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

Pavement Pounder

Midvale - Millcreek -Murray - Northwest - Orem - Sandy - South Salt Lake - Sugarhouse - Tooele - West Jordan - West Valley

September 2021

Publication 2012.9

**Retiree's Dinner
September 22, 2021
12344 Minuteman Drive
Draper, Utah
Chuck -A-Rama
Retired Member
And 1 guest please.**

The President's Report

Attendance

The last year and a half have been brutal, and nothing in this article is meant to imply anything else. There have been Carriers who have had COVID, or who have had family members who have had COVID, or whose children's schools or daycare have shut down unexpectedly due to COVID, and a myriad of other issues that have made it impossible for people to be at work. Knowing this would be the case, the Union and the Postal Service agreed to the following memorandum that has been extended through September 30th of this month.

“Managers and supervisors should also allow liberal sick leave usage for employees who are sick, and liberal annual and leave without pay (LWOP) usage to the extent operationally feasible during this time period. If an employee requests leave for reasons related to COVID-19, such leave should be treated as scheduled (as opposed to unscheduled) leave. Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons between February 29, 2020, and May 17, 2020, [extended until September 30, 2021] may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM 511.43.”

This MOU expires on September 30th, but we do expect the Postal Service to extend it again. However, it should be noted that the EFEL (Emergency Federal Employee Leave) will expire September 30th, and it would take an Act of Congress to extend that. Despite the extension of this MOU, we have actually seen an increase in attendance related discipline over the last few months. This came as a surprise, since the parties obviously knew that COVID would have an impact on attendance and took steps to avoid wasting unnecessary time and resources dealing with COVID related absences. So, what is going on with all this attendance related discipline?

The Union has been very successful in defending attendance during the last year and a half, especially if the reason for not being at work was directly related to COVID. However, some attendance related discipline is starting to stick, and reason is that there are Letter Carriers who are having problems getting to work, and those reasons are not COVID related. So, let's talk about what can go wrong with attendance. There are two main components to attendance: being at work and being on time to work. The first component is when a Carrier is too ill or injured to work, and this will require a “sick call” (otherwise it could be considered AWOL...Absent Without Official Leave). The second component may just be a Carrier clocking in to work more than 8 units after their start time. Either of these things constitutes not being regular in attendance and may lead to discipline (if there are enough instances). I have seen Letter Carriers get to the point of removal for tardiness alone!

As for what constitutes too many incidents of not being regular in attendance, the contract simply states: *“Employees are required to be regular in attendance. Failure to be regular in attendance may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the Postal Service.”* There is no defined quantity of absence for which discipline is required, the amount is entirely subjective. This creates a very strange circumstance for most of us, because since there is no defined quantity, what flies in one office may not fly in another office. In other words, too many absences/tardies in one office may not equate to too many absences/tardies in another office. In fact, Carriers are often surprised when they receive discipline for the charge of “Failure to Maintain Assigned Schedule”.

So what can Letter Carriers do to avoid attendance related discipline? The answer that I have said for years is this: When you are sick, then stay home and be sick. When you are well, be at work. I have had Carriers call me and ask how sick (or injured) you have to be to call in sick. To this I always answer: I’m not a doctor, and even if I were, I don’t know how you feel. I have seen people call in sick for a sniffle, and others come to work hacking up their lungs (so to speak). The bottom line is that the only person who can make that determination is you.

There are a few things that I would mention here regarding calling in sick. First, if you do call in sick, don’t go to public places while you are on sick leave (unless it is for medical reasons). Also (and this should go without saying) if you ignore the previous sentence, you are not doing yourself any favors when you post selfies on social media at public places from events that occurred while you were on sick leave. Social media is rarely your friend when you work at the Post Office, always think twice before you post anything on social media. People also call me and say “I called in sick, but now I am feeling better, can I go to Lagoon or [insert any other public place here]” The answer is that if you call in sick, and then feel totally well by 10:00AM, you are supposed to call your Supervisor and inform them of that change. Sick leave is for when you are incapacitated and not able to be at work due to illness or injury, if that is no longer the case then you are well. Of course being quarantined for COVID, and anything COVID related is different.

In closing, I would say the following: It is the Letter Carrier who determines when they are not able to work due to injury or illness. It is the Supervisor and/or Manager who enforces attendance. Carriers should not worry about other Carriers’ attendance, as this just leads to problems in the office. Make sure you inform your Shop Steward whenever you receive discipline, as there are often defenses that you are not aware of. And finally, when you are sick, then stay home and be sick. When you are well, be at work.

