



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

January 2022

Publication 2022.1

"The members of each Delivery Unit shall conduct a nominating election for Shop Steward within ten (10) days prior to the end of March every even year. The Recording Secretary shall cause to be posted at each delivery unit notice of such election not sooner than Jan. 1st and not less than forty-five (45) days prior to the nominating election. Each candidate for office of Shop Steward must comply with NALC National Constitution Article V, Section 2. The Branch President may appoint nominated stewards on April 1st for a term of two (2) years."

-Michael Wahlquist



Next month we will be deciding how your dues will be spent in 2022. We all have our own opinion about this. Please make time to be at the meeting to lend your vote to this very important cause!

Mike Madsen

Treasurer



The President's Report

Staffing

I started carrying mail in April of 1987 in Southern California. Over the years I have seen insufficient staffing many times, and I have also seen times when Letter Carriers were overworked to the point of exhaustion. However, I have never seen anything like what is happening right now in some of the offices here in Utah. We are now seeing offices where multiple routes (up to 17 in one instance) are not being delivered on a seemingly regular basis. While this is shocking, it is not surprising based on current staffing levels. When stations become understaffed, people get burned out. Tired and overworked people have more injuries. Because of additional injuries and susceptibility to illness from being overworked, there are more sick calls. Since more people become injured and sick, the problem of understaffing is compounded, and the work units becomes even more understaffed. And then there is COVID, which we are now dealing with for a third straight year. Eventually, the Regular Carriers that can endure it end up working 12 hours a day, up to 60 hours a week (the maximum hours permitted by the contract, except for December). For CCAs, the only limit is 11.5 hours per day plus a half-hour lunch period, with no limit on how many days per week. Unfortunately, these maximums are often violated. However, any Letter Carrier may bring back the mail at the maximum hour limit and go home if they are “too fatigued to safely continue”, and of course any Letter Carrier or City Carrier Assistant has the right to go home at any time if they become incapacitated due to illness.

The question I often hear is, “Why can’t the Union force management to hire more people?” The simple reason for this is that article 3 gives management the right to determine the complement, article 5 binds management to the contract, and article 8 allows management to direct the use of overtime, via voluntary or non-voluntary means, up to the maximum hour limitations. The Union can grieve it

when management violates Article 8, but we cannot grieve it when management does not hire.

The not so simple reason is that right now the Post Office is having trouble hiring people. Nick Vafiades, the Region 2 NBA, spoke at our Branch Meeting last night and told us that in Portland they obtained permission to hire 300 City Carrier Assistants. The USPS published the openings in Portland and awaited applications. After the entire hiring process had been completed, with all applicants having gone through orientation and training, losing somewhere around eighty or so applicants in the process (who did not meet the minimum requirements or who quit voluntarily), the final number of City Carrier Assistants that were finally hired by the Post Office in Portland was 3, which is exactly one percent of the amount that the Post Office was striving to hire.

Due to injury or occupational illness (often associated with mandatory overtime) some Letter Carriers end up with doctor prescribed work restrictions, such as being limited to 8-hours (plus or minus) per day. In the Post Office, these injured (or occupationally ill) workers must not be discriminated against, either by management or by their fellow Letter Carriers. In fact, it would be illegal to do so, as they are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Arbitrator Snow ruled in case number H1C-5K-C 24191 that: *“Management’s authority to assign overtime work must be understood within the context of laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Employer’s authority to order overtime is not unfettered, and such overtime assignments cannot be viewed as an implied part of every job description. Management’s right to require overtime of employees must be understood not only within the context of the parties’ contractual agreement but also as informed by relevant legislation. Those sources make clear that the right of management to require overtime does not translate into an implied or inherent qualification for every postal position.”* We must respect those who have restrictions, and I would remind everyone of the old adage that “There but for the grace of God, go I”. All of us are

susceptible to injury or occupational disease, but hopefully we will be able to avoid both for the majority of our careers.

