



# NALC Activist

A NEWSLETTER FOR BRANCH LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

## Grieving heat-related injuries

**W**hen it comes to heat-related injuries, prevention should always be the first priority. This prevention begins with educating letter carriers on steps to take before exposure to the heat and recognizing the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and injuries at the earliest stages. In addition to educating our members about the dangers of heat-related injuries, NALC's role in preventing future heat-related injuries also includes filing the grievances that support our prevention efforts. Grievances related to management's failure to properly address heat-related issues fall under the National Agreement provisions of Article 5, which incorporates external law including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations; Article 14 (Safety and Health);, and, Article 19 (Handbooks and Manuals), which incorporates OSHA regulations through Chapter 810 of the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)*. Article 14 establishes management's responsibility to provide safe working conditions for its employees. Article 14, Section 1 states in part:

### Section 1. Responsibilities

*It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations and to develop a safe working force. The Union will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility.*

Safety-related grievances filed under Article 14 receive priority in scheduling before an arbitrator. This is explained on page 14-2 of the March 2022 edition of the *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*, which states:

**Priority Handling of Safety Issues.** *Article 14.2 provides a special priority for the handling of safety and health issues, providing for cooperative correction of unsafe conditions and enforcement of safety rules,*

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## Attending your first national convention

**Y**ou just arrived in Boston and are full of nerves and excitement. This is your first national convention, and everyone told you that you must experience it to believe it. That is true, but does not help you know the ins and outs of the convention. A go-with-the-flow attitude is great, but this article will try and explain some things to you that are usually left unsaid.

### Find a branch mentor or friend

Having a guide to hang around with during your first convention is a great idea. There are a lot of moving pieces with getting to, getting in, listening to, and being a part of your first convention can appear daunting. Finding someone from your branch to take you under their wing and walk you through everything is a smart move. Most of the time, it will be assumed you know what to do. Having someone to answer all your questions will make your time at the convention less stressful and more enjoyable. Most experienced delegates will not mind sharing their past experiences with you.

### Boston

Boston is a big city with plenty to see and do. Keeping that in mind, big cities come with their own troubles. When you are out

exploring the city, keep your wits about you. Keep your headphones out of your ears and notice your surroundings. It is best to go out in groups or at least with a friend. Boston is a city with a rich history and tradition. Make sure to make some time to appreciate it.

### Buses from your hotel to the convention

The NALC provides buses from most of the hotels that are a part of the national block that are not within walking distance. The bus service is free of charge and an easy way to get back and forth to the convention every day. Save your money

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# Grieving heat-related injuries (continued)

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and requiring special handling of individual safety issues as they arise.

**Safety Grievances Filed at Formal Step A.** Article 14.2.(c) provides that safety and health grievances may be filed directly at Formal Step A of the grievance procedure. However, if a health or safety grievance is filed at Informal Step A instead, it is not procedurally defective for that reason.

When a letter carrier suffers a heat-related injury, NALC representatives should immediately investigate the causes of such injuries and determine if the injury may have been caused by a failure, on management's part, to provide safe working conditions. Some things to consider when investigating these types of grievances include:

- Have employees, including the injured employee, completed the proper training on how to prevent heat injuries? Union representatives should request any records of such training as well as interview employees to ensure they received the training.
- Did management ensure that the employees were provided with water, rest and shade, as recommended by OSHA and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)?
- Was management notified by the injured employee, or someone else, that the employee may be suffering from a heat-related condition? What actions did management take, or fail to take, to ensure employee safety?

## Training on heat safety

When investigating potential grievances resulting from a heat-related injury, union representatives should request training records that indicate whether employees have completed the required Heat Illness Prevention Program (HIPP) training through the Postal Service's HERO system. The training, which is required for all letter carriers who will perform street duties between April 1 and Oct. 31, is to be completed no later April 1 of each year. For those employees who do not receive the training prior to April 1 due to an absence from work, the training is to be provided prior to allowing employees to return to street duties. Union representatives should also interview employees to ensure that they have completed the training and there is no falsification of employee training records. For more information on HIPP training, go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). Under

the "Workplace Issues" tab, select "Safety and Health/Extreme weather."

## OSHA regulations and the USPS HIPP

The Postal Employees Safety and Health Enhancement Act of 1998 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 brought the United States Postal Service under the authority of OSHA. Under OSHA law and regulations, employers are responsible for providing workplaces free from known safety hazards. This includes protecting workers from extreme heat, which has been proven to be a known hazard.

Among the guidance that OSHA has developed for employers, is one titled *Using the Heat Index: A Guide for Employers*. These guidelines begin with the development of a heat-related illness prevention plan that should be implemented before heat index levels rise. It specifically addresses elements that should be included in the plan. These elements include providing water and rest areas, training managers for emergencies, acclimating workers through gradually increased workloads, and training. The guide can be found at [nalc.org/Workplace Issues/Safety and Health/Heat safety and extreme weather](http://nalc.org/Workplace Issues/Safety and Health/Heat safety and extreme weather).

In 2022, the Postal Service issued instructions to local management that detail its ongoing responsibilities relating to the HIPP. These instructions can be found at [nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health/extreme-weather](http://nalc.org/workplace-issues/safety-and-health/extreme-weather). Union representatives should review the detailed elements of compliance listed in these instructions titled: *Heat Illness Prevention Program Certification*. After review, union representatives should determine if management has failed to comply with any portion of these instructions that could have contributed to the heat-related injury and include such non-compliance in your arguments and contentions.

## Management's actions

When a heat-related injury occurs, union representatives should determine if management failed in its responsibility to either prevent or react properly to the injury. Unfortunately, management's actions, or lack of action, often contribute to heat-related injuries involving letters carriers. Local managers are provided with programs and applications, such as Delivery Operations Information System (DOIS) or the Performance Engagement Tool (PET), to assist them in projecting workloads for letters carriers on any given

day. None of these programs consider weather or other factors that affect working conditions.

It is all too common for management to focus on time projections while ignoring any aspects of safety that affect working conditions. Union representatives should investigate and determine if management failed to consider the aspects of temperature when providing daily expectations of performance to letter carriers.

Determine if management was properly trained and prepared for a known heat wave. Are they paying attention to concerns raised by our craft? Are they listening when we alert them that someone is suffering from the heat and that a potential heat-related injury could occur?

If so, did management take the appropriate action to prevent further injury or to ensure that immediate medical attention was provided? In your investigation, this information can best be obtained through interviews and statements of managers involved, any witnesses, or the injured employee.

## PS Form 1767: Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice

A PS Form 1767 should be filled out and submitted to the immediate supervisor to report any potential hazard or unsafe conditions you may believe contributed to the heat-related injury. Such unsafe conditions may include management's failure to follow proper procedures in preventing or acting upon a heat-related injury. Make sure you retain a copy of the submitted form for your records and inclusion in your grievance package.

## Handbooks, manuals and postal regulations

There are several resources, in addition to the National Agreement, that are available to assist union representatives in building their case files when investigating and grieving violations involving heat-related injuries. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), Chapter 8: Safety, Health, and Environment*
- USPS Heat Illness Prevention Program (HIPP) Certification
- *Handbook EL-802, Executives' and Managers' Safety and Health Program Transmittal Letter and Compliance Guide*
- OSHA Regulations: 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1900-1910.99 (citable under Articles 5 and 19 of the National Agreement)



- *Handbook M-39, Management of Delivery Services, Sections 115.4 and 134.5*
- *Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace (JSOV), dated February 14, 1992 (M-01242)*
- *Memorandum of Understanding, Re: Heat Abatement Program - Independence, MO, dated May 15, 2015 (M-01860)*

Union representatives should review these resources in when investigating, and, if necessary, filing a heat-related grievance. You should think about how management's inaction failed to provide a safe work environment for our employees. You should also consider which questions need to be asked when interviewing management. The following list forms a good starting point of the questions we need to ask management during an interview might be:

- Are you familiar with the USPS HIPP?
- Are you familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses?
- Do you know what the heat index was on the date of the heat-related injury?
- What actions did you take to ensure that employees were protected during this period of elevated heat index?
- Did the letter carrier that was injured, or anyone else, notify you that the carrier may be ill or showing signs of heat illness?
- Did you ensure the letter carrier was provided with emergency medical care?

These are only a few examples of interview questions. Management's responses to these types of questions will assist you in determining which portions of applicable laws and regulations management failed to follow and allow you to determine your arguments in building a grievance case file.

### Filing at Formal Step A and The Issue Statement, PS Form 8190 (Block 15)

You have conducted your investigation, received requested information, and conducted interviews and gathered statements. You have determined that a violation of the contract has occurred. It's time to start building your case file and prepare for the Informal Step A or Formal Step A meeting.