Let’s continue to do everything we can to be safe (and well) at work!

Michael Wahlquist – President
Branch 111, NALC

Together

It is the morning of September 11, 2021. It is a gloomy morning and I can hear thunder rolling outside my window. I sat down to write an article about something completely different but as I started to write I heard the names of the ones lost on 9/11 being read. I noticed names of firefighters from all over the country flash across my television screen. They are united forever simply because of the profession they share. I envy that bond and I often wonder why we struggle as Letter Carriers to form a similar bond. I understand that the jobs are different and maybe the danger that firefighters face everyday is what bonds them together but we as Letter Carriers provide an essential service to every person and business in this country. I am proud to be a Letter Carrier and I am proud to serve my customers and I am proud to serve my fellow Letter Carriers through the NALC. You are my brothers and sisters and it is always my hope that we can stick together through the good times and through the struggles that we are sure to face in the future.

I got word last week that Branch 111 is currently 90% organized. A historic number for the Branch that many people worked hard to achieve. It was exciting to hold some of the Branch 111 events this summer that we had to cancel last year. The summer party was held in June and had a great turn out. In July the Bowl-a-Thon was held and thousands of dollars were raised for the MDA. August brought us the steak fry that was so missed the previous year. Another 1000 dollars was raised for the MDA. It was so good to see your smiling faces. Events like these are what bring us together and if you have never attended I hope to see you there next year.

We are all Letter Carriers and are in this together. Support each other.

In Solidarity
Mike Hansen
Executive Vice President
NALC Branch 111

NALC HEALTH BENEFITS

Jimmy Kerekes

Essential Needs of the Unknown

We are fortunate to have some of these essentials. A safety blanket .For the, OH, I didn't see that coming. Where did that come from? How could that happen? I do the same things over and over, no problems. So why do I have to feel like this the next 5 days or whatever time period. Then it goes away (and sometimes not). Sometimes it's not known when it's your turn. Many afflictions come from an unknown source. A few are known.

Thanks for the things we can have to use for these unknowns. Make sure you use all of them or most of them. ESSENTIALS: Health ins., Sick leave, Annual leave, Dental and Vision and Life ins. Maybe a few more not mentioned. Take care of YOU and YOURS. OPEN SEASON dates are on the NALC HEALTH web site and probably the government one also. Rates,etc. coming next month.



NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
September 9, 2021

Convened at 6:35 pm

The meeting was also broadcast over Zoom for those unable to attend in person.

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Mike Simonsen,

Roll Call by Steve McNees

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

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees

- We received a letter from the MDA thanking us for a recent gift of \$4,788.00.
- Letters of endorsement were sent from the branch, endorsing Darin Mano, Blake Perez, and Sim Gill.
- We received notice of the NALC Health Benefit Plan virtual seminar on Oct. 17, 2021 for Branch Officers who are currently enrolled in the plan.
- We registered with the National MDA Campaign.
- We sent the National MDA a check for \$1,010.00 that was donated at the Steak Fry last month.

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

Jordan Tolbert, Tara Lundgren, Daniel Ruffin, Wenyi Chua, Mark Gygi, Adrian Diaz Escobar Sanchez, Paulette Foreman, Jacob Turberville, Nicholas Jarman, Rebekah Madsen, Tanner LaBonty, Richard Fryman, Sophia Chrysostom, Faasulusulu Foalima, Joseph Williams, Evelyn Garay, Christine Wilkins

LETTER CARRIER POLITICAL FUND by Josh Thibodeau – not present

MDA COORDINATOR by Jeremy Bailey

- We raised another \$1,000, for a total of \$6,060 for the year. This is a record for the branch.
- MDA is going to do another Marathon MDA Drive in October. Let Jeremy know if you have any ideas for another fund-raising events.

DIRECTOR OF VETERAN AFFAIRS - Jimmy Fleming

- Nothing new to report. Nobody has called him lately.
- If you or anyone you know is thinking of suicide or harming themselves, reach out and get help. The National Crisis hotline is 800-273-8255. Keep an eye on each other.

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen - excused

TRUSTEES by Chad Mortensen - excused

- Kirk McLaughlin: The semi-annual reconciliation will happen next month.