The one good thing about staffing comes from the November edition of the Postal Record. Brian Renfroe, the NALC Executive Vice President, stated in his article that: *“There are several locations in Colorado and California where we have reached agreement in the past few years to hire and employ an all-career workforce in installations that have experienced this hiring difficulty. It has been successful in those locations. I am hopeful that by the time you are reading this edition of The Postal Record, we have an agreement with USPS to apply the same or a similar concept to other installations around the country that are having difficulty hiring. Appropriate staffing is crucial for letter carriers and the service we provide. The success or failure of the Postal Service during peak season and beyond could depend on it.”* While we have yet to see the implementation of this in Utah, it gives me hope that in the future we could have our staffing problems abated by adopting this plan. It is also comforting to know that the higher-ups are aware of the problem and are actively working to resolve it.

Michael Wahlquist

President

I have been hearing a lot of mumbling about the current environment in stations across the state, not to mention across the nation. I hear complaints about carriers who are calling in sick, carriers who are getting medical restrictions, FMLA, etc. I also hear the complaints from those who are on the ODL- one day they are frustrated with not getting overtime, then the next day they are frustrated because they are being maxed out with overtime. While peak season can be extra frustrating, especially for those who are able to report to work and who are working tons of hours they did not sign up for (non-ODL), no matter which way you look at things, it all comes down to one common denominator- staffing. Now, before anyone starts beating their head against the wall because they do not agree with this, hear me out.

We all hear the normal management complaints- “you’re taking too long in the office, so now we need to move our start times back”, “carriers are wasting time on the streets, so now we need to put pressure on all carriers”, so and so “called in” or so and so “has medical restrictions so now I have to mandate you”. This is all complete and utter bull****. Are there carriers who do what management complains about? Sure, but it is the exception rather than the norm.

Now, I am going to use steward talk for a minute- any “reasonable person” can identify a multitude of reasons why people are working so much, but the real issue does not come down to individual carriers who are sick, medically restricted, not keeping management’s pace, etc. The true culprit is...staffing.

According to Mike Wahlquist at the December union meeting, we have fewer CCA’s this year than we did last year going into peak season. In the scheme of things, this may not seem to be important if “everyone shows up to work when scheduled.” However, let us break it down for a minute and use my station, Murray, as an example: In the 84107 zone, they allow four people on the vacation roster at once. Most weeks, the vacation roster is full, if not near full. That is about four routes the 84107 zone can potentially be down prior to any other events happening. Now, the 84107 zone only has two CCAs and no reserve carriers or unassigned regulars, which means management has already understaffed the 84107 zone- even if just in the case of the vacation allowance. Add in any multitude of other events such as sick calls, injured employees, employees on detail, military leave, etc. and the zone is in complete chaos.

At that point, without even thinking about the bigger picture, it is super easy to blame the extra hours and overtime on those who are ill and/or incapacitated and calling in sick, but it is not fair, nor is it accurate. Management already understaffed the zone before the sick calls or illnesses even happened. Illnesses are foreseen circumstances, otherwise the sick leave would not be there for employees to use. Additionally, every single station has been, or should have been, having stand-up talks about employees not coming to work when ill over the course of the pandemic. And they should, especially if they have a contagious illness. No one wants to get sick, nor do they desire being exposed to illnesses at work.

As humans, we will get sick, some more often or more severely than others, some have medical or mental conditions that are not discussed openly, some have life altering diseases or illnesses that will affect us the rest of our lives. The point is, no one knows what anyone else is dealing with when they are not at work, nor should anyone be worried about it. If it is not your condition, then it is not your business. Blame management for not having enough CCAs to cover the vacation roster, let alone any injuries or illnesses that may present themselves in carriers.

Management is quick to blame craft employees for their own shortcomings, and why wouldn’t they? Management officials have no issue talking about someone’s absences on the workroom floor because they want the other carriers to be upset at the ill employee. It is a divide and conquer technique used by many management officials... and it is a story as old as time. Do not play their game with them. We, as craft employees, are not in control of staffing. That is 100% a management issue. We as employees are, for the most part, not in control of whether we are ill or have medical conditions that require treatment and/or medical restrictions.