Safety-related grievances may be filed at the Informal Step A level; however, under the provisions of Article 15, Section 2.B, they may be filed directly at the Formal Step A level. Article 15, Section 2.B states:

*Any grievance initiated at Formal Step A,*

*pursuant to Article 2 or 14 of this Agreement, must be filed by submitting a Joint Step A Grievance Form directly with the installation head within 14 days of the date on which the Union or the employee first learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of its cause.*

Prior to initiating a grievance at the Formal Step A level, the steps in Article 1, Sections 2.A and 2.B should be followed. These sections state:

*(a) notify such employee's supervisor who will immediately investigate the condition and take corrective action if necessary;*

*(b) notify such employee's steward, if available, who may discuss the alleged unsafe condition with such employee's supervisor;*

If, after following these steps, the safety issue is not addressed, the grievance can be filed under the provisions of Article 14, Section 2.C, which states in pertinent part:

*(c) file a grievance at Formal Step A of the grievance procedure within fourteen (14) days of notifying such employee's supervisor if no corrective action is taken during the employee's tour;*

Once you have decided to file the grievance at the Formal Step A level, you need to develop your issue statement. A good example of an issue statement, which is found in Block 15 of the PS Form 8190, for grievances involving heat-related injuries might be:

*Did the Postal service violate, including but not limited to, Articles 5, 14, and 19 of the National Agreement, when it failed to provide a safe working environment which resulted in a heat-related injury? If so, what is the appropriate remedy?*

### Remedies

When requesting remedies for violations resulting in heat-related injuries, keep in mind that each case may have specific circumstances unique to the individual violations which may require specific remedies that address variable levels of harm to the letter carrier. In other words, the greater the harm, the stronger the remedy. The primary goal is to prevent future violations that result in heat-related injuries. With that in mind, the following are examples of remedies that may be requested:

1. That management cease and desist violating Articles 5, 14, and 19 of the National Agreement and be so ordered to comply with all applicable OSHA regulations

and provisions set forth in the USPS Heat Illness Prevention Program (HIPP).

2. That the unsafe conditions, which resulted in the heat-related injury, be immediately investigated and abated.
3. That proof of abatement be provided to [Letter Carrier and NALC Official] upon completion, and/or any other remedy the Step B team or an arbitrator deems appropriate.

### Filing OSHA Complaints

In addition to filing grievances after a heat-related injury occurs, a complaint may be initiated with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). You may file a complaint with DOL regarding violations of the OSHA regulations. The first is by downloading the OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool app and completing the following steps:

1. Open the app and press the "More" button on the bottom left of the screen
2. Press the "Contact OSHA/NIOSH" button
3. Contact OSHA either by calling the number, 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or by visiting the website at [osha.gov](http://osha.gov)
4. Under the "Take Action" menu, select "File a Complaint"
5. This takes you to the page identified as "How to File a Safety and Health Complaint," which lists your options

You may also file a complaint by visiting [osha.gov](http://osha.gov) and following Steps 4 and 5 listed above.

If you do file a complaint and/or grievance, please forward a copy to NALC's director of safety and health. It is recommended that every letter carrier use the OSHA/NIOSH Heat Safety Tool app each morning during the heat season to help determine what should be done each day to prevent heat injuries.

Also, after a heat-related injury has occurred, NALC requests that the employee or a union representative fill out a NALC Initial Heat Injury Report. Once the form is completed, it should be forwarded to the NALC director of safety and health and to the appropriate national business agent (NBA). A copy of the form can be found on NALC's safety page in the section titled "Enforcing heat safety rules."

For more information and resources available to union representatives for use in filing grievances related to heat injuries, visit [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). Under the "Workplace Issues" tab, click on the "Safety and Health" tab.

# Attending your first national convention (continued)

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and use the bus service instead of taxis and Ubers. Check your *Pocket Guide* for the bus schedule. Keep an eye on your time in the afternoon workshops. The last bus back to the hotels Monday through Thursday leaves at 6 p.m. You do not want to miss it.

## Registration

Each delegate must register that they arrived and will be in attendance for the convention. You will get your registration card, lanyard, and canvas bag of convention essentials. The registration line can be long at times but moves fast. It is a good time to strike up a conversation with the person next to you in line and start to feel the fellowship that the convention provides.



Make sure to go through the canvas bag you are handed at registration. The bag contains books you will use during convention, like the *Proposed Resolutions and Amendments* booklet and the *Pocket Guide*. The *Pocket Guide* is an essential source of information. It includes times and locations of workshops, bus schedules, and the locations and times of other events. The *Resolutions and Amendments* booklet is a must have during the general session. The work and business of the convention are done from this booklet.

## Sunday night meet-and-greet

On the night before the convention kicks off, there will be an official NALC meet-and-greet held in the convention center. There will be food, refreshments, live music, and fun to be had for all delegates. It will be your first real chance to see how big the convention body really is. There will be a sea of letter carriers. Make sure to mingle around the room and talk to fellow members from across the country.

## Exhibitors hall

Right next to the main hall is the exhibitors' hall. The exhibitors' hall is loaded with booths and kiosks associated with all things NALC. Check out the NALC Store to pick some convention merchandise. Every arm of the NALC has a booth set up to get your questions answered by NALC staff. There are also kiosks with experts from

Social Security, the Thrift Savings Plan and the Employee Assistance Program. The Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) has an area where you can sign up for the LCPF, raise your contribution, and pick up your LCPF T-shirt that all contributors wear on Thursday. There is even a post office set up so that you can mail all your goodies and swag home.

## Workshops

The NALC provides educational workshops before and after the general sessions Monday through Thursday. The morning workshops run from 7:30 to 9 a.m., and the afternoon sessions run from 3:15 to 4:45 p.m. or 15 minutes after the general session ends. Pro tip: There is a light breakfast served prior to the workshops beginning in the morning. The workshops cover a wide variety of subjects, all intended to educate letter carriers. Check out your NALC *Pocket Guide* for the list and times of each workshop so that you do not miss the classes you want to attend.

## Monday morning

The general session kicks off at 10 a.m. and runs to 3 p.m. without a break. You will need your delegate badge on you at all times. The convention hall can be cold, so it might be a good idea to bring a sweatshirt or light jacket. You also want to wear comfortable shoes. Dressing comfortably is acceptable on the floor. The convention center is a large place that will

# Letter carrier recommendations of things to do in Boston

## NBA Region 14 Rick DiCecca

**Fenway Park**—"If you are a sports buff, take a tour of Fenway Park. They let you behind the last manual scoreboard in the major leagues."

**Faneuil Hall**—"Faneuil Hall Marketplace is a good place to dine with a variety of restaurants."

**USS Constitution**—"If you are into history, check out the *USS Constitution*, or "Old Ironsides." It is the world's oldest commissioned warship that is still afloat."

## Boston Br. 34 President Tom Rooney

**Boston Freedom Trail**—"Boston is where the Revolution started. Check out the Boston Freedom Trail."

**North End**—"The North End has great

Italian restaurants and bakeries. I love a lobster tail pastry from Bova's."

**Duck Tours**—"The Duck Boats are a nice way to see Boston from the Charles River."

## Boston Br. 34 Executive Vice President Laura Fahey

**Encore Casino**—"If you like to gamble, I would take a water taxi to the Encore Casino."

**Shopping in Somerville**—"North of Boston, Somerville has plenty of stores and shops for those that like to shop."

**Mike's Roast Beef**—"My order is a 3 way on an onion roll, a large seasoned fries with extra cheese, and a vanilla milkshake. You cannot go wrong."



## Massachusetts State President Scott Doughty

**Paul Revere's House**—"Along the Freedom Trail is Paul Revere's House. If you like history, it is a must-see."

**Boston Common**—"Boston Common is over 350 years old. It is America's oldest park. There are beautiful views and it a wonderful place to take a walk."

**The campuses of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)**—"Both campuses are a great way to spend an afternoon in Boston. The buildings and campuses are beautiful and full of history."



require a lot of walking. There is no break for lunch. You might want to bring snacks and a drink to make it through the day.

Your first time entering the main hall of the convention is something you will not forget. You'll see thousands and thousands of union members with the same interests and job as you. Some branches wear colorful vests. This tradition started in the 1950s. The rows and aisles go on as far as the eye can see. The host branch and region sit up front. After that, the national business agents have a lottery to determine what section their members will sit in.

There are large signs that will recognize each region and state's seating section.

You are encouraged to move about your section, meet delegates from your region and reconnect with friends from other trainings or NALC events. The convention floor is the best place to meet NALC members from all over the country.

### Work of the convention

Kicking off each day, you will hear amazingly talented letter carriers sing the national anthem. If you have not already, you will learn the Letter Carrier Cheer. You will hear

from several guest speakers. But most importantly, as a delegate you will participate in the democratic process of making decisions for the future of our union. Being a delegate from your branch is a serious responsibility and one you should take pride in.

Make sure to ask your branch leadership what responsibilities you have as a branch delegate. Some branches ask paid delegates to attend a certain number of workshops, while others may ask for a report of your time at convention. Check with your leadership and find out what is expected of you.

## NALC Veterans Group supports veterans in Boston

Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces comprise almost a quarter of NALC's membership. These veterans traded their military uniforms for letter carrier uniforms, and they continue to serve their communities and this great nation. Created in 2015, the NALC Veterans Group seeks to provide active NALC military veterans with resources, information, and a sense of camaraderie. With more than 19,800 members and counting, the NALC Veterans Group, their families and branch members often collaborate on projects to help local veterans. These projects can include cleaning veterans' gravesites, talking with veterans about their time in the service, or visiting veterans in assisted-living homes with no family. Nationally, every two years at the national convention, the Veterans Group organizes a project to help veterans local to the convention site who are unhoused or are at risk.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has shown a substantial decrease in homelessness among veterans. While this reduction is encouraging, the needs of veterans struggling with homelessness, unemployment and other barriers to reintegration still exist. Of the veterans living in America today, more than 35,000 are homeless, and more than 15,000 experience unsheltered homelessness. Although they represent a small percentage of the entire general population, veterans make up nearly 20 percent of the homeless population.

More than 277,000 Veterans reside in the state of Massachusetts, and of them, 4.7 percent are unemployed, 6.1 percent live in poverty, and at least 1,200 are

homeless. Keep in mind, many of these veterans are not alone but experience homelessness with their families. Also, there are a substantial group of veterans who may not yet be unhoused, but are at critically at risk of becoming homeless.

