

BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C.  
"THE WASATCH BRANCH"

# The Pavement Pounder

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May—june 2014

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SAT., MAY 10, 2014

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# The Nelson News

Jeff Nelson, President.



*“Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush”~Doug Larson*

Spring is finally here, and it tends to bring a spring to the step of a letter carrier, especially after a long, hard winter. To me, it is the best time of year to be out delivering the route. During this season, make an effort to talk to every non-member in your office, encouraging them to join the union. We are truly blessed with a great job, and remind the scabs in your office that it would not be nearly as great of a career with the benefits we have, if it weren't for the union. So many union brothers & sisters have fought to maintain our rights so we could have a livable wage, health benefits, leave to use for illness and recreation, and so many other betterments to our job.

Make sure that whenever you use your leave (whether it is sick, annual, or LWOP), you always fill out your own PS 3971. I've seen too many times when someone uses one that management has so kindly generated for them, only to find out later that it was incorrect, either with inaccurate comments, or the wrong type of leave. It takes a little longer to fill out your own, but since you do it on the clock, it shouldn't be a problem.

As always, I would encourage everyone to come out to union meetings, which take place the second Thursday of every month @ 6:30 pm. Some of the things coming up which will be taking place or needing action taken include:

The Food Drive, Utah AFL-CIO convention, National Convention, Regional Convention, legislative updates, updates to changes with our jobs, changes in management, new scanners, and officer elections at the end of the year, just to name a few. Plus, it's nice to catch up with carriers from other offices you may not have seen for a while. And if that's not enough for you, we have the door prize drawings, and the progressive drawings (with the largest one up to almost \$1100). Make an effort to come out and attend your union meeting, since this is your union. We all can do more to be more active to help Branch 111 and the rest of the NALC to thrive and progress.

Last of all, one of the other exciting changes that is taking place is that our own Michael Wahlquist is returning back to us. As most of you know, Mike served in various positions in the Branch, including Vice President & President, before he was most recently working as a Regional Administrative Assistant at the Regional office in Vancouver, Washington. Everyone I've talked to is anxious to have this great union activist back with us, and he has already agreed to continue to help shortly with investigating & processing grievances at the Formal level. I hope all of you join with me in expressing your gratitude to Mike for all of his hard work at so many levels for our union.

Thanks go out to all our stewards & alternate stewards (some of which are new, due to elections) and to everyone else that donates of their time or finances to support the NALC. If you need anything, please let me or one of the other officers know.

In solidarity,

Jeff Nelson

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have something to say or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	want to make others aware.....?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Send in your ideas or articles to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jones255@xmission.net	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Visit the Branch 111 Website**  
<http://branch111.com/index.htm>

# Be aware of AWOL

## By Kim Mortensen

AWOL (absent without leave) has been showing up on the paychecks of letter carriers, both full time regulars, as well as city carriers assistants. There have recently been changes with the TACS office, compounding issues with pay and leave. What has been happening is, even when management in your office runs the leave type you requested, there have been situations when that leave has been changed. On top of this, there are supervisors and managers that have been known to run carriers AWOL, regardless of the leave type requested or whether the situation fit the criteria for AWOL. There are very few circumstances where AWOL is appropriate.

It is never a good idea to sign a computer generated 3971 (leave slip). You have the right to complete your own, all too often the computer generated leave slip does not accurately reflect the leave you requested. If you are presented with a computer generated leave slip for AWOL, do not sign it! Manually fill out a 3971, request the leave desired, and most importantly, **notify your shop steward.**

Management has instructions which must be followed regarding AWOL, the F 21 (USPS manual on timekeeping and attendance) section 393 states: *All employees who are absent without notification or permission are considered AWOL pending the receipt of the facts in each case. AWOL is an administrative matter which is to be handled by the head of the installation for purposes of making a final time recording disposition. In all cases of AWOL which come to the attention of the timekeeper, he should notify the appropriate supervisor. The matter then becomes the responsibility of the supervisor to resolve.*

What this means is that management must determine the facts in each case. It does not mean that if your request for unscheduled leave is recorded five minutes after you are scheduled to begin tour, you are AWOL. It does not mean if you have exhausted your sick leave, annual leave and they don't wish to run you LWOP, you are AWOL. AWOL is an administrative matter, it is not a leave type like LWOP or sick leave. Discipline generally follows once AWOL has been run, so again do not sign a slip for AWOL!

Stewards, if this is an issue in your office, and you need guidance with a grievance, Branch 111 has many good decisions on it. The F 21 is a great resource, as well as numerous other handbooks and manuals.

