



THE Mail Bag NEWS

- ★ SOLIDARITY
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ ORGANIZATION



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF TRI-VALLEY BRANCH 2902
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS AFL-CIO

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New Year, New Term

By James Perryman, President

Hello Brothers and Sisters. Happy New Year to all of you and your families. Hopefully you were able to enjoy the holidays in spite of the enormous volume of parcels you delivered during the past couple of months. I would also like to thank the membership of Branch 2902 for electing me and our current leadership team to another three-year term; all but the President and Executive

Vice President positions were elected by acclamation. Additionally, 22 pre-qualified candidates (not including delegates by virtue of office), were elected as paid delegates to the 2024 National Convention by acclamation.

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New Year, New Term

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NALC Rap Session 2023

In November more than 1,000 Letter Carrier activists representing branches across the United States gathered in New Orleans to take part in NALC's 2023 National Conference. Executive Vice President Albert Reyes, Senior Vice President Alex Lopez, Vice President Walter Williams, and I had the pleasure of being in attendance at the RAP session and workshops. While there was so much to cover, I have summarized topics and the subjects that I felt were the most important to inform the branch members about.

At NALC rap session, President Renfroe updated state and branch leaders on:

- **Contract negotiations**
- **Crimes against carriers**
- **Heat safety**
- **Improving representation**
- **Legislation and politics**
- **New initiatives**

Contract Negotiations

“That’s always our top priority,” Renfroe said. He explained that NALC is working on dual tracks, finalizing preparations for interest arbitration even as it continues to engage at the table with the Postal Service for a negotiated agreement. “We have been hard at work for some time in preparation for the possibility of us reaching the interest arbitration process, and we are not completely finished with that preparation, but we have a very strong case put together. And should that be where we ultimately end up, we feel very good about the case that we can put on,” Renfroe said.

Enough is Enough

President Renfroe then talked about the increase in robberies and assaults targeting Letter Carriers, which have risen exponentially over the past three years, with more than 2,000 such assaults in that period. Of those, only 14% have resulted in an arrest and federal prosecution. “Unfortunately, there is no simple, quick solution to this,” he said. “This is something that’s going to take time. But we are beginning to make progress.”

The Postal Service has made both public and private commitments to replace all of the Arrow Locks in the field and has tested a number of electronic solutions to devalue the Arrow Keys, which have been a primary target of thieves.

President Renfroe said that increasing federal prosecution rates is another important component. The Postal Service is funding about a dozen prosecutors in U.S. attorneys’ offices to spend a majority of their time prosecuting these crimes. But more is needed, and that is why NALC has been holding “Enough is enough” rallies.



Heat Safety

The President next addressed heat safety, which has resulted in Letter Carrier deaths. He said that the Postal Service has acknowledged the widespread problem with getting area and district managers to hold the mandatory heat training. Along those lines, he said, “We are going to continue to engage them to ensure this training looks a whole lot different for 2024 by the end of or by April 1 of next year.”

Improving Representation, The Delivering for America Plan

President Renfroe told attendees how the union is trying to improve representation for the branches, mostly small, that are not fully functioning—not active in representing their members—by working to merge those branches with nearby functional branches that can improve the representation for the members. He said that 113 of these branches have been merged with other branches, resulting in improved representation for those members.

On the Postal Service’s 10-year plan, the union is remaining engaged with the Postal Service in order to maintain a seat at the table and offer feedback, but also to enforce compliance with the National Agreement as more Letter Carriers start delivering from Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DCs). He also warned members to not listen to local managers talking about routes that will be moved to a future S&DC. “If you’re going to be impacted by one of these in any way, you will hear well in advance from your regional office and from us at Headquarters to prepare for that,” he said.

Politics and Legislation

President Renfroe outlined NALC's legislative and political agenda, starting with the union's efforts to educate the Biden administration on the need for implementation of the "Segal" pension valuation method for CSRS. Convincing the White House to issue an executive action to institute the private-sector pension valuations would save the Postal Service billions of dollars annually.

In Congress, NALC continues to add support for the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82), the bill that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset. Another piece of legislation is the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 5995), the bill that would allow former non-career employees including CCAs, TEs and Casuals, all the way back to December 31, 1988—to make deposit (or buy back) their non-career time and have it credited for retirement.

New Initiatives

President Renfroe outlined four new initiatives that the NALC is working on:

- A new online learning program to complement the in-person training that NALC does well on a local, regional and national level.
- An emergency response team of Letter Carriers to help NALC members when they're dealing with trauma, not to

serve as counselors, but rather to offer peer-to-peer support in situations like suicide awareness, suicide prevention, mental health issues or substance abuse.