With this in mind, NALC's Veterans Group will host a booth at the Boston Biennial National Convention all week. During that week, we will collect donations for the New England Center and Home for Veterans (NECHV). The monetary donations collected will go to the veterans in Boston and the surrounding area. The NECHV is a nonprofit organization and a national leader in housing and serving veterans who are at risk of homelessness. The mission of the NECHV is to equip veterans facing or at risk of homelessness with the tools for economic self-sufficiency and to provide them with a path to achieve successful and dignified independent living. NECHV is in downtown Boston and offers services throughout the region, and it supports veterans with innovative services that enable success, meaningful employment, and dignified, independent living.

The NALC is an essential partner in helping make NECHV one of the nation's most prominent resource providers for veterans of every era who face challenges and/or are at risk of homelessness. NALC's goal is \$50,000, but it's just a goal. Your gift will



provide necessary, immediate support to nearly 1,500 veterans in the Greater Boston area. Your gift makes a huge difference for veterans, no matter how large or small. For more information on NALC's partnership with NECHV or to make an electronic donation to this worthwhile cause, visit the secure website <https://p2p.onecause.com/nehcvlettercarriers>.

If you prefer not to donate electronically, checks or money orders payable to the New England Center and Home for Veterans can be mailed to the address below or bring them to the Veterans Group booth at the National Convention:

National Association of Letter Carriers  
Attn: Christina Vela Davidson  
1101 Northchase Parkway SE, Suite 3  
Marietta, GA 30067

For more information on NALC's Veterans Group or questions about this project, contact Assistant to the President for Community Services Christina Vela Davidson at 202-662-2489 or [cveladavidson@nalc.org](mailto:cveladavidson@nalc.org).

NALC's Veterans Group strives to make a positive impact not only with local veteran programs, but throughout our communities. We are "veterans helping veterans." Thank you for your service today, tomorrow and forever!

# National-level grievances and interpretive disputes

**A**rticle 15 of the National Agreement provides the structure for grievance-arbitration procedures that are negotiated by the parties to resolve disputes. National-level grievances are often initiated through an interpretive dispute. Either party at the Step B level or national business agent (NBA)/area level may refer an issue to Headquarters if they think a grievance involves an interpretive issue.

The *Joint Contract and Administration Manual (JCAM)*, 15.2 Step B (e) provides the following procedure for certain representatives to have an issue reviewed if they determine the facts of a grievance may involve an interpretive issue:

*If either member of the Step B team, or the NBA or USPS Area representative believes that an impasse grievance involves an interpretive issue, the issue will be discussed with the appropriate national union/management representatives at the headquarters level. When either party's national representative determines the issue to be interpretive, a written notice will be sent to the other party specifying in detail the facts giving rise to the dispute, the precise interpretive issues to be decided and the initiating party's contentions. The grievance(s) will be held at the Step B level pending settlement or arbitration of the issue at the national level.*

## Interpretive dispute

An interpretive issue can be referred to Headquarters from either NALC or USPS representatives. Once an interpretive issue is referred to Headquarters for review, the Contract Administration Unit will discuss the issue to determine if an interpretive issue exists. The parties then send out notification to the field of a possible interpretive issue, and cases are placed on hold if they are relative to the issue until it is determined if there is an interpretive issue or not. Once reviewed, if it is determined there is not an interpretive issue, the case is sent back to the current step, and all other cases being held are returned back to their current step.

If after review it is determined that there is an interpretive issue, the parties will notify the appropriate national

union/management representative in writing and formally initiate the dispute at the interpretive step.

The National Agreement at Article 15.2 Step B (e) explains the process once an interpretive dispute is initiated:

*In any interpretive dispute properly initiated at this Step by the appropriate National Union/Management Representative, the parties shall meet at the National level promptly, but in no event later than thirty (30) days after initiating such dispute in an effort to define the precise issues involved, develop all necessary facts and reach agreement. The Union representative shall have authority to resolve the dispute in whole or in part. The Employer's representative shall have authority to resolve the dispute in whole or in part. The parties' national representatives may, by mutual agreement, return any dispute to Step B where (a) the parties agree that no national interpretive issue is fairly presented or (b) it appears that all relevant facts have not been developed adequately. In such event, the parties shall meet at Step B within fifteen (15) days after the dispute is returned to Step B. Thereafter the procedures and time limits applicable to Step B grievances shall apply. Should the parties at the National level fail to reach agreement, then within fifteen (15) days of such meeting each party shall provide the other with a statement in writing of its understanding of the issues involved, and the facts giving rise to the interpretive dispute. In the event the parties have failed to reach agreement within sixty (60) days of the initiation of the dispute, the Union then may appeal it to national arbitration within thirty (30) days thereafter. Any local grievances filed on the specific interpretive issue shall be held in abeyance at the appropriate level pending resolution of the national interpretive dispute.*

The national parties will discuss their understanding of the issues presented in the grievance and provide their respective positions on the specific interpretive issue to attempt to resolve the dispute.

Article 15.3.F of the National Agree-

ment provides the process by which interpretive disputes are handled:

*It is agreed that in the event of a dispute between the Union and the Employer as to the interpretation of this Agreement, such dispute may be initiated at the national level by the President of the Union. Such a dispute shall be initiated in writing and must specify in detail the facts giving rise to the dispute, the precise interpretive issues to be decided and the contention of the Union. Thereafter the parties shall meet at the interpretive step within thirty (30) days in an effort to define the precise issues involved, develop all necessary facts, and reach agreement. Should they fail to agree, then, within fifteen (15) days of such meeting, each party shall provide the other with a statement in writing of its understanding of the issues involved, and the facts giving rise to such issues. In the event the parties have failed to reach agreement within sixty (60) days of the initiation of the dispute at the interpretive step, the Union then may appeal it to arbitration, within thirty (30) days thereafter.*

Currently, there are two cases pending at the national level as interpretive disputes. Once an issue commences at the interpretive step, all grievances pertaining to that issue are placed on hold in the grievance process pending resolution of the interpretive issue. These cases are identified below with a brief synopsis of the core interpretive dispute being advanced. The open cases as of this writing are:

1. Qo6N-4Q-C-09038600—  
Subcontracting versus 2006 MOUs  
NALC brought this case to the national level. This case concerns issues related to implementation of, and compliance with, the Memorandums of Understanding Re: Article 32 Committee and MOU Re: Subcontracting or new deliveries on Contract Delivery Service (CDS) routes that are not in-growth. These MOUs were implemented on Sept. 11, 2007, and placed additional prohibitions on contracting city letter carrier work.

2. Q11N-4Q-J 16655901—

City/rural jurisdictional case

USPS brought this case to the national level. USPS framed the issue as whether a jurisdictional dispute initiated by the NALC that concerns work assigned or being assigned to rural letter carriers may be appealed to arbitration pursuant to Article 15.4 of the USPS/NALC collective-bargaining agreement.

This issue statement can be misleading. This case arose as a result of USPS doing away with a collection route and putting the work back on the routes where the collection boxes were located. A few of the boxes were located in rural territory, and USPS removed this collection box work from our craft and assigned it to the rural craft. As such, this case involves the narrow issue regarding the assignment of collection boxes. No other type of city/rural cases (territory disputes) should be held for this case.

**Arbitration—national level**

We currently have just one issue pending a decision at the national level. The open case as of this writing is:

1. 4B19N-4B-C 23120456—

Non-Payment of Wages—PostalEase Hack (6X19N-6X-C 23276415)

The issue in this case is whether the Postal Service has violated various provisions of the National Agreement by failing to reimburse the grievant for the loss of his paycheck. During the meeting, NALC identified the interpretive dispute as being the interpretation of what establishes an employee being paid in accordance with the Agreement. According to the Postal Service, criminals caused the direct deposits of certain employees to be routed to bank accounts not associated or controlled by the employees. The NALC argued that the Postal Service has both a legal and contractual obligation to pay employees for their work, and to adequately protect access to employee’s electronic

payroll information. Failure to pay an employee for hours worked is a clear violation of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, as well as the National Agreement.

The Postal Service argued that the employees bear responsibility for the loss because they logged into a fake LiteBlue website. The NALC contends that the Postal Service is solely responsible for administering LiteBlue and determining the level of security needed to access the website. Many employees who were enrolled in direct deposit via PostalEase fell victim to a criminal attack on LiteBlue. It resulted in city letter carriers and other postal employees’ wages being diverted and stolen. Prior to the attack, the Postal Service had failed to employ basic security protocols to prevent unauthorized access of employee accounts. In particular, the service failed to implement multi-factor authentication (MFA), among other available security measures for employees wishing to log into the LiteBlue website. MFA is required by the Handbook AS-805, Information Security, which was updated in June 2021.

The grievance was presented at national-level arbitration before Arbitrator Dennis Nolan Jan. 23-24, 2024, and briefs were due April 15. As of this writing, we are awaiting the decision by Arbitrator Nolan.

**National-level cases recently resolved**

Two national-level cases have recently been resolved through an agreement with the Postal Service. Here is a brief description of each case:

1. Q06N-4Q-C-12180373—

When the Oct. 22, 2008, new delivery MOU expired

This case concerned the question of whether the MOU Re: Assignment of City Delivery expired at midnight on Nov. 20, 2011, or if it continued until the successor National Agreement was settled through interest arbitration on Jan. 10, 2013.