Kimberly Mortensen



### NALC HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN

My article this time will be HEALTH BENEFITS and RETIREMENT PREPARATION.

#### HEALTH BENEFITS:

I found out from our NALC HEALTH BENEFIT PLANS ELIGIBILITY DEPARTMENT that all new hires (cca's), and that means those who are 360 days or less or if you are on your second 360 days. Both of you who fall in that category must call HRSSC, (HR Services) to request information and sign-up forms to get health insurance. The number to call is 1-877-477-3273 option 5. There is a time limit to sign up when you get the information. I have a copy of the Postal Plan and the NALC Health Plan and also all of the other FEHB Plans. If you would want to meet with me and go over any of those plans, I would be willing to meet with you. Just call and we will set up an appointment. HR Services is the one to call to get the premium prices. I have NALC'S premium prices.

#### RETIREMENT:

If anyone is going to retire this year or within the next two years you need to have some savings set aside. It is probably still taking about four months from your last day of work to get your final lifetime monthly payment. Your first few payments you get are your last two weeks of work with your annual leave payout, if you have annual leave left. After that OPM sends you about 80% of what you should get for the rest of your life. These are called interim checks. On the interim checks it shows what they take out. Take Outs: Federal tax, State tax, Life insurance, Health insurance. After those you have to still pay all your other expenses. For example, Utilities, house payment, gasoline, other monetary debts, any excess medical, dental. All these things add up. Also if you're not eligible for social security, you'll only be able to live off of your Postal annuity. Some of you may be able to qualify for the social security supplement (you will need to check that out before you retire). If you already have about 2-3 thousand saved you might be ok for those 4 months of waiting. Another way to have quick cash is to not use your annual leave for about a year and a half. With your last two weeks of work before retirement and the saved one and a half year of annual your last pay check out the door could be close to \$ 10,400 plus before taxes etc. A grade two carrier a little more. That would give you for sure about \$3000 to last those 4 months of waiting for OPM to finalize your retirement. You could also set aside every pay day \$100 or \$150 for one to two years. You may not want to use your TSP prior to retirement otherwise it is considered an inservice withdrawal because you are still a Postal employee. It would also limit your withdrawal options after retirement. Bottom Line PREPARE for your retirement. Think of ways to save.

We'll be doing another retirement class soon. We might try a Friday night. I'll keep you informed.

# Applying for Disability Retirement



## Eligibility Requirements

You must meet all of the following conditions to be eligible for disability retirement:

- You must have completed at least 18 months of Federal civilian service which is creditable under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).
- You must, while employed in a position subject to the retirement system, have become disabled, because of disease or injury, for useful and efficient service in your current position.
- The disability must be expected to last at least one year.
- Your agency must certify that it is unable to accommodate your disabling medical condition in your present position and that it has considered you for any vacant position in the same agency at the same grade or pay level, within the same commuting area, for which you are qualified for reassignment.
- You, or your guardian or other interested person, must apply before your separation from service or within one year thereafter. The application must be received by either OPM or your former employing agency within one year of the date of your separation. This time limit can be waived only if you were mentally incompetent on the date of separation or within one year of this date.

You must apply for social security disability benefits. Application for disability retirement under FERS requires an application for social security benefits. If the application for social security disability benefits is withdrawn for any reason, OPM will dismiss the FERS disability retirement application upon notification by the Social Security Administration.

## Applying for FERS Disability Retirement

You must complete the following forms:

- SF 3107, Application for Immediate Retirement, and
- SF 3112, Documentation In Support of Disability Retirement

If you are under age 62, documentation that you have applied for social security disability benefits after you separated from your agency.

### **If you have been separated from Federal service for 31 days or less**

Your employing agency will help you complete these forms and will forward the completed forms to OPM. However, it is your responsibility to obtain all of the information necessary for OPM to make a decision on your claim. This includes providing all of the required forms and documents.

### **If you have been separated from Federal service for more than 31 days**

Your application for disability retirement must be received by OPM within one year after the date of your separation. If you have been separated from Federal service for more than 31 days, your former employing agency may no longer have your personnel records. They may not be able to recover them in time to process your disability retirement application and submit it to OPM within the one-year time limit. Therefore, you should submit your application directly to OPM rather than to your agency. At the following address

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Retirement Operations Center  
Post Office Box 45  
Boyers, PA 16017

- Ask your former supervisor and employing agency to complete SF 3112B, SF 3112D and SF 3112E and give them to you so you can send them to OPM.
- If you think you will not have the completed package in time to meet the one-year time limit, send OPM the completed SF 3107 and SF 3112A, along with the name, address and telephone number of the person(s) you have asked to complete the remaining forms.