- A mentoring program for women in the union. "The idea behind this is to structure a program that for any of our members that face challenges just because of the fact that they are a woman, they have someone they can reach out to help them navigate that challenge," he said.
- A standing committee for diversity issues. "Everyone in our union deserves and should have the opportunity to learn and to be involved, no matter who they are, no matter where they're from," he said. "And if we do that, and we make conscious efforts to ensure that as we move forward, we give all those who express interest that opportunity, it will allow us to continue to do something we've done for a long time, but I think even move to the next level of embracing and utilizing the strength that we have through our diversity."

He then moved to the "rap" portion, taking approximately an hour's worth of questions from the attendees, primarily about issues related to contract negotiations, uniforms and route adjustments, before adjourning the meeting at about 11 a.m.

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Pictured above are your Branch 2902 Executive Board members who attended the National "Rap" Session in November in New Orleans.

Workshops Updates

(provided by the national officers & assistants)

Attendees had the opportunity to attend four workshops on a multitude of topics important to Letter Carriers. The four workshops were:

- National and regional arbitration and Step B updates, dispute resolution training for branch leaders and city delivery issues.
- Benefits and offerings of the health and life insurance companies and about issues affecting current and future retirees.
- Discussed issues related to branch dues, branch bylaw changes and the Employee Assistance Program.
- Provided updates on the New Employee Experience and Retention Program, USPS vehicles, the alternate dispute resolution process, Sorting and Delivery Centers, the Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process, NALC's communications efforts, research and resources through NALC publications and website, OWCP and the Letter Carrier Political Fund.

The Rap Session was good and the workshops were highly informative; the consensus amongst our officers were the same. Great job by the NALC National Officers and Assistants.

Term Ending Report

In accordance with the NALC Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches, specifically Article 6 "Duties of Officers, President" I respectfully submit the following Term Ending Report for the just concluded 2021-2023 Term.

President Emeritus Ray Hill presided over Branch 2902 as President from May 1, 2017 until he retired after June 3, 2022. Ray did an outstanding job representing and overseeing the Branch for the majority of the past three-year term.

I have served as President from June 4, 2022 through the remainder of 2023. Ray was responsible for most of the successes of the branch for the past three years and he helped make my transition from Executive Vice President to President relatively painless. Over the past 18 months I've discovered that the job of President isn't as easy as Ray made it look, but I am proud to say that the branch has continued to thrive, even in Ray's absence.

Finances

To say Ray was a fiscally responsible President is an extreme understatement; Ray was *extremely* prudent in the allocation and expenditure of branch funds throughout his

Presidency. I have continued to exercise fiscal responsibility in the expenditure of branch funds and am pleased to report that the branch continues to operate in excellent financial condition, we have continued to avoid debt and we have maintained a contingency fund in excess of \$420,000.00.

Our Financial Secretary Treasurer, Mary Stanley, has continued to do a great job in keeping the books and preparing and finalizing workable budgets to keep the branch financially strong. Like Ray, Mary makes her job look easy and the branch is fortunate to have her as our Financial Secretary/Treasurer for at least another three-year term.

Currently, Branch 2902 has a total of 1,164 active members, 525 retired members (including 120 Gold Card members), which equals 1,689 total membership for the branch, with 1,643 of them paying dues. Branch 2902 does not bill members for dues while they are off work in Leave without Pay (LWOP) status. It is difficult to keep up on the membership numbers of active Carriers due to the fluctuations with regards to the hiring, firing and resignations of our City Carrier Assistants (CCAs). Sometimes CCAs quit so fast their membership paperwork doesn't even have a chance to be processed. Branch 2902 currently has 525 retired members and I have no doubt that this number will definitely rise as our membership continues to age and grow increasingly tired of the daily grind involved in working at the USPS.

Organization

At the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC) Convention in 2022, Branch 2902 was presented with a plaque from our National Business Agent, Bryant Almario, for being 95.28% organized. Considering the fact that NALC is an open shop, that is a really impressive number. Of course, our goal is, and always will be 100% membership and we will continue to pursue that goal. The Stewards and Officers of the branch must ensure that we all make an effort to educate the non-members and the new employees about the benefits of Union membership. I am pleased to report that recently we have had some long-time non-members join NALC. To all of them, as well as to all of the new hire members, I say welcome aboard. We are pleased to have you in our membership. As the writing of this article, Branch 2902 is currently at 97.20% organized according to branch records. I truly believe we are at least 96% organized at this time, but, as written above, it is difficult to keep up on the membership numbers due to the fluctuations with regards to the hiring, firing and resignations of our CCAs.