• M-02001—March 1, 2024—National-level interpretive step settlement for grievance number Q06N-4Q-C 12180373. The national parties agreed that the expiration of the Oct. 22, 2008, MOU Re: Assignment of City Delivery, coincides with Arbitrator Das’s interest arbitration award dated Jan. 10, 2013. It was agreed that any new delivery growth that was improperly assigned during the time frame in question, Nov. 20, 2011, through Jan. 10, 2013, will be properly reassigned.

2. Q06N-4Q-C-11377406—

Implementation of the caser/street-er test program

NALC brought this case to the national level after USPS implemented a unilateral test in 2012 that was similar to its more recent consolidated casing test. This case concerned the question of whether the Postal Service may suspend compliance with the National Agreement under the guise of conducting a test.

• M-02000—March 1, 2024—National-level interpretive step settlement for grievance number Q06N-4Q-C 11377406. The parties agreed the casers/deliverers test has concluded and that the data collection and testing did not involve or result in any changes to current work measurement systems, work, or time standards. The test also did not result in any permanent changes to the route structure or route evaluation and/or adjustment process in the city letter carrier craft. As a result, it was agreed to close this case without prejudice to the position of either party in this or any other matter. Additionally, any remaining issues will be subsequently resolved in accordance with the collective-bargaining agreement.

As always, NALC will provide updates on any future developments regarding any national level grievances or interpretive disputes that may arise.



# Education: Leadership Academy

“It changed my whole outlook. It’s given me a whole different perspective—the perspective to understand what I’m learning. It has given me the confidence to learn and do new jobs in the branch. I feel that I can do anything I’m asked to do.” This is what Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack Julion, then a recent graduate of Leadership Academy Class 2, said in 2007.

Sixteen years later, Julion presided over the graduation ceremony of Leadership Academy 27. To say that the program that retired Executive Vice President Jimmy Williams put together 20 years ago has succeeded would be an understatement.

More than 800 members have now graduated from the Leadership Academy after gaining acceptance, and then working hard for five months to earn their diplomas. Leadership Academy Class 29 starts in August, and applications are now being accepted for two classes in 2025.

Thirty members participate in each class, and applications far outnumber the slots available. Applications for the 2025 classes will be accepted until Friday, Sept. 27. Members can print or download the application form, which is available on the front page of the NALC’s website, [nalc.org](http://nalc.org).

“To see that we receive 10 times the number of applications for the 30 slots in each class is a testimony to the strength of Leadership Academy,” President Brian L. Renfroe, a Leadership Academy graduate, said. “The NALC has a constant growth of members getting involved in their union. The Leadership Academy is the perfect place for them to get the tools they need to hit the ground running as the present and future leaders of this union at all its levels.”

Each application is reviewed by the applicant’s respective national business agent (NBA) and President Renfroe. President Renfroe then chooses two participants from each of the NALC’s 15 regions after consulting with their NBA to make

up the group of 30 for each class.

Each trainee works closely with a mentor—their branch president, another branch activist, and someone hopefully that has graduated from the Leadership Academy and understands what they will be up against. Mentors agree to advise or assist the students throughout the five-month-long process, assisting trainees with projects they complete between classes, and providing them with opportunities for greater activism in the union.

## A tough, comprehensive curriculum

“Work ethics matter a great deal,” says Keisha Lewis, Region 1 NBA, Leadership Academy instructor and Leadership Academy graduate. “To succeed, Leadership Academy trainees must make a serious commitment to work hard throughout the learning process.

Former Region 6 NBA and Leadership Academy Instructor Troy Clark agrees, saying, “Getting accepted is the easy part. Working hard is where the rubber meets the road at Leadership.”

Jimmy Williams and his team designed the Academy curriculum to be a comprehensive “boot camp” introducing the students to a broad range of leadership fundamentals. The curriculum introduces every major skill and area of knowledge that a union member needs.

The curriculum is designed to be taught directly by national resident officers and national staff. Participants gain a unique perspective. “The misconception is that the Leadership Academy is three weeks of training with contractual content, it’s not. It’s three weeks of preparation for success and gave me the view from 20,000 feet, an awareness of the larger issues facing the USPS and the NALC,” said Wayne Green, Winston-Salem, NC Branch 461 president and Class 26 graduate.

## Active learning

The Leadership Academy emphasizes the progressive teaching techniques that all instructors use in the classroom. The Leadership Academy is based on all instructors using methods on the “active learning” concept. Active learning means learners are encouraged

to discuss issues, solve problems, write papers, complete projects, and collaborate with fellow students in their learning.

Chris Wittenburg, former Region 7 NBA, current Leadership Academy instructor, and Class 1 graduate put it best when he said, “We’re not lecturing all day, trying to stuff facts into people’s brains. That kind of teaching is not just boring, it’s also ineffective. People learn best when they participate in their own learning, and when they use their new knowledge and skills with their own experience.”

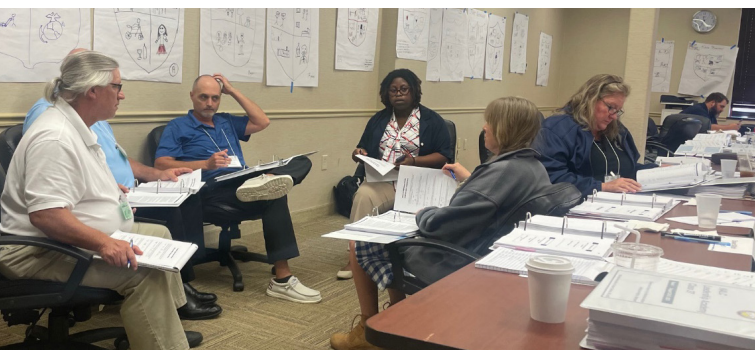
Trainees put their learning to work immediately in projects that they complete in their home branches. During Week 1 of classroom training, participants plan their projects and obtain their mentors’ and instructors’ approval. The projects must relate to a topic addressed in that week’s training. For instance, participants learn and practice training techniques during Week 1, and participants often choose projects involving training sessions in their branches.

After the class, trainees return home and work with mentors to complete their projects during the two months between classes. Each participant composes a written project report, turned in before the next week of training. As part of the writing skills segment, NALC staff editors mark up the reports for grammar, clarity, organization, etc.. Leadership Academy continues to help participants improve their writing. At Week 2 of training, participants plan a second project, and repeat the process during the break before Week 3.

The projects have varied widely. Participants have researched and written about the history of their branches. Others have taught classes on topics they learned at the Academy. Still others have written branch newsletter articles, run charity events, or recruited Letter Carrier Political Fund contributors. All participants have put their Academy learning to work for the union’s benefit.

Although the Academy curriculum is varied, it is neither light nor easy. During classroom sessions, participants learn all day then they attend night sessions during most evenings. To complete projects at home, participants must juggle Academy work along with the demands of carrying the mail, their regular union work, and family responsibilities.

*Continued on page 11*





# Thoughts on the Leadership Academy

**Jose Romero, Class 27**—Leadership Academy was more than I could have ever expected. Leadership Academy was the most in-depth and effective training I have had to opportunity to attend. Every day was filled with classes conducted by dedicated facilitators and national officers. I gained effective communication and leadership skills, as well as an overall knowledge of issues affecting active and retired letter carriers. Meeting and interacting with national officers was an everyday occurrence. Assistant Secretary-Treasurer Mack Julion stayed after class one day to explain to me the approval of our recent branch bylaws submission. As a graduate of Leadership Academy, I realize that mentoring and training future leaders is one of the most important responsibilities we have as leaders.

**Yvette Kinard, Class 27**—Prior to the Leadership Academy, I held various positions within my branch. I have always had the desire to assist my fellow carriers and tried my very best to relay everything that I have learned. Public speaking was never one of my strengths, and I oftentimes struggled to find my union voice. However, the need to do better and learn more was always at the forefront of my mind. Even though I held many positions within my branch, I never considered myself a leader or mentor. I was simply a member who wanted to learn and do more to help my fellow members. My branch president (mentor) recommended that I apply to the Leadership Academy because he saw potential in me, which, I must admit, I struggled at the time to see in myself. I had no inkling of what to expect or how it would change my union career for the better.

When I received my acceptance letter into Class 27, I was both nervous and excited. The first week of classes were intense, not to imply that the other weeks were less rigorous. Meeting everyone during Week 1 was intimidating, but it gave me a sense of pride knowing that I was surrounded by so much knowledge. The facilitators and guest speakers during my weeks at the Academy pushed and challenged us to strive for more. The classes and projects gave us the skills needed to become lifelong learners, teachers and mentors. Attending and graduating from the Leadership Academy was a privilege. After Week 1, I thought I could do so much within the union and by



Week 3, I knew I could. I returned to my branch as a better communicator, educator and mentor. The Leadership Academy taught me that knowledge is meant to be shared and that the importance of mentoring people is to build a stronger union. Thanks to the skills I learned during my time at the Leadership Academy, my union voice became stronger and public speaking became easier. If you are thinking of applying, do it; it is a decision you will not regret.

**Tyrone Valdez, Class 26**—As a union representative, communication is paramount. Whether dealing with a grievant, meeting with postal management or training fellow union stewards, conveying a message requires a multitude of skill. My time at Leadership Academy 26 opened numerous avenues to which I was able to learn and apply these methods.

**James Frankford, Class 26**—Mentors in your branch or region may be pushing you to apply to Leadership Academy; you should. Not for their sake, but for yours. I probably fell into the category of I wanted to go, I wanted the experience, and I wanted to make my many mentors proud. However, I didn't know how much I needed Leadership Academy or how much I would learn and grow from the experience. Leadership Academy is a challenge you take on to better yourself as a leader and as an NALC member. What also occurs is that the knowledge you gain benefits your branch and region as a whole. I'm sure that every person who applies for Leadership Academy has thoughts as to what it is about—I know I did, and I know I partly missed the point until I got there.