## Periodic Medical Exams to Keep Your Disability Benefit

When they approve your application for disability retirement, they may determine that based on your medical condition you will periodically have to provide us with current medical information in order to continue receiving benefits. You are responsible for paying for any medical exams that are needed. If you do not fulfill the request for evidence of continuing disability, it is likely that your benefit payments could be suspended until your continuing eligibility is established.

## Termination of FERS Disability Benefit

If you are under age 60, your benefit will stop if:

- You are found to be medically recovered from your disabling condition;
- In any calendar year your income from wages and self-employment is at least 80 percent of the current rate of basic pay from the position you retired from (also known as restoration to earning capacity); or



- You are reemployed in the Federal service in a position equivalent to what you held at retirement (also called “administratively recovered”).

### Disability Retirement Computation

FERS disability benefits are computed in different ways depending on the annuitant’s age and amount of service at retirement. In addition, FERS disability retirement benefits are recomputed after the first twelve months and again at age 62, if the annuitant is under age 62 at the time of disability retirement.

#### FERS Disability Computation if

- Age 62 or older at retirement, or
- Meet the age and service requirements for immediate voluntary retirement
- You receive your “earned” annuity based on the general FERS annuity computation, as follows

Age	Formula
<b>If age 62 or older at retirement with less than 20 years of service, or</b> <b>Under age 62 qualified for an immediate voluntary retirement</b>	1 percent of your high-3 average salary for each year of service
<b>If age 62 or older with 20 or more years of service</b>	1.1 percent of your high-3 average salary for each year of service

#### FERS Disability Computation if

- Under age 62 at retirement, and

Under Age 62	Formula
<b>For the first 12 months</b>	60% of your high-3 average salary minus 100% of your Social security benefit for any month in which you are entitled to Social Security benefits. However, you are entitled to your “earned” annuity, if it is larger than this amount.
<b>After the first 12 months</b>	40% of your high-3 average salary minus 60% of your Social Security disability benefits. However, you are entitled to your “earned” annuity, if it is larger than this amount.
<b>When you reach age 62 your annuity will be</b> <b>Recomputed using an amount that essentially</b> <b>represents the annuity you would have received</b> <b>if you had continued working until the day</b> <b>before your 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday and then retired</b> <b>under FERS.</b>	If your actual service, plus the credit for time as a disability annuitant equals less than 20 years:: 1 percent of your high-3 average salary for each year of service. If your actual service, plus the credit for time as a disability annuitant equals 20 or more years: 1.1 percent of your high-3 average salary for each year of service. Total Service used in the computation: will be increased by the amount of time you have received a disability annuity. Average Salary used in the computation: will be increased by all FERS cost-of-living increases paid during the time you received a disability annuity.

If I can be of any assistance please call;  
Terry C Ehlers (801) 694-0558

Information was taken from OPM website.

# UTAH UNIONS AND YOU *Night*

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**6:35pm FIREWORKS GAME!**

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Join The NALC and other local unions at the ballpark. Bring the whole family out for the game and fireworks after.

Sign up for COLCPE and receive a free ticket for the game.

For Tickets call Chad Mortensen (801)-726-9364

Jeff Nelson (801) 205-3015

## Legislative Report

What is COLCPE? Committee on Letter Carriers Political Education COLCPE helps elect candidates who support Letter Carriers. COLCPE is the NALC's voice in Congress, by strengthening NALC's voice in Congress COLCPE protects our rights and the future of the Postal Service. The NALC does not use our Union dues for Legislative issues, are dues are used for contractual rights and to fight for our benefits. The Future of the Postal Service is in the hands of Congress and how it votes. It is important that everyone gives to COLCPE if you do not currently have the automatic \$5.00 deduction from your Payroll get with your local Shop Steward and they can help you sign up or you can log on NALC.org

Rick Watson, Stephanie Wood, Phil Rodriquez, and Chad Mortensen all just returned from Legislative training in Vancouver, up there we meet with other Region 2 carriers and discussed are plan of attack this year. We talked about what type of activities have worked and what areas need improvement in order to help get our message out.

Chad Mortensen



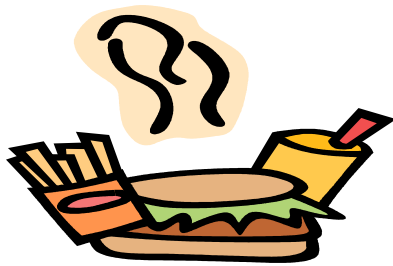
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