for another year thankfully for us that they will be. So, Let's be proactive and look at the future of the branch.

Thank you for what you do. We are all family. Dysfunctional family but none the less we are family. Please take this article seriously.

John Adkins

My 1st time at a National Convention by Ulric Graham:

Classes: I liked that there were a variety of topics for those of us that are brand new to the whole union process. It was also great that there were Q&A sessions at the end so anyone could ask as detailed questions as possible and still get a satisfactory answer. Only downside was that it seemed so many took the Q&A sessions as excuse to overdramatize their situations at times.

General Session: though most of the technical resolutions and amendments seemed over my head, a few times, it was nice to be part of the voting process and seeing how

even with thousands of people there, everything was seemingly organized and efficiently moved along. Again, another downside seemed to be when people used the privilege to over dramatize their situation.

Booth area: being new to the USPS and UNION delegate, it was nice to finally clear up what a lot of the acronyms for various things are. NBA, MDA are just an example of two I always got mixed up as the sound similar when you say them but are two different things. Also learned about things I didn't know existed like the Auxiliary is an organization that family and friends of NALC members can join to help NALC members. Overall: it was a great experience overall. Waiting on the train both times was annoying but better than being stuck in construction on the highway. I will definitely participate again.

Bad Pork, Electric Dreams, and a violent Rainbow from West Virginia.....

As I looked around the room staring at what could be described at first glance by an outsider as a weight watchers first step meeting, filled with obese branch members proudly wearing their local colors, I thought to myself "How in the shit did I end up here?" Where was I? An International Geriatric Moped Rally?? No, I was deep in the stomach of the 2022 National Association of Letter Carriers BI-ANNUAL Convention in Chicago Ill.

At approximately 5am On Sunday August 7th, the day before the convention was set to start, I met Ulric Graham (AKA convention beast) at the Train Station. Months earlier the branch had decided by consensus that the train was the way the branch would travel to Chicago, so naturally Ulric and I were the only ones taking it. It soon became apparent as to why none of our seasoned convention comrades were choosing this route to Chicago. Fifteen minutes into the experience all romantic notions of train travel one may have from yesteryear go away. There is only one class these days, steerage. By the time we arrived in Chicago 4 hours later, Ulric and I knew what it must have been like to be an Immigrant on their way to the promised land in the latter half of the 19th century. After arriving and waiting just 10 short hours for the rest of the branch, we were ready to take get this party started! Ulric and I were convention virgins, we were armed with credentials and a fun bag! so much to experience, so much to learn.

Day one consisted of a morning class about the future vehicle of the brand, we did the class as a branch (minus the Beast), Then proceeded into the largest room I had ever been in, filled with letter carriers from all over the United States, Young and Old, Men and women, Fat and Super Fat getting fatter by the second. We were the branch closest to the stage for the K.I.M region. We sat right behind Branch 82 out of Portland Oregon. After an hour of opening statements by the Executive Board, Fredric Rolando, President of the National Association of Letter Carriers came to the stage. He opened the convention riding high on a victory in congress, recently overturning a 15-year law created by the Lizard people to destroy the Postal Service, The Reptiles had lost, and we could celebrate. As the week progressed it became apparent that every politician that could make it to the Convention wanted to make it clear to every letter

carrier, that they had always been an avid fan of the recently passed legislation. After a daily barrage of Politicians standing on their bucket, it would be time for the Amendments, but on Wednesday this would be paused for a spell, for it was time to nominate the brothers and sister who would lead our union into the future. One of those shinning stars who was nominated, I had read about a few years earlier and found some of his literature to be interesting. He had made some videos on YouTube back in 2016 that were not boring and full of controversy. I heard a rumor he was once arrested at a convention. So when the time came for Rolando to ask "will anyone be running against Brian Renfro (Rolando was retiring and Executive vice President Renfro was running hopefully unopposed), and in a dark corner of the room a young man said to the chagrin of the Rolando crowd and most of the body " I would like to nominate DAVID NOBLE" Followed by a wave of boo's I knew something exciting was happening. The man that came to the microphone that day resembled in almost no way the man I had watched in the videos. He had obviously climbed into a bag of Doritos in 2016 and had only escaped out of it 4 minutes before his nomination. He wore a white shirt. White was not a good choice for a guy who obviously had an insatiable desire for fruit punch Gatorade. Einstein had spent more time combing his hair than this guy. He resembled someone who a been victim to multiple lightning strikes from different storms, but within the same year. Noble had worked for headquarters in the 80's and in 1993 he had exposed expenditure account abuses by the Vincent R. Sombrotto executive board. According to Noble, the Rolandoist and Sombrottoist loathed and shunned Noble still to this day for his virtutis act so many years earlier. As the nominations continued Noble would submit imaginary branch members to challenge every executive office up for election. He owned mid-day Wednesday. This was his Carnival and for the next two hours we all had free passes to the show. I admired his tenacity, but I feel like he may have been 28 years past his prime and his sharpest years were behind him. After the nominations the whereabouts of David Noble became as obscure and as unknown as the "Huddle" had become at every station in Grand Rapids.

