

Pavement Pounder

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

Publication 2021.03

March 2021



UNIFORMS NEEDED



**Clean out your closets and help Branch 111 Carriers.
All sizes and items needed!**

Please drop off clean, good condition items to the
Union Hall or with your Steward.

For retirees: if you are unable to make it to the Union Hall, please call 801-973-6705 to make arrangements.

The President's Report

American Rescue Plan Act & The Ratified Contract

It has been a busy four weeks since my last Article: The contract is ratified and the American Rescue Plan is now the law! Over 94% of participating eligible members voted to accept the contract with the final tally being: 60,111 for, and 3,341 against. More than that combined total declined to vote, which is a sad statement considering how easy it was to do so. The date of ratification was 3-8-21.

I gave the highlights of the new contract in a previous article, but I need to go over the most relevant timelines in this article. The Post Office will do pay adjustments for back-pay “as soon as practicable” (including back-pay for people who retired since 11-23-19). I would guess, based on the implementation of the last contract, that this will occur sometime this Summer. The new step (Step P) will come into being on 11-19-22. CCAs with 24 months of service will be automatically converted to PTF status within 60 days of ratification. The ability to earn Annual Leave in lieu of Holiday Pay will start with the holiday occurring 7-4-21. Starting no later than 60 days from ratification, MSP Scans will no longer be used. Local Memorandum Of Understanding negotiations will begin 4-29-21 and will be completed on 5-28-21. If anybody has questions about the new contract please feel free to call me, talk to your Steward, or go to www.nalc.org for the answers.

Yesterday, President Biden signed the “American Rescue Plan Act” into law. According to CBS:

“The American Rescue Plan provides \$1,400 direct payments to individuals making up to \$75,000 annually, \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments and \$14 billion for vaccine distribution. The bill also provides \$130 billion to elementary, middle and high schools to assist with safe reopening.”

In addition to this, the Act also grants much needed leave to Letter Carriers who have to take time off work for COVID-19 related issues. If you remember, The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act expired 12-31-20, so Letter Carriers have had a hard time obtaining COVID-19 related leave for the last 2-1/2 months. According to NALC.org, the “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARPA):

“provides up to 600 hours of paid leave for each full-time employee or a proportional equivalent for part-time employees at a capped rate of \$35 per hour and no more than \$1,400 per week. The bill also carries forward the same COVID-related reasons for using the leave that were included in the FFCRA but adds new reasons, such as getting vaccinated.

While the FFCRA required leave be paid at only 2/3 rate for certain reasons, this bill contains no such reduction in the rate the leave is paid. A \$570 million fund is included to pay for the leave.

Workers' compensation language that presumes a positive COVID-19 diagnosis for postal (and federal) employees as work-related. The presumption would authorize benefits such as medical, disability and survivor benefits for workers who contracted COVID-19 in the three-year period beginning January 27, 2020 and ending January 27, 2023.

While all of this seems fantastic, our experience with the USPS during the last 12 months in dealing with anything COVID-19 related has taught us that USPS policy will change many times while their lawyers and experts figure out exactly how to implement the provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act. After the CARES Act was signed into law, it seemed that USPS policy changed weekly, and the NALC developed an alternative dispute resolution process at the national level to deal with individual situations on a case-by-case basis. I am sure that in the coming weeks we will see similar “scrambling” as the USPS tries to figure out how they will deal with this new law.

The best advice that I can give is: If you have symptoms of COVID-19 don't come to work and go and get tested. If you have been quarantined by a doctor, or by a State Official, stay at home while quarantined. If your child is out of school due to a COVID-19 related closing and you need to take care of them, do so. The NALC will get the ever-changing information about the “American Rescue Plan Act” dispersed as quickly as we can, including how the USPS is dealing with it, but please be patient as things can change quickly.

I received my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine a couple of days ago (based on age qualification in the State of Utah), and I can say that for me the process was quick and nearly painless. To get information about getting the vaccination, go to www.coronavirus.utah.gov.

Thanks again for serving our community as “Front-Line Essential Workers”! (Even if the Governor still does not acknowledge us as such.)