Charity and the Golden Rule

Branch 2902 continues to support the official charity of NALC, the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). Our Branch, outside of the COVID-19 pandemic, holds an annual MDA Bowl-A-Thon, usually on the first Sunday in November. If you haven't been to the Bowl-A-Thon, you should come out at least one time and experience it. It's a great fundraiser for MDA—we get exercise, something to eat, enjoy good camaraderie and football is available to watch on the big screens. Additionally, through the efforts of Rochelle Harvey, our Branch sold Jamba Juice Cards and snacks to raise funds as well. Thanks to our MDA coordinator, Mary Stanley, for her ongoing efforts in raising money for the MDA.

Branch 2902 continues to be actively involved in the annual Letter Carrier Food Drive. Despite the Food Drive being cancelled in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the late announcement from national in 2022 which reduced time to coordinate the event; in the just concluded three-year term, our branch collected a whopping 330,154 pounds of food that was distributed to local charities and food banks from Studio City to Ojai. That's 330,154 pounds of food collected by Branch 2902 Carriers over the past three years. Great job!

In addition, Branch 2902 has raised funds for the California State Association of Letter Carriers (CSALC) Saxsenmeir Scholarship fund and we continue to support the Special Olympics and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Turkey and Toys campaign.

Legislation

During the past three-year term, Branch 2902 has been actively involved in the political arena. Branch 2902 members David Hyman and Bob Golden remained actively involved in legislative matters, even in their retirement. David and Bob, worked for NALC during the 2020 election cycle and beyond to help lobby political figures to secure the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022.

When the bill was ready to be send to the President, the White House wanted a Letter Carrier to present the bill to President Biden to sign into law. The six-day delivery and repealed health care mandate was effective the day the bill was signed. What the service owed was completely forgiven.

President Biden signed the Postal Service Reform Act of

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Treasurer's Report

11/1/2023-11/30/2023

General Account

Previous Balance	\$35,978.01
Receipts	<u>\$44,299.58</u>
Sub-Total	\$80,277.59
Disbursements	<u>\$41,074.65</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$39,202.94</u>

Payroll Account

Previous Balance	\$39,209.61
Receipts	<u>\$0.00</u>
Sub-Total	\$39,209.61
Disbursements	<u>\$33,549.71</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$5,659.90</u>

General Account (New)

Previous Balance	\$96,213.32
Receipts	<u>\$0.00</u>
Sub-Total	\$96,213.32
Disbursements	<u>\$1,570.96</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$93,642.36</u>

Payroll Account (New)

Previous Balance	\$59,970.26
Receipts	<u>\$0.00</u>
Total-on-Hand	<u>\$59,970.26</u>

Convention Fund

Previous Balance	\$213,759.37
Checking Acct #7 .15% rate-USPS-CU	\$27.03
(Active & Retirees 1625 x \$2 per By-Laws)	<u>\$3,250.00</u>
Total of Convention Fund	<u>\$217,036.40</u>

C.D. (6 mos) .350% rate-Premier CU-#1	\$91,339.19
C.D. (6 mos) .250% rate-Premier CU-#2	\$12,397.35
C.D. (1 yr) .598% rate Premier CU- #3	\$116,940.09
MM Cert #21 26 wks .200% rate-USPS-CU	\$26,222.02
MM Cert #18 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-CU	\$24,458.09
MM Cert #19 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-CU	\$72,272.94
MM Ckg #8 26 wks .250% rate-USPS-CU	\$47,206.69
C.D. (6 mos) .380% Priority One CU	\$34,122.32
Shares acct USPS-CU	<u>\$7.11</u>

Total of Contingency Fund **\$424,965.80**

Retiree Fund

Retiree Luncheon **\$6,910.73**

Mary Stanley
Financial Secretary-Treasurer

2022 (H.R. 3076) into law. The President’s signature comes after the bill passed with massive bipartisan majorities in the House and in the Senate.

The key provisions of this bipartisan legislation repeal the mandate to pre-fund retiree health care benefits decades in advance, and codify a minimum of six-day delivery of mail and packages into federal law. This will eliminate the need to renew the six-day requirement every year through the Congressional appropriations process. The bill also maximizes the integration of future Postal annuitants into Medicare. NALC President Fredric Rolando said, “This is a monumental victory for Letter Carriers and all Americans who depend on the Postal Service for affordable and high-quality universal service.”

The integration of Medicare is effective January 1, 2025 and it does not take retirees out of the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) plans. Before the bill was passed, 80% of retired Letter Carriers were enrolled in Medicare option A & B, which eliminated any out-of-pocket medical cost. Having more health care expenses integrated into Medicare will reduce the cost to retirees and the service when the law goes into effect.