For hours Branch 82 continued to give what felt like a wet willie of continuous Green Energy proposals that were beyond comprehension. Well intentioned, environmentally responsible yet a one size fits all solution to the postal services fossil fuel consumption. Going 100 percent electric before 2030. My father is an avid ambassador for nature, and I have lived more than half of my adult life in the Hippie west, I am no stranger to the ideas of making the world a better cleaner place for future generations, yet these guys were a bit too much, even for me. It was time for food.

I walked into the concession area and waited in line for a pulled pork sandwich that would have been disappointing if it were from a gas station, yet it was the star of the convention at only \$17 a pop. Normally I would have had two, but I want to have enough money to retire before I am 86.

I returned to the Main Hall about a half an hour later, Branch 82 was finishing up a proposal that was asking for the work week to be 3 days, and every carrier start out with 17 weeks of vacation at their disposal. After an overwhelming rejection, Rolando

started to introduce his next guest. Fitting that after all the Environmental proposals, the guest would naturally be the National President of the Coal Miners Union. In Fred Rolando's almost Monotone voice, with about as much electricity as a cabin in the western Upper peninsula, He introduced "Cecil Roberts".

With-in one minute of this small, thickly accented West Virginian man's coming on stage though, the entire crowd was quit. He had managed to capture the audience's attention with his voice. Both honest and good ole boy ensue. Celil Roberts embodied what I had imagined what a Union should be. He reminded us as to why we were there, why we were in a Union in the first place. He reminded us in a genuine demeanor, one that the politicians who previously had been on stage could only dream of emulating, "That Goddamit, we were the workers"!

That divided we were weak, but in Solidarity we could not be stopped! He reminded us that men 150 years ago men had fought in solidarity against the most autocratic Corporations, Corporations that cared not about enslaving children for their venal profit and those men who had fought the corporate swine had won! Shaming the Capricious Barons of industry, showing them who actually does the work and creates the wealth! He reminded us that sword of Worker solidarity must be honed regularly, or we will perish. He reminded us that "WE" the workers created the middle class, not the Industrialist! Not a damn thing has ever been given to us, we have had to fight for everything we have.

We were in Chicago after all, just blocks from the site of the Haymarket Massacre, the incident that started May Day worldwide. His words resonated with us all, for a moment we were all coal minors, steelworkers, railroad workers, we were all reminded of the injustices that can come if we are not unified. That despotic forces are at hand trying to divide us. He shared of some recent injustices to workers in his own industry and shared that through solidarity how Injustices can be righted. We the many, are the powerful he orated. By the end of his passionate speech, He got a standing, screaming in joy ovation. One of the first to stand was the orator of all the branch 82 clean air proposals. I swear like myself the Echo warrior was crying. Cecil Roberts was the real deal, He verbalized why I love being in a union, I was lucky to witness his speech and will never forget it as long as I live. At age 46, I had figured most of those moments were long gone. I didn't know it, but perhaps Cecil Roberts was why I went to the National convention in the first place.

The following days were filled with learning about the direction of the Postal service and things to watch out for. More proposals and learning about the 1970 wildcat strike. Nothing that came after though compared to the Coal Rainbow of West Virginia. The Beast and I parted with the Branch on Friday for our 12-hour journey back home. In this piece I may have been critical of some of the characters, but aside from the pulled pork this truly was an amazing experience. I will certainly be back; I hope you will come too. **Adam Umlor**

OPEN SEASON NOVEMBER 14 THRU DECEMBER 12

Type of Enrollment	Enrollment Code	Premium Rate			
		Biweekly		Monthly	
		Gov't Share	Your Share	Gov't Share	Your Share
High Option Self Only	321	\$259.72	\$102.98	\$562.73	\$223.12
High Option Self Plus One	323	\$560.52	\$241.73	\$1,214.46	\$523.75
High Option Self and Family	322	\$611.42	\$211.30	\$1,324.74	\$457.82
CDHP Option Self Only	324	\$167.18	\$55.73	\$362.23	\$120.74
CDHP Option Self Plus One	326	\$368.86	\$122.95	\$799.19	\$266.40
CDHP Option Self and Family	325	\$396.08	\$132.03	\$858.18	\$286.06
Value Option Self Only	KM1	\$137.22	\$45.74	\$297.31	\$99.10
Value Option Self Plus One	KM3	\$302.71	\$100.90	\$655.87	\$218.62
Value Option Self and Family	KM2	\$325.22	\$108.40	\$704.63	\$234.88