Michael Wahlquist – President

Branch 111, NALC

Please Support Your Stewards

It takes a special kind of person to do Union work and anyone who has done it knows how stressful it can be. As a Carrier, think about how many issues can arise in your day-to-day Postal life. Being mandated, having leave denied, crazy hours, injuries, or being disciplined by a difficult manager. Now multiply those issues by 30 or 40 for every Carrier in the office. This is the task your steward faces everyday. It is a thankless job that I can never fully describe. We do it because we care about helping and protecting out fellow Letter Carriers -- ALL OF THEM -- regardless of their personalities or circumstances. Steward work is not for everyone and there are many stewards in our Branch that are struggling to continue the work. Without a doubt, the phone call I receive most often from stewards is a call needing nothing more than words of encouragement during a challenging time. I do my best to express my understanding that I know exactly how they are feeling.

Please encourage your stewards, tell them thank you for doing a job that most Carriers are not willing to do, and please remember there are going to be times that stewards are fighting grievances that you don't understand or agree with. Please trust that your stewards will fight for EVERYONE and one day it might be you that needs the help.

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Early in my career I never really thought I would be a steward but I am grateful that I took the opportunity to help my co-workers. I am proud of the work I do and I am proud of my fellow stewards. Hang in there stewards, you are appreciated.

In Solidarity
Mike Hansen

UNION MEETING, Branch 111 April 8, 2021, 6:30 pm

- Go to zoom.us on your computer or download the Zoom app on your phone
-
- Click Join a meeting
-
- Enter Meeting ID 989 001 1306
-
- Change your screen name to your name
-
- Click "Join"
-
- Password: branch111
-

Log on early to avoid any issues logging in.

Sadly, and as many of you may have already heard, the annual food drive has been postponed. Thankfully, the NALC Donor Drive has been carried over from last year and financial donations are being accepted. I encourage all of you to talk with your local management and see if you can set something up in your individual offices. With the ongoing pandemic, many individuals and families are suffering from food insecurity and do not know when or how they will get their next meal. Letter carriers have had an important role in our communities year after year in helping to lessen the struggle for many. Let's get those donations coming in and help our community during this stressful time. You can donate to any of the following Utah Food Banks:

Bountiful Community Food Pantry
Cache Community Food Pantry
Open Doors
Utah Food Bank

Box Elder Food Pantry
Catholic Community Services
Tabitha's Way

As always, the food bank at the Union Hall will also accept your non-perishable food donations.

The NALC also has a Disaster Relief Foundation that was established in 2018 to help members who have been affected by natural disasters. For those of you who are Amazon shoppers, an easy way to help is to sign up to support the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation through smile.amazon.org. Once you have signed up, make sure you shop the Amazon Smile website and Amazon will donate a portion of all qualifying purchases to the Foundation. It is a simple way to help our brothers and sisters who have been devastated by natural disasters. And the best thing, it doesn't cost you anything extra!

Finally, 2021 seems to be looking a bit brighter with the new NALC/USPS contract being ratified, the new stimulus plan, more paid leave for COVID related absences and (hopefully) everyone being able to be vaccinated within the next 6-8 weeks. I'm sure there will be a lot of information to be shared as we dig further into these things and learn more about what they mean for us as letter carriers. In the meantime, please take care of yourselves, your families and each other!

Amie B. Gallo
Vice President

NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
March 11, 2021

The meeting was conducted remotely using Zoom software.

Convened at 6:30 pm

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Mike Simonsen,

Moment of Silence for Carrie Strickland and Jack Raymond who have passed away.

Roll Call by Steve McNees

Minutes of the February meeting were posted. Without objection, they will be filed for future reference.

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees.

none

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

Simon Zivny, Tanner Jones, Mick Cross, Maxwell Martinez, Bobbie Gallup, Elizabeth Thorson, Alexandria Oliva, Brandon Parker, Austin Rosado, Kelly Sanchez, Robert Pioch, Jacob Williford, Chad Hurst, Julie Montgomery, Faisal Ways, Deirdre Flynn, John Cassidy, Robert Balken II, Daniel Delgado, Susana Miramontes, Ellysha Jones, Connor Jensen, Andrew Kazal, Celeste Neville, Christopher Melendez, James Burke, Hector Garcia

LCPF by Josh Thibodeau – not present

MDA COORDINATOR by Jeremy Bailey

•We are definitely going to have a bowling event later this year when it will be safe. •The summer party will be at the Murray Aquatic Park on either June 26th or June 12th.

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen

•The state legislative session is done. They created a definition of what an apprenticeship program is (going through trades training, not occupational schooling). •Nationally the House passed the PRO act that protects workers organizing. It is going to the Senate where they are hopeful it will pass. •HR695 & SB145 would eliminate health benefits pre-funding. Contact your legislators and encourage them to vote for these bills. •It is party convention time. You are encouraged to become a delegate for your party. It is the delegates who pick who is running for office. It would be good to pick Letter Carrier friendly and labor friendly candidates.