Leadership Academy is a lot of work, takes you outside of your comfort zone, and rewards you with knowledge, confidence, and a group of fellow classmates you form a lifelong bond with. Take the

step to better yourself for your branch and the NALC as a whole. It's a big step, but take it; I know you will appreciate the honor it is to become a graduate of the NALC Leadership Academy.

**Jenilee Jackson, Class 26**—When I first stepped into a leadership role in my branch, I felt I was completely, totally, and absolutely in over my head. I wanted to help, but I didn't have a great base of knowledge or experience to build on. I gradually learned more and gained confidence in my role as a shop steward, but when it came time to step into a bigger role, I still didn't feel prepared. Thankfully, I have a mentor who helped walk me through many aspects of this new position, who answers many of my questions, and who has helped me learn how to find many answers for myself. I also decided to sign up for every training that was available, and one of them was the NALC Leadership Academy. I was accepted as a part of Class 26 for early 2023, and since graduating I have continually used what I learned during my time there to help my branch at the local level. I learned how to manage my time more effectively, how to have confidence in myself when addressing issues with management or communicating information to my members, and a lot about my own strengths and weaknesses. I met other people who are fairly new in their time with the NALC and people with decades of experience—and I found out that no matter how much experience you have, no one is above learning something new. I learned there is no cookie-cutter template for a leader, but that everyone is different, and everyone has something to offer.

The NALC is not built on the back of any one individual—Leadership Academy showed me that it takes an entire team of people at the local, regional and national levels in order to be successful. I was also able to see that the NALC is not stagnant, but instead is a living, growing, changing organization that has to adapt to the challenges and the needs of its members as they arise. In order to do this, it is imperative that we take part in its growth at the local level by identifying those with the potential and the drive to be union activists, and by mentoring them and passing our hard-won wisdom on to them. We hear all the time that knowledge is power,

*Continued on page 11*

# Legislation: Engaging our elected officials to support the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act

While NALC has built an impressive legislative and political network, none of it could work without the contribution of individual NALC members. While the branches are the strength of the state associations, individual members are the strength of the branches. Members who may or may not be otherwise involved can play an important role in legislative activities. Two main ways that the union calls on members to contribute are through donations to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) and by responding to calls to action through the NALC website or app.

Asking your representative to sign onto the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/

S. 4356) is a top priority for the NALC. This call to action is critical for the safety of letter carriers as they deliver the nation's mail.

Letter carriers know that since the inception of the Postal Service nearly 250 years ago, we have delivered to every community on every street in the United States rarely being the targets of violence. In recent years, that has changed. Since 2020, there have been more than 2,000 crimes committed against letter carriers on the job. Letter carrier robberies climbed to 643 last year, an increase of nearly 30 percent.

The Protect Our Letter Carriers Act includes three important provisions to deter these crimes from happening. It would:

1. Provide \$7 billion in funding over the next five years (\$1.4 billion annually) for the Postal Service to secure its infrastructure, including the installation of high-security collection boxes and the replacement of items carried by letter carriers with more secure electronic versions.
2. Increase prosecution rates for these crimes by requiring the attorney general to appoint an assistant U.S. attorney in each judicial district to prioritize any case involving an assault or crime against a letter carrier.
3. Strengthen sentencing guidelines for these crimes, ensuring that these crimes are treated in the same manner as assaults on federal law enforcement officers.



To take action and contact your members of Congress, please follow these steps:

1. Go to [nalc.org/action](https://nalc.org/action).
2. Click the “Take Action” button under the “Enough is Enough: Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/S. 4356)” box.
3. If you have never registered in NALC’s Legislative Action Center (which is separate from the Members Only section), follow the steps on the right of your screen to register.
4. Once you are registered, log in with your First Name + Last Name + ZIP + Last 4 digits of Social Security Number, select “Go!”
5. If you are a “Jr.,” your username will be First Name+ Last Name-JR+ ZIP + Last 4 digits of Social Security Number—(after your last name, add a hyphen and JR.) select “Go!”
6. Next, you’ll see your representative selected with email checked and a form email ready to be sent.
7. Select “Go!” and an email will be sent. You can also copy and paste the form letter to a Word doc and mail a copy to your representative.

Tips for your branch:

- Remind members at all functions to take action and send out letters on current legislative issues.
- Put reminders and sample letters in local newsletters.
- Put together a special letter-writing meeting after work at a location near their post office(s)—(e.g., pizza par-

lor) and provide refreshments.

If your branch or region has meetings virtually, your legislative and political organizer can join the meeting to help your members and answer any questions.

The Protect Our Letter Carriers Act is essential to deterring these crimes from happening and keeping letter carriers safe on the job. All NALC members are encouraged to get involved, take action, and make our collective voice heard.

**NALC**  
BRIAN L. RENFROE, PRESIDENT

## Take Action

Take action today!

### Current Issues

Enough is Enough: Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629/S. 4356)

Since 2020, there have been more than 2,000 crimes committed against letter carriers on the job. Many of these attacks involve a gun or another weapon. This bipartisan legislation would deter these crimes by:

- devaluing and securing key infrastructure
- increasing prosecution rates for these crimes
- strengthening sentencing guidelines for these crimes

[Click here](#) for the fact sheet.

[Read More](#) [Take Action](#)



# Leadership Academy (continued)

Continued from page 8

## A powerful bond

Participants gain something else, too, in Leadership Academy training—lasting bonds with the union and with fellow trainees. “Friendships I made during Leadership Academy will last my entire union life and beyond. It’s a lasting bond. The first week we felt like we were in this by ourselves. By the second week we were good friends, and by Week 3 we were like family,” said Class 26 graduate and Branch 530 member Chad Fallecker.

Classmates reach out to each other for help with problems they have defending the members. It is an ongoing network that lasts well beyond at the Leadership Academy. “It’s not in the curriculum,” says Jimmy Williams, “but the bonds between people are powerful glue binding the union together. At the Leadership Academy, the shared experience has built friendships that span the country and the union.”

“We hope that all members take advantage of the trainings that the NALC provides at every level of our union. Training is where the leaders of our branches, state associations, regions, and at a national level take shape,” President Renfroe said. “Training is essential for our union to remain strong, and we are committed to providing training that lives up to that standard.”

Continued from page 9

but the real power comes when we take that knowledge and pass it on to the next group of leaders, to the next generation. Our goals are greater than our differences, and it takes all of us working together to build a strong union for our members.

**Wayne Green, Class 26**—Through the Leadership Academy I have had the opportunity to not only meet sisters and brothers across every region encompassed by the NALC, but to also work on projects, laugh, dine, and encourage one another along the way. To get a phone call, text message, or that friendly handshake or hug at a national convention is true evidence that these relationships and bonds truly last a lifetime. So, keep in mind, if you are not selected during your first attempt, you are not alone. A true leader must first successfully grow themselves before successfully growing others.

**Wayne Harlow, Class 25**—My experience at Leadership Academy was a great one. Of all the things I learned, the one thing that not only benefited me, but also the members of my



branch, and state association, was speech week. Speech week will give you the confidence to stand up to management in defense of your members. There is nothing these days I enjoy more than standing up to management. As a union advocate, not only learning how to represent members, but learning how to stand your ground is crucial!

The second most important thing I learned was the networking in progress. There is nothing better than bonding with other NALC advocates whom you can reach out to on a regular basis regarding grievances. To think I have NALC friends all the way across the country who I can reach out to for advice on grievances issues and get a response within an hour is as good as it gets! If you ever get a chance to go, do it. Until then, apply over and over, as I did, until you get accepted.

USPS

## BY THE NUMBERS

### USPS Operations Second Quarter, FY 2024

	Number	Chg. from SPLY*
Total mail volume year-to-date (Millions of pieces)	58,513,642	-5.9%
Mail volume by class (YTD in millions)		
First Class	23,700,535	-4.0%
Marketing mail	29,346,776	-8.4%
Shipping and packages	3,749	3.4%
Periodicals	1,402,510	-8.8%
International	3,583,221	3.6%

### USPS Operations Second Quarter, FY 2024 (millions)

	Number	Chg. from SPLY*
Operating revenue	\$41,326	1.3%
Operating expenses	\$45,090	1.0%
Controllable operating income	\$155	-149.8%
Workers’ comp adjustments	\$1,765	23.8%
Net operating income	\$(3,540)	0.9%

### Employment 2024 - PP15

	Number	Chg. from SPLY*
City carrier employment	177,928	2.5%
Full time	166,139	0.5%
PT regular	370	-1.1%
PTF	11,419	42.9%
City carrier assistant 1	30,077	-10.1%
City carrier assistant 2	14	-41.7%
City carriers per delivery supervisor	7.5	-8.6%
Career USPS employment	507,798	1.7%
Non-career USPS employment	96,167	-7.8%

\*SPLY=Same Period Last Year  
This information compiled by the NALC Research Department from USPS reports.

# Teaching tool: An overview of the grievance-arbitration process

**W**hat is a grievance, where does it start, and where does it end? This article will explore the life of a grievance, the time limits, and who takes part in each step of the process.