MBA, COMPENSATION by Bob Jewell

- Kevin Card's article in the Postal Record tells how Covid is accelerating this year. NALC and OWCP are teaming up to make it easier to get Compensation benefits if you come in contact with Covid. There is a QR code in the article so you can go directly to [ECOMP.DOL.GOV](https://ecompany.dol.gov) to get your claim filed and accepted. You do not have to prove that you contracted Covid while at work.
- Encourage everyone to get registered with OWCP.
- Supervisors are filling out your CA-1 and CA-2s and making carrier decisions instead of the injured carrier (don't allow this). You can fill out the forms at your supervisor's desk if you want. We suggest having your shop steward present with you.



ecompany.dol.gov/#/register (register here and go to forms, etc.)

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

- The 2022 open season is almost here (November).
- For those with other than basic Medicare (parts C & D or supplemental plans), if you move out of state and haven't contacted Medicare with your change of address, you may lose your coverage because you are outside the coverage area for your selected plan.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Justin Lindquist

- Driving safety. The new driving instructors are planning to make sure you have your shoulder strap on while the vehicle is in motion. If you need to, you can take the strap off after stopping to reach out to the mailbox. The shoulder strap must be on while the vehicle is in motion.
- It is still hot – keep hydrating.
- At the October meeting, he will be pushing all of the winter issues (vehicle prep, equipment like cleats, etc.).

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist

- Justin had surgery last month so not all new CCAs signed up for the union (6 of 8 did). This last couple of weeks, he has signed up all 22 new CCAs.
- We are over 90% organized with only 90 non-members in the branch. Over 93% of CCAs are members.

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay

- The Retiree Dinner is on Sept. 22nd from 3:30 to 5:30pm at the Draper Chuck-A-Rama.

TREASURER by Mike Madsen

- Everything is up to date. The branch Reconciliation is coming up.

VICE PRESIDENT by Amie Gallo

- Steward training is next week.

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT by Mike Hansen

- 1,600 grievances so far this year.
- 16 members are on zoom tonight.
- The Alaska Rap Session is in a couple of weeks.
- Happy birthday Kirk McLaughlin.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist

- President Biden has mandated all federal employees to be vaccinated. We aren't sure if it applies to us yet. Our NBA says this may apply to us but the USPS lawyers will be involved to get a final answer. We should know in a week or two. We will get the word out as soon as we find out.
- Those attending the rap session will need to be vaccinated or wear a mask.
- Hospitals report that only .004% of those dying from covid have been vaccinated.
- The union is encouraging everyone to get vaccinated.
- We would like to have your pictures from the Steak Fry. We were too busy to take any.

SPECIAL ORDERS: none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

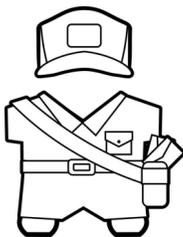
NEW BUSINESS: none

GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION: none

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE: Hass Haslam reported that Sweden's postal service is going to every other day delivery of 1st class mail with parcel delivery daily.

DRAW AND ADJOURN – 7:15 pm

- \$25 drawing winners: Bob Valdez and David Johnson (to be mailed)
- RETIREES – \$50 (Michelle Stone was not present). Next month it will be \$75
- PROGRESSIVE A - \$25 (Rebecca Silver was not present). Next month it will be \$50.
- PROGRESSIVE B - \$200 (Nathan Fetzer was not present). Next month it will be \$225.



Please bring any uniforms you may have that you'd be willing to donate.

We accept any uniforms in new or used condition, but please none in bad condition.

Uniforms Needed!

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

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Salt Lake City, UT
Permit No. 1981

Address Service Requested

Keep on Delivering.

The financial records of Branch 111 are available to anyone by appointment and a monthly record is always available at Branch 111 monthly meeting.

PRESIDENT

Mike Wahlquist

VICE-PRESIDENT

TREASURER

Mike Madsen

SECRETARY

Steve McNees

SGT-AT-ARMS

Mike Simonsen

MBA & OWCP

Bob Jewell

TRUSTEES

Chad Mortensen

Kirk McLaughlin

Destiney Carrillo

COLCPE Coord.

Josh Thibodeau

The
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LEGISLATIVE

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HEALTH BENEFITS

Jim Kerkes

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Jeff Asay

ORGANIZER, SAFETY & HEALTH

Justin Lindquist

FOOD DRIVE

Josh Jessop

MDA

Jeremy Bailey

DIR. VETERAN AFFAIRS

Jimmy Fleming