In close, if management wants enough employees to get the job done then they, like every other company out there, need to hire enough employees to get the job done. Staffing/hiring is solely their responsibility, not the carriers who are at home trying to heal and/or recover from their illnesses/injuries. Be kind to each other...and force management to be accountable for their inability to staff sufficiently.

In solidarity,

NALC BRANCH 111
Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting
January 13, 2022

Convened at 6:33pm

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

Pledge of Allegiance conducted by Phil Rodriguez

Roll Call by Steve McNees

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

Reading of the Communications by Steve McNees

- Received an extension from National, of the dispensations from 2020, to utilize alternative electronic meeting methods through the end of 2022 and meeting scheduling.
- Received four Christmas cards and one thank-you card.

Application for Membership by Mike Hansen

Christopher Mitchell, Kaylie Eddleman, Elysa Reed, Sarah Farley, Kurt Warner, Brian Petterborg, Samuel Cook, Jose As-cua, Zhu Xiao Kun, Kyle Attebery, Jennifer Alvarez, Johnathan Sims, Gareth Davies, Doug Bywater, Brett Coplen

Guest: Nick Vafiades, NBA:

- National is taking an overtime 12/60 case to arbitration to stop the USPS working carriers beyond 12 hours in a day or 60 hours in a week. This is the only way to stop mandatory work over 12/60 to continue. It is up to the carrier to determine if it is safe for them to work beyond these limits even if mandated.
- Mandatory vaccination was overturned by the Supreme Court today.
- The staffing shortage is universal. UPS and Fedex are advertising on tv. It is industry wide. Portland posted to hire 300. They had 89 apply. After interviews and background only 50 remained. The number making it through training was in the teens. Only three made it through the first month. None of them were fired.
- In the beginning PM Dejoy promised President Rolando that non-compliance with the national agreement was a top priority for him. But he had no intent to do so, and hasn't complied. Dejoy does serve an important position. The Postal Reform bills should hit the floor by Feb. 1st. Postal reform is bipartisan and currently there are enough votes in the senate and the house. But, some Republican friends say they won't vote if Dejoy is not in office. When Postal Reform goes to the floor, we all must contact our representative to get them to vote for the bills.
- For the P.O., Covid infections tied the record of Dec. 2020.
- We have a rash of management not giving stewards time and information. We now have a friendly National Labor Relations Board. So, file charges if not given time and information.
- He is having problems with our new district leaders. They are not responding to him or the branch.
- There are negotiations going on to create a joint route inspection process.
- Just out – we are going to be delivering 500,000 home Covid tests kits.
- National Convention and the Rap Session in SLC are still scheduled to happen. There may be a vaccination mandate to attend.
- The CCA mentorship program is working well and should expand soon.

LETTER CARRIER POLITICAL FUND by Josh Thibodeau

Best way to get legislation passed is to donate, or increase your donation, to LCPF. We are the best branch in the region at 17.7% donating.

MDA COORDINATOR by Jeremy Bailey

Amie Gallo and he are looking for volunteers to form a committee to help with preparing for MDA events like at the Rap Session coming to SLC. Suggested events are bowling and axe throwing. Maybe get other unions and branches involved with us. Talk to Jeremy if you are interested in helping.

DIRECTOR OF VETERAN AFFAIRS - Jimmy Fleming – excused/Covid

LEGISLATIVE by Chad Mortensen

- HR 3076, Postal Reform, this will bring oversight to the USPS and eliminate prefunding. We need to get Curtis and Stewart on line with us. We are not asking for more funding; we just want to have more oversight in the Postal Service.
- Contact our representatives using their local address, not their national address.
- 17 routes downtown didn't get delivered today. City Council members are supporting us and are asking the union how they can help to get mail delivered.
- The Postal Reform Act is our main priority. It will also allow city and state governments to use postal facilities to provide government services.
- LCPF is making our chances better to get the legislation passed. No union dues go to political activity.
- We support candidates/legislators who support us. We don't support political parties.

TRUSTEES by Chad Mortensen

- They met Tuesday. They got the quarter finished and closed out the year.
- Some charges came through Dec. 30th that look questionable and are being followed up on.