Article 15 of the National Agreement is titled “Grievance-Arbitration Procedure” and is a vital portion of the agreement to any would-be or current shop steward. It sets the rules of the procedure and must be well understood by any grievance handler. Out of the gate, Article 15 defines a grievance as a dispute, difference, disagreement or complaint between the parties related to wages, hours and conditions of employment. It goes on to explain that a grievance will include, but is not limited to, the complaint of an employee or of the union that involves the interpretation, application of, or compliance with the provisions of the National Agreement or any local memorandum of understanding (LMOU). Although the definition of a grievance can be broad, a good grievance will include specific provisions of the agreement that were allegedly violated.

The first step of the grievance procedure is called Informal Step A. At the Informal Step A meeting, any employee who feels aggrieved can discuss the issue with the immediate supervisor within 14 days of the date on which the employee or the union first learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of the cause. This meeting would be the Informal Step A filing date. The employee, if they wish, could be accompanied by the steward or, after discussing the matter with the steward, have the union conduct the Informal Step A on their own. The best bet for an aggrieved employee is to always request time with the shop steward from the get-go to discuss the issue. This allows the shop steward to become aware of the issue as soon as possible and begin an investigation as necessary, while all the facts of the situation are still clear. Sometimes a grievance is actually just a gripe and might be something that management is clearly allowed to do under the terms of the agreement, and therefore not a grievance. Effective shop stewards will investigate the issue and tell a letter carrier when their complaint is not a grievance and why.

Shop stewards are fellow letter carriers

with special training and knowledge of the contract and are the front line in enforcing the terms of the agreement. They can be elected or appointed by the branch president. Almost everyone who volunteers to be a steward started with no experience. They learn as they go and take advantage of local and regional training. NALC’s *Shop Steward Guide* and grievance starters are an invaluable resource and should be used by all shop stewards.

At every step of the grievance, the union and the corresponding management representative have the authority to resolve the grievance in whole or in part. However, no resolutions or settlements at the Informal Step A level set a precedent for any purpose. This can be fine when management is willing to admit to their error, prevent the error from reoccurring, and to make the grievant (or grievants) whole. Otherwise, precedents are important to prevent recurring issues.

The time limits of a grievance are very important. Each step has specific time limits, and it is always the union’s responsibility to timely appeal to the next step as necessary. In the case of the Informal Step A meeting, if no resolution is reached by the parties, the union, if it wishes to continue the dispute, must appeal the grievance to the next step within seven days of the date of the discussion.

The second step in the process for an unresolved grievance is Formal Step A. However, there are some cases in which a grievance can (but is not required) be immediately filed at Formal Step A, bypassing Informal Step A. These would be grievances alleging a violation of Articles 2 (Non-Discrimination and Civil Rights) and 14 (Safety and Health). Grievances initiated at Formal Step A must be filed by submitting a Joint Step A Grievance Form directly with the installation head within 14 days of the date on which the union or the employee first learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of its cause.

After a grievance is appealed or initiated at Formal Step A, the installation head or designees will meet with the steward or union representative as expeditiously as possible, but no later than seven days following receipt of the Joint Step A Grievance Form unless the parties agree upon

a later date. If the installation head or designee fail to schedule a meeting within the prescribed time limits, the union is still responsible for the timely appeal to the next step of the procedure, regardless of management’s failure to meet. Again, the union is the moving party and responsible for keeping the grievance trucking through the process. Missing the time limits can be fatal to a grievance and one of the most consequential missteps in the grievance procedure.

The Formal Step A representative is a shop steward or a designated union representative. They are typically experienced shop stewards with more knowledge of the grievance-arbitration process and the National Agreement. They may attend branch and regional trainings, or the Advanced Formal A and Beyond national training.

Advanced Formal A and Beyond is a weeklong training session that teaches participants to look at every Formal Step A case file from an arbitration advocate’s point of view. Emphasis is placed on handling situations where management fails (or refuses) to follow the grievance procedure, which is particularly disruptive and only generates more grievances. More information and applications can be found on the NALC website.

If the Formal Step A parties are unable to resolve the grievance, the union can appeal the grievance to the next step (Step B) within seven days. The parties at Step B are also known as the dispute resolution team (DRT). Anytime the DRT reviews a case, its goal is to write an educational decision so that the local parties (ideally) can prevent the same disputes from reoccurring.

Representatives at Step B must undergo a weeklong joint USPS/NALC training and pass a test to qualify. The training includes contract application, decision writing, computer-based research and dispute resolution skills.

When the DRT is unable to resolve a grievance, team members write up an impasse and send it to the appropriate NBA’s office. NBA offices review the Step B impasse and the case file to determine if it wants to appeal the case to regional arbitration. Prior to the arbitration date, the NBA’s office and/or the advocate



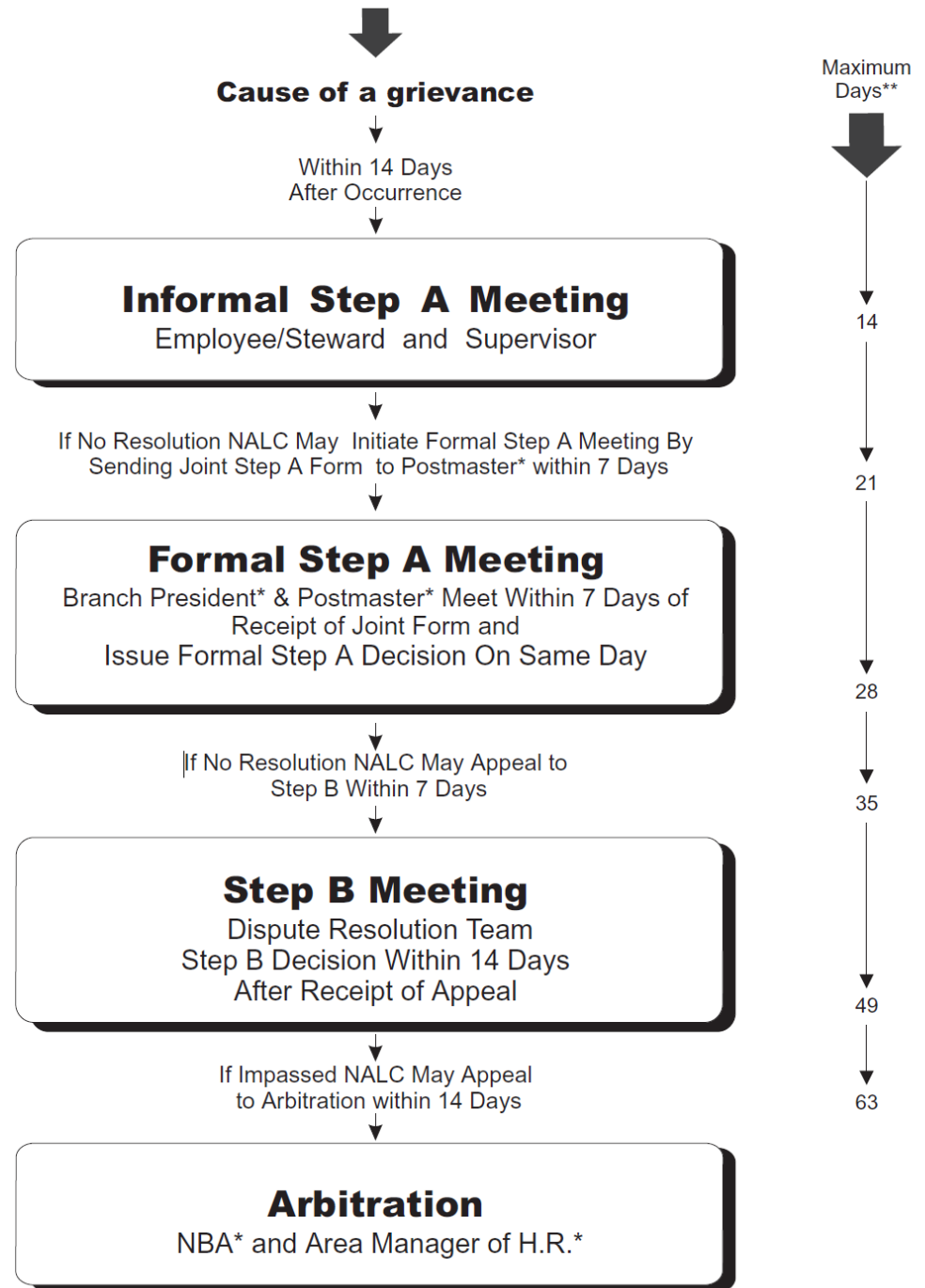
assigned to the case will speak with their counterparts at USPS in an attempt to resolve the case in what is referred to as a pre-arbitration settlement.

When the case remains unresolved and appealed to arbitration, it can be appealed to either regular or expedited arbitration. Expedited arbitration is what it sounds like—a quicker resolution process. For specific issues defined in the contract, such as minor discipline like a letter of warning, or hold-downs, which tend to be less complex, they can be better served in expedited arbitration where a decision is rendered on a faster time frame. Regular arbitration is the most common avenue and better suited for complex cases.

Once the case makes it to arbitration, the union advocate and the management advocate present the case and their arguments to a neutral arbitrator. This often involves testimony of the local parties involved in the dispute, the grievant(s), and sometimes subject matter experts in especially complex or technical cases. After hearing the case, the arbitrator will go home and write their decision. They will decide if there is a violation and grant an appropriate remedy based on the facts. These decisions are the final step of the grievance-arbitration process and are binding.

As arbitration is the last and final step in the grievance procedure, the advocates tend to be the most experienced grievance handlers. They may have been successful as Formal Step A and/or Step B representatives. The NALC provides Arbitration Advocate training designed to provide our advocates with the tools needed to be successful in arbitration. The training covers witness preparation, examination and cross-examination, opening and closing statements, and brief writing. The participants will take part in mock arbitrations to apply and sharpen their skills. Grievance handlers that are interested in becoming an advocate should contact their NBA.