We have a lot of work to do in our on-going effort to educate our membership regarding the importance of donating to the Letter Carriers Political Fund (LCPF). Our LCPF Coordinator, Alex Lopez, is doing an outstanding job trying to get the membership to buy in to the importance of the LCPF with regards to job security. Currently, 4.75 % of our total membership contributes to the LCPF, which is not enough to ensure protection of our wages and benefits from the whims of the politicians. I understand that many of our members are of the opinion that because they are paying dues to the union they should not have to contribute to the LCPF. However, it is illegal for NALC to use dues money to donate to politicians and that is why voluntary donations to the LCPF are so important.

Many of us have become complacent and think that our wages and benefits, including our Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) and Retirement benefits, are etched in stone and completely untouchable. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Frank always preached throughout his years as our President, everything we currently have can all be taken away through the stroke of a legislative pen. In the grand scheme of things, \$5 a pay period isn’t too much to ask to protect our precious benefits and livelihoods.

Grievance Activity

Although the numbers are not fully complete, to date these are the current numbers for the grievance activity for years 2021 through 2023.

Letters of Warning Rescinded	371
Letters of Warning Reduced to Review Periods	260
Letters of Warning Denied	0
Suspensions Rescinded	148
Suspensions Reduced to Letters of Warning with Review Period	185
Suspensions Reduced in Length	121
Number of Suspension Days Recovered/Saved	2,394
Suspensions Denied	04
Removals Rescinded or Resolved	18
Removals Reduced to Suspensions	18
Removals Denied	05
Contract Cases Resolved	2,782
Contract Cases Denied/Withdrawn	47
Carriers Removed from Restricted Sick Leave	08
Total Cash Settlements	\$714,257.26
Total Overtime Hours Recovered	1,154.67
Total Straight-Time Hours Recovered	4,500.53
Total Annual Leave Hours Recovered	839
Total Sick Leave Hours Recovered	357.08
Total Administrative Leave Hours Paid	1,331.92
Total Penalty Overtime Hours Recovered	1,259.25
Total Continuation of Pay Hours Recovered	437.42



A Letter Carrier Contract Update

By Albert Reyes, Executive Vice President

Branch #2902 participated in NALC's 2023 National Conference in November. The NALC Constitution calls for the union to hold a national conference in non-convention, odd-numbered years. The meeting, commonly called a "Rap Session," occurred Friday through Sunday, November 17, 18 and 19, in New Orleans, Louisiana. President Renfroe addressed the floor with many updates on Letter Carrier issues. He discussed the bargaining committees and the proposals for this round of negotiations. I plan to share how these updates affect the Letter Carrier craft.

President Renfroe said that NALC's leadership regarding Letter Carriers is what drives the union's agenda and shapes NALC's goals and strategies through negotiations. As for an update on our contract, he said that the union has been working on two tracks, one involving the negotiation talks themselves and the second laying the groundwork for making a case for interest arbitration. He mentioned that interest arbitration would be scheduled sometime in the beginning of 2024. He spoke about two proposals, one that would include an "all career workforce," such as hiring Part-Time Flexibles (PTF), and the second had the hiring of City Carrier Assistants (CCAs).

President Renfroe spoke briefly on achieving a single pay table. He talked about eliminating Table 2 and going strictly to Table 1. This is to have higher starting and ending pay while prioritizing general wage increases and COLAs. However, he says this is hard for the Postal Service because they must calculate costs and back pay. Renfroe said, "We aren't going to accept anything less than a 9% salary increase." I am not sharing "inside" information. President Renfroe has asked that we return to the membership and share this. This is encouraging.

During my station visits, Carriers have mentioned that they would not support another 1% increase. I agree! Many Carriers have clarified that they will seek employment elsewhere if this contract does not include a significant pay increase. Letter Carriers are underpaid. Many Carriers follow the UPS contract (which I like, but I think Letter Carriers have long-term substance) and "want UPS money." Many Carriers ask why they can't strike. It's a great discussion. It is not a brief discussion, but hopefully, I can shed light on it.

Some carriers may not understand the power of collective bargaining. Some may think that a strike is more powerful. How many Carriers would strike? Would they genuinely know what they are striking for? With all the theatrics and misinformation spread over the internet and in offices, with cute slogans for personal financial gain, what information is accurate, and what information is fake (Check the NALC website daily for precise information). If you want to strike for higher pay, there's no guarantee that would end in your favor. Would you strike for your retirement, health benefits, and working conditions? Would you strike every three to four years to achieve these goals? For how long? Would it be days, weeks, months, or even years?

Collective bargaining is already a positive start to any negotiation. Because of collective bargaining, provisions of the National Agreement have been agreed upon to protect you. Article 1 of the National Agreement states, "ARTICLE 1 UNION RECOGNITION Section 1. Union: The Employer recognizes the National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO, as the exclusive bargaining representative of all employees in the bargaining unit for which it has been recognized and certified at the national level — City Letter Carriers." Therefore, you have bargaining representation. You are protected.