MBA, COMPENSATION by Bob Jewell

- Filling out a request for Continuation of Pay for Covid is simple. You can do it at home or work on a CA-1 without a supervisor around. Approval is coming back in less than a day.
- Everyone needs to register with OWCP now, not after you get hurt or sick. Covid is an OWCP issue, CA-2 issue, not a reason to use sick leave. Many are using sick leave, just because... Filing the CA-1 can protect you in the future from long term effects that may arise from Covid.
- More information will be in the Pavement Pounder. Please call Bob if you have questions or need help.
- OWCP/COP cases cannot be cited in discipline.

HEALTH BENEFITS by Jim Kerekes

- The Wellness Incentive Plan provides money, in the form of a debit card, when you complete certain activities such as tobacco cessation (\$50), weight loss program (\$50), and others. You can also get \$50 for sending in a picture of your vaccination document to our health benefits plan.
- Starting Saturday, your health insurance will cover getting covid rapid tests from pharmacies.

ORGANIZER by Justin Lindquist –

- 23 new CCAs were in training the last 3 weeks. Only one didn't join the union.
- There will be another orientation next week.
- We are still over 90% organized.

SAFETY AND HEALTH by Justin Lindquist

The quarterly safety meeting was today. Not much got accomplished because upper management wasn't there.

- Justin is trying to create a network with stewards to keep track of what is going on in each office and create our own safety topics.

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES by Jeff Asay

- It is tax season. OPM will send out your tax documents. The tax forms may be a little late this year. You can check online for your tax info. You will be required to create a new password if you haven't logged in during the last year.

TREASURER by Mike Madsen

- December income was \$28,446 with \$28,115 in expenses. Our end of year net surplus was about \$16,686.
- W-2s are available tonight. Those not picked up will be mailed.
- The proposed budget is online at branch111.com and will be discussed at next month's meeting.

VICE PRESIDENT by Amie Gallo - excused

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT by Mike Hansen

- In 2021 there were 2,218 grievances filed. 112 grievances have been filed this year.
- CA-1 registering with OWCP (eomp.dol.gov) is easy. The first 3 days after an injury, aren't paid on COP unless you are off more than 14 days. Sundays, non-scheduled, and holidays are considered part of the first three days.
- File covid claims now. There may be health problems in the future due to Covid that won't be paid for if you didn't file a claim originally.
- Carriers in Sandy haven't been getting a non-sched day off since Thanksgiving. Some are being mandated on Sundays. This is the same in many other offices.
- They are paying him to do union work at home, after hours.

PRESIDENT by Mike Wahlquist

- In some places, like California, they have to file grievances because CCAs aren't getting paid because the computer programs can only pay up to 99 hours in a week.
- We are still recommending getting vaccinated and boosters.
- Vets can go to the VA to get their vaccines.

SPECIAL ORDERS:

Reading of Bylaws Proposal: I propose a change to the bylaws, my proposal is to update the bylaws of NALC branch 111 to include attending and voting by way of current technology such as zoom. Submitted by Russ Shosted

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: none

NEW BUSINESS: none

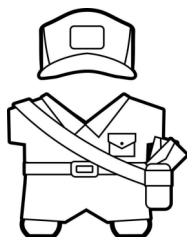
GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:

- The B team sustained a grievance from Downtown by Stormy Blood regarding a supervisor making illegal changes to carrier time rings. The remedy was to pay \$50 for each of the 1,600 time rings changed by the supervisor. The supervisor is still supervising Downtown.

FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE: none

DRAW AND ADJOURN – 8:13 pm

- \$25 drawing winners: Spencer Heinz, Russ Shosted
- RETIREES – \$150 (George Westerman was not present). Next month it will be \$175
- PROGRESSIVE A - \$125 (Nathan Fetzer was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$150
- PROGRESSIVE B - \$25 (Anna Davis was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$50



Uniforms Needed!

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.

National Association of Letter Carriers
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The final records of Branch 111 are available to anyone by appointment and a monthly record is always available at Branch 111 monthly meeting.

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EXC. VICE-Pres.

Mike Hansen

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