The time limits of a grievance must be met. As stated earlier, a grievance that misses a time limit risks the dismissal of the grievance. The time limits of each step, including the time to appeal, is shown in Figure 1, which is also found on the NALC grievance folders that can be



obtained from your NBA's office. The time limits of a grievance can be extended by the parties at each level, but this should always be in writing and included with the case file to ensure no challenges at a later step.

Every branch should consider a system to keep track of grievances that ensures they remain timely. This might be writing deadlines on the calendar at each step or creating a spreadsheet to keep track. Any system can work as long as all the grievance handlers are familiar with and ensure that the system is used.

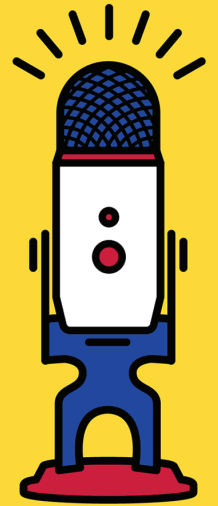
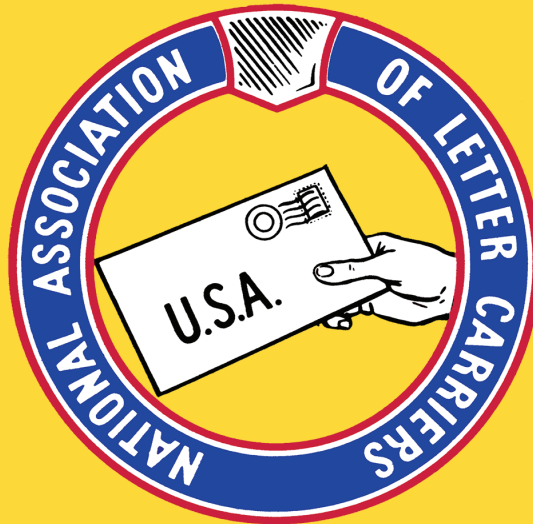
Aspiring and current grievance handlers benefit from a thorough understand-

ing of Articles 15, 17 and 31, which outline the process, representation, and right to information necessary to be an effective shop steward. There is also a plethora of information throughout the *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)* that all shop stewards should reference, as well as NALC's Materials Reference System (MRS). Grievance handlers that have not yet had an opportunity to attend branch, regional and national trainings are encouraged to take advantage of these valuable resources. There would be no National Agreement if it wasn't for shop stewards and grievance handlers that enforce the terms of the agreement.

# Looking for the latest NALC news? Give it a listen wherever you stream your favorite podcasts!

**NALC's podcast "You Are the Current Resident" is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and wherever you listen to podcasts.**

During each episode, NALC President Brian Renfroe and guests discuss vital topics affecting the letter carrier craft and the union. The show's format also includes interviews with other NALC leaders to talk in depth about issues affecting letter carriers and the union.



**YOU ARE THE CURRENT RESIDENT  
PODCAST**



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Listen on  
**Spotify Podcasts**





# Training opportunities for NALC representatives

**K**nowledge is power, and the more knowledge letter carriers have, the more powerful the union is at protecting our members. Fortunately, NALC members have many training opportunities on letter carrier issues, from national-level workshops at conventions and rap sessions, to the specialized training offered through NALC Headquarters, to the vast amount of training put on at the local, state and regional levels.

Take regional rap sessions, for example. Most regions hold these rap sessions annually and the training offered at them is centered around the skills and knowledge NALC activists need. While each regional rap session is different, workshops are often aimed at current shop stewards, branch presidents and other officers, as well as anyone who might one day become interested in becoming a shop steward. Other workshops and classes offered at regional raps session may cover topics on route inspections, safety issues, the Employee Assistance Program, legislation and political issues, branch organizing, community service and much more.

Regional rap sessions offer a wide range of subjects for NALC representatives to learn about, but that is not the only place to get trained. The regional offices also offer shop steward schools, retirement seminars, and in-depth training on Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), to name a few. The 15 NALC national business agents communicate with the branches when rap sessions, as well as numerous other training opportunities, take place throughout the year, so be on the lookout for that information or give your regional office a call.

NALC Headquarters also offers several training opportunities for representatives to expand and build upon their skillsets.

## Advanced Formal A and Beyond training program

Advanced Formal A and Beyond is designed and geared toward NALC activists who have some experience at the Formal Step A level of the grievance procedure. The focus of this program is to teach participants to look at every Formal Step A case file from an arbitration advocate's point of view. This training also sharpens the skills needed for enforcing the National Agreement at Formal Step A and provides an experience of what it's like to serve as a Step B representative.

The training program is built for 64 participants per class. The goal of the program is to help experienced activists sharpen their skills to process grievances at Formal Step A more effectively.

This training program takes the participants from the point of receiving an Informal Step A grievance appeal through all aspects of processing a grievance at Formal Step A to the point of writing a Step B decision.

Below are some of the topics covered in this program.

- Grievance processing topics:
- Completing PS Form 8190
- Creating proper issue statements
- Grievance process time limits
- Information/interview requests
- Conducting interviews
- Documentation
- Organizing files
- Undisputed facts
- Disputed facts and contentions
- Remedies
- Additions and corrections
- Appealing cases to Step B

Other topics:

- Effective writing
- Burden of proof
- Negotiating
- Article 16 (just cause)

Hands-on practice exercises:

- Presenting grievances at Formal Step A
- Writing Formal Step A grievances
- Using grievance starters
- Computer training—search, cut and paste, etc.
- Writing Formal Step A settlements
- Researching arbitration decisions
- Meeting at Step B
- Writing Step B decisions

The program offers an optional additional day of hands-on computer training for those who want to take advantage of it. To be accepted to attend this training, applicants must have some current experience presenting grievances at the Formal Step A level of the grievance procedure and be able to bring a Windows-based laptop computer (no Apple products) to the training. Attendees use computers a lot during this week of training, and some of the applications used are not compatible with Apple products.

Each Advanced Formal A and Beyond training session begins on Sunday afternoon and ends on Friday at noon. This

training is conducted at the Maritime Institute just outside of Baltimore. This is a union facility that is located just minutes from the Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) airport. A free shuttle to and from the airport is available. The optional hands-on computer training begins on Saturday afternoon before the Advanced Formal A and Beyond training starts.

Applications to attend Advanced Formal A and Beyond can be found on the NALC website under the "Workplace Issues" tab. From there, click on "Contract Administration Unit" and then "Advanced Formal A and Beyond." The next available training dates are listed on the application, and once full, those who have submitted applications will have an opportunity to attend a future training session.

## Arbitration Advocate Training

Arbitration is the process of the grievance procedure where we present our most difficult and contentious issues. Arbitration Advocate training is for NALC activists who have experience processing grievances at the lower levels of the grievance procedure. This training sharpens the skills needed for successfully presenting a case appealed to arbitration and delivering the arguments made at the lower levels of the grievance process.

The training, conducted by NALC officers, national business agents (NBAs), regional administrative assistants, staff and arbitration advocates, is built for 16 students per class, and covers a wide range of subjects related to arbitration. It explains key principles, court decisions, contract language, national-level settlements and arbitration decisions that advocates need to understand to be effective.

All advocate trainees will take part in mock arbitrations of both discipline and contractual issues. Training includes witness prep and examination, cross-examination, opening statements, closing arguments and brief writing. The goal of the program is to provide arbitration advocates with the tools necessary to enforce our contract at the final, and some would argue the most complex, step of the grievance procedure.

Each training session begins Sunday afternoon and ends on Saturday. Prospective advocates must be recommended by their NBA to attend the training. To be accepted, applicants must have experience as a

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# Training opportunities (continued)

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witness or as a technical assistant (aka TA) in at least a few arbitration hearings and possess a full working knowledge of the contract and grievance procedure. Letter carriers interested in becoming an arbitration advocate need to contact their NBA as they submit all recommendations for participants to attend this training.

## Branch Officers Training

Branch Officers Training consists of three and a half days of educational seminars tailored to assist branch presidents, vice presidents, treasurers, recording secretaries, financial secretaries and trustees in the performance of their duties.

The training covers the basics for financial officers: taxes; accounting systems and maintenance of proper controls; reporting to the Department of Labor; fiduciary duties under the Landrum-Griffin Act; bonding of branch officers and IRS reporting requirements.

Additional training topics include the *NALC Constitution* and branch bylaws; branch operations and identifying branch policies; maintaining accurate and complete meeting minutes; member notification requirements; record keeping; branch elections and branch dues and how to read a dues roster.

Here's an overview of what is covered:

- Constitution and bylaws—This session covers what is required in branch bylaws and common errors.
- DOL reporting—This session reviews the history of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) and how it affects the activities of unions and union officers. Participants learn about each title of the LMRDA and the reporting requirements under the law.
- Travel, reimbursements and per diem—This session helps branches comply with the tricky IRS and DOL rules involved in travel payments.
- Handling MDA funds and PAC funds—Covers the rules for collecting and remitting these funds.
- Preparing LM forms and 990s—Participants get into the nitty-gritty about completing these required filings.
- Auditing branch records—This session is for trustees and teaches how to ensure a complete audit.