Second, every employee is protected under Article 6 of the National Agreement. "ARTICLE 6 NO LAYOFFS OR REDUCTION IN FORCE (1): Each employee who is employed in the regular workforce as of the date of the Award of Arbitrator James J. Healy, September 15, 1978, shall be protected henceforth against any involuntary layoff or force reduction." Rest assured your work is protected against any "involuntary layoff." Article 8 of the National Agreement guarantees Full-Time carriers 8 hours, 40 hours a week (See your Steward if this is not happening).

Both the NALC and USPS agree with the provisions of Article 18 of the National Agreement. "ARTICLE 18 NO STRIKE Section 1. Statement of Principle: The Union, on behalf of its members, agrees that it will not call or sanction a strike or slowdown. Section 2. Union Actions. The Union or its local Unions (whether called branches or by other names) will take reasonable action to avoid such activity

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A Letter Carrier Contract Update

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and, where such activity occurs, immediately inform striking employees they are in violation of this Agreement and order said employees back to work.”

Article 18 of the USPS-NALC National Agreement is devoted exclusively to the no-strike clause. It has been discussed that this provision emerged from the Great Postal Strike of 1970. This language was agreed upon after the nationwide wildcat strike, which secured collective bargaining rights. The foundation was set before I was even hired. Thanks to the trailblazers who sacrificed in those uncertain times. Many of these carriers are now retirees and are still active and in great standing within their branches nationwide.

Not everyone can wear the badge of honor with integrity to sacrifice for others. I thank retirees for their dedication during these times. The no-strike clause assures me that I would never need to choose between my pay and providing for my family. During this time, many Carriers had already served their country in the military and then served their fellow Letter Carriers within the craft. Their servant leadership has fostered and enabled everyone in their branch to thrive. Any false theatrical rumors about what retirees do for their branch are disrespectful.

So, what has collective bargaining done for Letter Carriers regarding pay? Focusing strictly on Grade 1, a pay chart dated September 8, 2001, has Step A (beginning of the pay chart) at \$32,156.00 a year at an hourly rate of \$15.45. The most recent updated pay chart dated March 11, 2023 (career appointment date **prior** to January 12, 2013) has Step A **Table 1** (Grade 2) at \$62,078.00 a year at an hourly rate of \$29.85. That's a \$14.40 increase over 22 years for new Full-time/Part-time Regular Carriers. Almost double in hourly rate over 20 years.

The same updated pay chart dated March 11, 2023 (career appointment date **on or after** January 12, 2013) has Step A **Table 2** (Grade 2) at \$46,038.00 a year at an hourly rate of \$22.13. That's a \$6.68 increase since 2013 for new Full-time/Part-time Regular Career Carriers. I believe that if the starting hourly rate for those Full-time/Part-time Regular Carriers prior to 2013 becomes today's hourly rate of \$29.85, we would see a significant increase in Carriers staying with the Postal Service, anticipating a true path to a career position. Again, this is for Full-time/Part-time Regular Carriers.

Part-time Flexible Carriers started at an hourly rate of \$16.08. Again, this was Grade 1, dated in 2001. Twenty-two years later, Part-time Flexibles are starting at \$22.24 and



Pictured above are the attendees of the annual Shop Stewards appreciation dinner held at Los Toros restaurant. This is a Branch 2902 tradition held to throw a little love to our very hard working Shop Stewards. Thank you Stewards, keep up the good work!

\$23.11. That's an average of \$6.59 increase over 22 years. Is this enough? It's not; we can do better. Could we advocate for more? Absolutely. But what is done is done. We can't go back 20 years. If offices start hiring with Part-time Flexibles (PTFs), starting around \$25.00 to \$26.00 an hour, I think hiring in those understaffed offices would be significant.

I have much more to share and report on, such as new eArrow keys, MDD updates, and new vehicles. OWCP, TIAREAP and heat safety. Crimes against Letter Carriers. Over 2,000 attacks have occurred on Letter Carriers, and only 14% have been prosecuted. NALC has taken a firm stance to ensure the Postal Service follows through for these crimes. I believe Letter Carriers want to know the Postal Service's position to ensure Carrier safety. I will have to write on these hot topics in later discussions. However, as of now, I would not settle or accept a contract without significant pay increases.

Carriers are underpaid for their work, especially the current working conditions. Holding the Postal Service accountable for safety issues. What good does all this do if the Postal Service doesn't do its part in ensuring Carrier safety? Increase letter carrier's pay to a respectable living wage. President Renfroe has used the slogan "Enough is Enough" regarding Letter Carrier safety. Now, let's see this slogan turn into action. If not, it's just another cute slogan printed on a hoodie or a hat.