TRUSTEES by Chad Mortensen

• They met last Tuesday and reviewed last month's books. It went smooth and easy with everything in order. Let trustee know if you have questions about the budget, checks, or would like to see the books.

MBA, COMPENSATION by Bob Jewell

• Changes are coming to ECOMP by August. It will be more user friendly (web based). Users will be able to go online and see all of their information related to their compensation case. Now you can only see the forms. They are trying to get everyone to register with OWCP on ECOMP. If something happens you can quickly get on your phone, tablet, or a computer and file a CA-1 (report of injury). You can also use a computer at work. This will get around management submitting (or not) your claim through Human Resources. Bob advises all active carrier to get registered on ECOMP (www.ecomp.dol.gov).

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

Nothing new on our national health plan.

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist

In the last month he has met with 56 new CCA and signed up 55 of them. One in Holladay hasn't sign up yet.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Justin Lindquist

Start filling out the form 1767 instead of just arguing about unsafe working conditions with your supervisor. The form documents safety issues. Then make sure they are getting processed. If you fill out a 1767, send a copy to Justin or the union office so he can make sure management is processing and addressing them correctly. Get your office safety captain involved also.

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay

Planning on a retiree's dinner probably the end of October or the first part of November. Jeff will be paying for all retirees that go to the steak fry this year (from the retirees' funds). He is also planning a great Christmas party.

TREASURER by Mike Madsen

• LM2, spreadsheets are all made and he is already completing the form. The IRS 990 spreadsheets are done and will be filed electronically (for the first time) this year.

VICE PRESIDENT by Amie Gallo - excused

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT by Mike Hansen

The Zoom password will be “branch111” for all meetings from now on.

•Grievance report: 550 filed so far this year. •Case filing is all caught up.

•Those 50 and older, BMIs over 30, diabetes and some other conditions can now get vaccinated. By April or May, everyone should be able to get their shots.

Pres. Biden signed the new Covid Rescue bill, similar to Family First, for federal workers who need to use leave for Covid related issues (childcare, school closing, covid, etc). •Another bill was signed for \$570 million allocated for federal workers to use for Covid related problems, including 600 hours of leave. There is also vaccine leave to get vaccinated or for complications with vaccinations. Goes until Sept 30th. There is no more 2/3 limitation as in Family First. The plan can be used for virtual learning for your kids. See nalc.org for more info.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist

•New Covid Stimulus Plan (posted on nalc.org): It establishes a federal emergency leave fund, for federal and postal employees, replacing the 2020 Family First (FFCA) program that expired December 31st. It provides up to 600 hours of paid leave for each full-time employee with a proportional amount to part time workers. Same covid related reasons as in the FFCA but includes getting vaccinated. This bill has no 2/3 reduction like the previous bill. Workers Compensation language presumes a positive Covid-19 diagnosis for employees as work related. Benefits include medical, disability, and survivor benefits for workers who contract Covid for a 3-year period beginning January 27, 2020. This is very good news !!

•The Executive Board anticipates having a physical branch meeting in May. •Zoom meeting in April.

•Planning a June summer party, a steak fry in August, and a retiree party in late fall. •Covid report: cases are way down in our branch. There was trouble at Sandy main office, otherwise there was only a couple others in the last two weeks.

SPECIAL ORDERS:

• Executive board approved a motion to spend up to \$15,000 to renovate the branch office (flooring, paint, etc). It has been at least 25 years since there has been any work done on the office. Motion passed (25 for and 5 against).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS: none

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:

• Next year the Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor School will be held in Utah the week of July 14th. This will be a great union activity. •Seventeen USPS districts have been eliminated to save money. The Salt Lake district will be combined with the Las Vegas district. We don't know who will be moving or where.

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE: none

UNION (ZOOM) MEETING

April 8th 6:30

- Meeting ID 989 001 1306 Click “Join” and the Password: branch111

Log on early to avoid any issues logging in.

National Association of Letter Carriers
2261 South Redwood Road, Suite 14
Salt Lake City, Utah 84119

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Keep on delivering!!!

The financial records of the Union are available to be looked at by any Branch 111 member, in the Union Office, by appointment.

PRESIDENT
Mike Wahlquist
**EXC. VICE-
PRESIDENT**
Mike Hansen
VICE-PRESIDENT
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Mike Madsen
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the
“Wasatch Branch”

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