So, what should you consider when making this decision? Although many individuals consider the premium amount first, which is important, you also should thoroughly review the benefit structure and patient liability that may be passed down to you. Examples of these costs may include deductible, coinsurance, copayments, and the maximum out-of-pocket amount for the year. Unfortunately, these amounts can add up quickly depending on the required care.

It also is very important to review the health plan networks to determine if your individual and family needs will be met within the area you live or locations where you may travel. While some insurers may place strict perimeters around which health care providers, hospitals, and pharmacies you can use, others may only encourage members to use their network to obtain the most comprehensive and cost-effective benefit package. Be sure that you understand how the insurance network operates and determine whether you can continue to see your current providers. Specialties to consider include primary care, physical therapists, and chiropractic care.

Another area to consider is wellness programs and incentives. From weight loss, certain preventive care, to helping you kick the nicotine habit and much more, these programs can be beneficial to your overall certain facilities, urgent care centers and more health and wallet.

In summary, health care insurance can be complicated, but considering the following questions can be a good place to start:

- Should I pay more for premiums each month, or less for the premiums and more for the health benefits when I need care?
- How much health care do my family and I use on an annual basis?
- Do I want low-deductible or high-deductible plan?
- Is my provider, facility, or pharmacy in the network?
- Do I have any upcoming surgeries or medical needs?
- What kind of prescriptions am I currently taking, and will the insurer cover them?
- What wellness programs and incentives are offered?

With that said, it would be remiss of me not to ask you to include the NALC Health Benefit Plan in your comparison. I believe you will find that we are a competitive choice for all your health insurance needs. From premiums and outstanding benefits to a network of quality providers for your medical care, we are an outstanding choice.

Lastly, if you are feeling overwhelmed, remember that we are here to help. If you do not understand one of our benefits or need a better explanation, please make sure to reach out to us. We want to make sure you have what you need to make an informed decision.

Although the new 2023 updates have not been added yet, we encourage you to become familiar with our website's Open Season page, where you can view short video clips about key benefits, read through brochures, and check out a great comparison slideshow, "What to consider when choosing a health plan."

So, ladies and gentlemen I figured I would let the Director of the NALC health Benefit Plan, kind of give you some info. There are the new Rates for the High option, CDHP and Value option. those are in the newsletter also. You can go to Nalc.Org click on Health Benefits Plan on top of the page, that will give you a lot of information.

Thanks again,

Your HBR

Mike S.



NOTICE TO ALL CARRIERS!

CITIBANK HAS BEEN HAVING PROBLEMS ESTABLISHING NEW CREDIT CARD
ACCOUNTS FOR UNIFORMS.

IT IS AN ISSUE THAT SHARED SERVICES IS WORKING TO FIX.

YOUR CITIBANK CARD IS NON FORWARDEABLE AND ARRIVES JUST LIKE
EVERY OTHER CREDIT CARD.

CCAS RECEIVE UNIFORM VOUCHERS.

THE VOUCHERS ARE SENT VIA CERTIFIED MAIL.

PLEASE GO ONLINE ON LITEBLUE AND UPDATE YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS WITH
THE POSTAL SERVICE.

SIMPLY DOING A CHANGE OF ADDRESS WILL NOT UPDATE YOUR HOME ADDRESS
THAT IS ON FILE.

WHEN A CCA ORDERS ONLINE – PLEASE CONTACT THE COMPANY TO EMAIL MICHELLE
DIRECTLY. SHE NEEDS THE INVOICE FOR PAYMENT.

MICHELLE.L.SCULLY@USPS.GOV

PLEASE NOTIFY BRANCH 56 WHEN YOU
CHANGE YOUR MAILING ADDRESS.
MAIL CHANGES TO: 1680 VIEWPOND DR SUITE A
KENTWOOD, MI 49508
OR
EMAIL: Nalc56vp@comcast.net
PHONE: (616) 458-8611

National Association of Letter
Carriers Branch 56
1680 Viewpond Suite A
Kentwood, MI 49508

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Branch meetings are the
first Thursday of each month

Branch training is the last
Tuesday of each month

**ALL MEMBERS ARE
WELCOME**

Food and refreshments are
provided.

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