In the meantime, do not expect management to do what's required of you. Hold management accountable. Happy New Year, and, most importantly, a sincere thank you to every

retiree and active Letter Carrier, especially the OTDLs, who continue to ensure the auxiliary is delivered! Help each other out. Continue to look out for one another. And if you haven't done so already, download the NALC app. As always, be safe out there!

By the Numbers Membership 2023

By Diane Dozal, Branch 2902 Recording Secretary

Active	1,164
Retired	525
(including 120 Gold Card members)	
Total members	1,689
During the last year:	
Separated*	124
Retired	27
Deaths	2
Transfers out	18
Cancel	23
New Members*	206
Transfers In	13

*Numbers are high due to hiring and separation of CCAs

Branch 2902 is 97.2% Organized!!!

New Year, New Term

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In order to calculate an approximate dollar amount for the grievance settlements for the past three years I used the following formula.

I calculated the dollar amounts for the overtime hours recovered, the annual leave hours recovered, the sick leave hours recovered, the administrative leave hours recovered, and the penalty overtime hours recovered for the past three years at the CC (Grade 2) Step N rate. This equates to \$135,469.93. Adding this amount to the \$714,257.26 of cash settlements received gives us a term total of approximately \$849,727.19 received for our membership from grievance settlements.

There are still outstanding grievances from 2023 that have yet been paid, so this total dollar amount will be higher when all is said and done.

In summation, I feel that the past three-year term was a very successful one and I can assure you that the

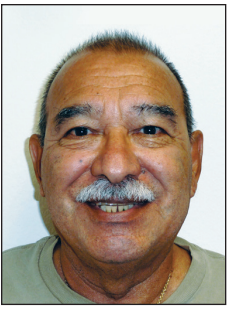
officers of this branch will strive to improve conditions for our membership in the next three years and beyond.

You are all invited to the Branch Installation of Officers at our meeting on January 18th. Dinner will be served and a National officer will be in attendance for the installation of officers. I hope to see you all there.

Fallen NALC Brother Report

In closing, we mourn the loss of branch member Jose Lopez, Retired Letter Carrier who worked at the Thousand Oaks Post Office. Brother Lopez recently retired in September 2023 and was a branch member of the NALC for 23 years. Branch 2902 mourns the loss of Brother Lopez. We appreciate his service and we send our deepest sympathies to his families, friends and colleagues.

That's all for now and I'll be back with more. God bless you all.



Here's to a Happy New Year and Hoping You Made the Decision to Be Part of Our Family

By Joe Gutierrez, Branch 2092 Health Benefits Representative

Hello everyone. Happy New Year. By now you have chosen your health plan for 2023. In this article I will go over some of the new benefit additions to the plan. In future articles I will go over other benefits available to our members.

There are new expanded foot orthotics benefits. You now may get two orthotics year. Previously it was only one every two years. You now have available an annual skin cancer screening, an annual AIC test (for those 18 and over) and expanded infertility treatments — see the brochure for the benefits for people trying to conceive.

Expanded Gender Affirmation services are now available. Again, check the brochure for more information. You must meet certain approvals for acceptance.

The plan will now pay for FDA-approved vaccines when administered by a pharmacy that participates in the NALC health benefit program. You also get paid for receiving these vaccines. \$10 to \$50 dollars can be had by our members.

Expanded Hearing Aid benefits are available for treatment

related to injury or illness. Again, read the brochure for the increase in benefits. You now have a maximum payment of \$350, which was previously \$200. The hearing aids, wigs and orthotics are only for the high option plan.

Also in the high option plan is the SilverScript Prescription Drug Plan. If you, or an annuitant's family member is enrolled in Medicare A, or Medicare A and B, you will be automatically enrolled in Medicare employee Group Waiver Plan (EGWP) on January 1, 2024 or later, once you become Medicare eligible. You will receive an annual \$600 Medicare Part B premium reimbursement per enrollee from the NALC Health Benefit Plan. You have the option of opting out of the EGWP and receive regular NALC Health Benefit Plan prescription drug coverage. However, you will not receive the \$600 annual premium reimbursement

In closing, the plans premiums only went up \$6.43 for individuals and \$10.49 for families. Retirees only saw individual up \$13.93, family \$22.72. How did your plan do?

SECURE AND EASY SLIDE DOG SPRAY HOLSTER!

VIDEO



[HTTPS://YOUTUBE/2BEN69t6CnQ](https://youtube.com/2BEN69t6CnQ)



BUY



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Basic Insurance in Retirement

By Chris Alessi, MBA/NSBA Representative

The amount of your basic insurance is equal to your salary rounded up to the next even thousand, plus \$2,000 dollars. In retirement this is your BIA (Basic Insurance Amount) at the time you separate as an employee. This amount continues until you reach the age 65, after which it may reduce based on the election options you choose when you retire. **You will not have Accidental Death & Dismemberment coverage in retirement.**

When you retire, you must choose the type of (reduction) you want by completing form: SF 2818, provided by your local personnel office. For Basic insurance, you choose **75% Reduction, 50% Reduction or NO Reduction.** You can change to 75% Reduction at any time; your coverage will be as if you had originally elected 75% Reduction and your “extra premium” will stop. You will not receive a refund of premiums.

What is 75% Reduction?

This means your basic insurance will reduce by 2% of the pre-retirement amount each month. The reduction starts at the beginning of the second month after your 65th birthday, or at retirement, whichever is later. Your basic insurance will continue to reduce until 25% of the pre-retirement amount remains. Your basic insurance is free once it starts to reduce. If you retire before age 65, the cost is \$0.3250 per \$1,000 of basic coverage.

What is 50% Reduction?

This means your basic insurance will reduce by 1% of the pre-retirement amount each month. The reduction starts at the beginning of the second month after your 65th birthday, or at retirement, whichever is later. Your basic insurance will continue to reduce until 50% of the pre-retirement amount remains. When you turn 65 your “regular” premium for basic insurance stops, but you continue to pay an extra premium for this choice (\$0.60 per each \$1,000 of your basic life insurance monthly). If you retire before age 65, the cost is \$0.925 per \$1,000 of basic coverage.

What is NO Reduction?

This means your basic insurance will not reduce. When you turn 65, your “regular premium” for basic insurance stops, but you continue to pay an extra premium for this choice (\$1.83 per each \$1,000 of your basic life insurance

monthly). If you retire before the age of 65, the cost is \$2.155 per \$1,000 of coverage.

The MBA has eight different Life Insurance policies that are good for up to \$100,000 from Term to Whole life policies; The MBA has very reasonable rates because there is no middle man and we pass the savings on to you. Please take a look at our insurance plans that will be better for you and your family in the future. You can go on line to nalc.org, click on departments and go to the Insurance department or you can call me for more information.

Take Care and have a Great New Year Ahead, God Bless You.

Muscular Dystrophy Fundraiser

At the February Union Meeting at the Jon Gaunce Union Hall there will be Costco pizza & hot dogs for sale.

All proceeds from the sale of this food will go to MDA.



Winding Our Way Through the Political Morass

By David Hyman, Branch 2902 Trustee & Political Liaison

Greetings Sisters & Brothers! This past year's long, hot labor summer resolved several large labor disputes—UPS was able to settle before a strike occurred, three auto manufacturers settled their UAW strike and the Directors Guild of America (DGA) and SAG/AFTRA both settled their strikes. There are still labor disputes in many other industries such as hospitality, nurses and Smart & Final just to name a few.

In mid November, the budget issue in Congress was voted on and temporarily funded until next year. The AFL-CIO contacted the L.A. Federation of Labor for assistance in lobbying Congressman Mike Garcia's office to encourage him to vote for the budget extension. The group of over a dozen veterans and retirees represented several different unions. Brother Frank Salazar and I represented Branch 2902. Garcia was one of the many Republicans to join the Democrats in supporting this funding bill. The budget funding next year might require two bills since part of the funding expires in January and part in February.

There has not been any significant progress in adding co-sponsors to the several bills we have been following. There is one new additional bill, H.R. 5995 by representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA) that would allow federal employees that were in previous non-career positions such as TEs or CCAs to make catch up retirement contributions to their current career positions for that previous time served. This bill has 42 co-sponsors.

The Social Security Fairness Act, H.R. 82, has 300 co-sponsors, with the Senate version, S 597 at 49. The bill could move forward if there are 60 co-sponsors - enough to prevent a filibuster. The Comprehensive Paid Leave Act, H.R. 856 has 37 co-sponsors. The companion Senate version, S 274, has 11 co-sponsors. The Shipping Equity Act, H.R. 372, has 18 co-sponsors. The Door to Door resolution, H. R. 376, has 32 co-sponsors including our local member, Tony Cardenas.

Representative Tony Cardenas has announced he will not seek re-election next year for the seat he has held for six terms. He has represented several of our offices in the north-east San Fernando Valley. Assembly member Luz Rivas is the front runner to replace Cardenas after next year's elections. Former speaker Kevin McCarthy announced he was resigning before his term ended. Unlike Cardenas who opted not to run again, McCarthy's retirement will saddle the taxpayers with the cost of a special election to fill his seat for the balance of his term. McCarthy is the only speaker in history to be voted out of the Speakership.

President Biden visited Las Vegas and Los Angeles this past December to promote a couple of infrastructure projects in his infrastructure bill. He pledged \$3 billion of the \$12 billion required for the bullet train between Las Vegas and Southern California, in Rancho Cucamonga. The environmental reviews and right of ways had been previously approved and construction could be completed before the 2028 Olympics. The President also approved \$3 billion in additional rail projects and touted union jobs, jobs and jobs. The President has more than a one track mind. He used to ride Amtrak regularly between Delaware and DC when he served in the Senate.

Congratulations to Shohei Ohtani, may he be the one to push the team over the October drought. That is the \$70 million per year question.

RETIREES LUNCH RAFFLE AT 12:30

JANUARY

Where: Golden Panda
1825 Madera Rd.
Simi Valley
When: Tuesday, January 16, 2024
Time: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

FEBRUARY

Where: Golden Panda
1825 Madera Rd.
Simi Valley
When: Tuesday, February 20, 2024
Time: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm



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THE TRUTH ABOUT ESTATE PLANNING, WILLS, TRUSTS & PROBATE



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- Probate is **VERY** expensive and the fees are set by statute. Example, an estate of \$500,000 (FMV Home \$490,000 and \$10,000 in bank accounts) has **statutory fees of \$26,000**. This can be avoided with proper planning including a Trust.
- If you don't have a legal plan, everything **does not** automatically go to your spouse or kids. It passes via intestate law which may not be what you would want.
- If you don't have a legal plan and you can't make decisions for yourself, a judge will decide who gets to make decisions for you and it is expensive to go through.

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BRANCH #2902 OFFICERS

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- James Perryman

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

- Albert Reyes

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT

- Alex Lopez

VICE PRESIDENT

- Walter Williams

FINANCIAL SECRETARY/TREASURER

- Mary Stanley

RECORDING SECRETARY

- Diane Dozal

DIRECTOR OF RETIREES

- Bev Sucich

MBA/NSBA REPRESENTATIVE

- Chris Alessi

HEALTH BENEFIT OFFICER

- Joe Gutierrez

SGT.-AT-ARMS

- Bob Golden

TRUSTEES:

- Marcos Aldrete
- Rochelle Harvey
- Ray Hill
- David Hyman
- Louie Rodriguez

WEBMASTER

- Larry Orcutt

SHOP STEWARD LIST

Agoura Hills Chief S.S.	Louie Rodriguez
Alternate S.S.	David Navarro
Chatsworth Chief S.S.	Robert Tracey
Fillmore Chief S.S.	Kathi Albritten
Moorpark Chief S.S.	Kathi Albritten
No. Hollywood Chief S.S.	Louie Rodriguez
Chandler	Louie Rodriguez
Laurel Canyon	Louie Rodriguez
Studio City	Louie Rodriguez
Valley Village	Louie Rodriguez
Northridge Chief S.S.	Robert Tracey
Porter Ranch	Robert Tracey
Ojai Chief S.S.	Call Union Hall
Oxnard Chief S.S.	Johnny Boyd
Pacoima Chief S.S.	Steve Dickerson
Reseda Chief S.S.	Call Union Hall
San Fernando Chief S.S.	Martin Diaz
M.C.A. S.S.	Javier Torres
M.C.A. Alternate S.S.	Diane Dozal
North Hills S.S.	Fernando Aguilar
North Hills Alternate S.S.	Diane Dozal
Sylmar / Main Office	Martin Diaz
Sylmar S.S.	Samuel Sabedra
Santa Paula Chief S.S.	Marcos Aldrete
Simi Valley Chief S.S.	Sal Lopez
Simi Valley S.S.	Durim Kamberi
Simi Valley Main S.S.	Glen Lopez
Mt. McCoy Station S.S.	Sal Lopez
Thousand Oaks Chief S.S.	Alex Lopez
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Attn: Mary Stanley,
Financial Secretary-Treasurer

Calendar of Events

- | | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| JAN 15 | Martin Luther King Jr. Day-Holiday |  |
| JAN 16 | Retiree Luncheon* 11:00 am
Golden Panda-Simi Valley | |
| JAN 18 | Regular Branch Meeting* 7:00 pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth | |
| FEB 1 | Executive Board Meeting* 6:00 pm
Executive Council Meeting* 7:00 pm | |
| FEB 14 | Valentines Day | |
| FEB 15 | Regular Branch Meeting* 7:00 pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth | |
| FEB 19 | President's Day-Holiday |  |
| FEB 20 | Retiree Luncheon* 11:00 am
Golden Panda-Simi Valley | |
| MAR 7 | Executive Board Meeting* 6:00 pm
Executive Council Meeting* 7:00 pm | |
| MAR 10 | Daylight Savings Time Begins |  |
| MAR 19 | Retiree Luncheon* 11:00 am
Golden Panda-Simi Valley | |
| MAR 21 | Regular Branch Meeting* 7:00 pm
Union Hall-Chatsworth | |

* Subject to Covid-19 restrictions