- What am I signing?—This session is for branch presidents/vice presidents and covers the responsibility and legal exposure that goes along with signing certain documents.
- What policies should your branch have?—This session identifies policies that every branch should have in place.
- Why minutes matter—This session assists recording secretaries in maintaining accurate and complete minutes.
- Member notification requirements—This session covers required notifications and the proper way to make them.
- Payroll and wage issues—This session covers the ins and outs of payroll.
- Recordkeeping—This session teaches the proper way to keep records consistent with DOL guidelines.
- Dues and membership—This session guides branch officers through membership issues that they deal with daily; it also explains how to read a dues roster.
- Fiduciary issues and practices—This session gives participants practice applying what they learned in the DOL reporting and constitution and bylaws segments.
- Managing branch finances and creating transparency—This session provides guidance on the day-to-day aspects of running the financial affairs of a branch.
- Fraud prevention and detection, internal controls—This session is designed to identify the biggest risks of fraud and how branches can establish procedures to prevent it.
- Branch elections—This session covers *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures*.
- I was just elected, now what?—This session is focused on helping officers learn more about branch operations.
- Strategic planning and budgeting—This session helps officers plan and budget.
- Introduction to QuickBooks—At the suggestion of past participants, this session is designed to provide guidance on how to set up and use QuickBooks.

Future training sessions will be announced on the NALC Secretary-Trea-

surer's page on the NALC website. Upon announcement, registration forms will be provided to register for the class.

## Mutual Benefit Association Representative Training

The U.S. Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association (MBA), founded in 1891, was created for the benefit of NALC members and their families. The MBA is the life insurance division of the NALC.

The MBA has a network of letter carriers known as MBA representatives (MBARs), whose duties are outlined in the *NALC Constitution and General Laws of the United States Letter Carriers Mutual Benefit Association*. MBARs are required for each branch and act as the liaisons between the members of their branch and the MBA at NALC Headquarters. They work independently, receiving guidance and material from the MBA's headquarters office. They provide information about the plans to the members, assist members with claims, and assist members who are interested in obtaining a policy. To do so, this means that an MBAR must become familiar with the plans offered by the MBA.

MBA conducts a series of training sessions designed to educate MBARs on each product that MBA offers. The training also includes instructions on completing product applications and assisting members with filing claims.

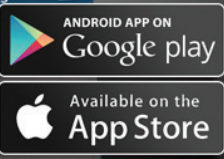
Training sessions are conducted virtually via Webex and last 90 minutes each. Upcoming training sessions will be announced on the NALC website, and in publications such as *The Postal Record* and the *NALC Bulletin*.

Once a training has been scheduled, branch presidents may begin registering their MBARs for the training through the branch president's Members Only page on the NALC website. Registration instructions will also be provided in the training announcement.

## Health Benefits Representative Training

Like MBARs, branches are also required by the *NALC Constitution* to have a health benefits representative (HBR). The role of the HBR is an integral part of the NALC Health Benefit Plan. The HBR is crucial in helping provide personalized service

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# Install the free NALC Member App for your iPhone or Android smartphone

As technology increases our ability to communicate, NALC must stay ahead of the curve. We've now taken the next step with the NALC Member App for iPhone and Android smartphones. The app was developed with the needs of letter carriers in mind.

## The app's features include:

- Workplace resources, including the National Agreement, *JCAM*, MRS and CCA resources
- Interactive Non-Scheduled Days calendar
- Legislative tools, including bill tracker, individualized congressional representatives and PAC information
- Instantaneous NALC news with personalized push notifications and social media access
- Much more

**Go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "NALC Member App" to install for free**



# Help your NALC family affected by natural disasters

The **NALC Disaster Relief Foundation** provides hands-on relief for carriers affected by natural disasters, such as wildfires, hurricanes, floods and tornados. It receives donations to be used to assist regular NALC members affected by natural disasters.

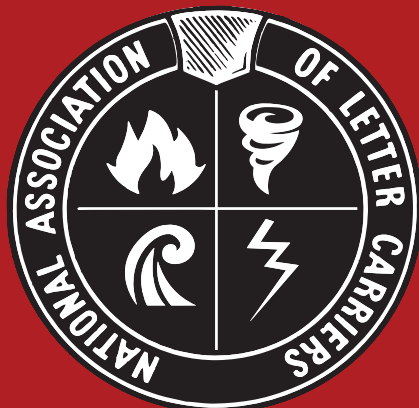
NALC response teams throughout the country are activated to go to disaster locations and offer assistance to NALC members and their families who live in the same household. Basic supplies, including uniforms and food, are available for those who need assistance.

Financial support may be available depending on the availability of funding and qualifying criterias. Any regular member of NALC who has faced hardship as a result of a natural disaster will be able to apply for assistance.

Make a donation by sending a check or money order to:

**NALC Disaster Relief Foundation**  
100 Indiana Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2144

*The foundation is a 501(c)(3). Your contribution to the NALC Disaster Relief Foundation may be eligible for a tax deduction. It is recommended you seek further advice from your tax advisor.*



## NALC Disaster Relief Foundation

# Recent MRS additions

- M-02003**—July 1, 2024—Memorandum of understanding (MOU) outlining the agreed-upon procedures to be followed for specific delivery zones being moved from the Lynnwood, WA, Installation to the Everett, WA, Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC).
- M-02002**—June 21, 2024—MOU regarding the agreement of the national parties to allow regular workforce career employees covered by the USPS-NALC National Agreement to carry over 520 hours of accumulated annual leave from leave year 2024 to leave year 2025. Provisions in the *Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM)* regarding payment of accumulated leave are not changed because of this MOU, which expires with the conclusion of the 2025 Leave Year.
- M-02001**—March 1, 2024—National-level interpretive step settlement for grievance number Qo6N-4Q-C 12180373. The national parties agreed that the expiration of the Oct. 22, 2008, MOU Re: Assignment of City Delivery, coincides with Arbitrator Das's interest arbitration award dated Jan. 10, 2013. It was agreed that any new delivery growth that was improperly assigned during the time frame in question, Nov. 20, 2011, through Jan. 10, 2013, will be properly reassigned.
- M-02000**—March 1, 2024—National-level interpretive step settlement for grievance number Qo6N-4Q-C 11377406. The parties agreed the casers/deliverers test has concluded and that the data collection and testing did not involve or result in any changes to current work measurement systems, work, or time standards. The test also did not result in any permanent changes to the route structure or route evaluation and/or adjustment process in the city letter carrier craft. As a result, it was agreed to close this case without prejudice to the position of either party in this or any other matter. Additionally, any remaining issues will be subsequently resolved in accordance with the collective-bargaining agreement.
- M-01998**—Dec. 29, 2023—MOU in which the parties agreed to an extension of MOU Re: Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process (TIAREAP) 2022-2023 (**M-01982**). The joint process to evaluate and adjust city delivery routes is extended until May 31, 2024.
- M-01997**—Nov. 29, 2023—MOU outlining the agreed-upon guidelines for the implementation of a Modified Delivery Unit Optimization (MDOU) process when moving city carriers from the Corte Madera, CA, Installation into the Mill Valley, CA, Installation.
- M-01996**—Nov. 29, 2023—MOU outlining the agreed-upon guidelines for the implementation of a MDOU process when moving city carriers from the Corte Madera, CA, Installation into the San Rafael, CA, Installation.
- M-01995**—July 10, 2018—Memorandum of agreement in which the national parties agree that Step B teams are prohibited from citing or quoting regular panel arbitration awards in any decision, unless the award is from the installation where the grievance arose and is relevant to the subject matter at issue. This policy shall continue until the national parties agree otherwise.
- M-01994**—June 2, 2023—Letter from USPS to NALC acknowledging the bidding procedures outlined in Article 12.3.A of the National Agreement, are renewed effective May 21, 2023. Employees are allowed to continue bidding during the period of ongoing contract negotiations and/or in the event of an impasse. Successful bids subsequent to May 21, 2023, will be counted toward the maximum bids established in the next agreement.
- M-01993**—April 24, 2023—MOU regarding the agreement of the national parties to allow regular workforce career employees covered by the USPS-NALC National Agreement to carry over 520 hours of accumulated annual leave from leave year 2023 to leave year 2024. Provisions in the *ELM* regarding payment of accumulated leave are not changed as a result of this MOU, which expires Dec. 31, 2024.
- M-01992**—April 12, 2023—MOU outlining agreed-upon procedures and rules specific to the USPS installations being housed within the Utica, NY, and Bryan, TX, Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DC).
- M-01991**—Jan. 13, 2023—MOU concerning the agreed-upon procedures to be followed regarding local memorandums of understanding (LMOUs) when all city letter carrier assignments are permanently moved from an independent installation to a sorting and delivery center (S&DC). The process outlined in this MOU does not apply when an installation is discontinued and/or consolidated, or when a station or branch is transferred or made independent in accordance with Articles 12.5.C.1, 12.5.C.2, and/or 12.5.C.3 of the National Agreement.
- M-01990**—Jan. 13, 2023—MOU regarding the movement of city letter carrier assignments from an independent installation to a S&DC. The MOU contains the agreed-upon procedures to follow when all city letter carrier assignments are permanently moved from an independent installation to a S&DC. The process outlined in this MOU does not apply when an installation is discontinued and/or consolidated, or when a station or branch is transferred or made independent in accordance with Articles 12.5.C.1, 12.5.C.2, and/or 12.5.C.3 of the National Agreement.
- M-01989**—Sept. 23, 2022—NALC and the Postal Service agree that holiday carrier assistants may be hired prior to the start of the four-week December period solely for the purpose of training.
- M-01988**—June 3, 2024—Several memorandums agreed upon by NALC and USPS pursuant to the May 24, 2022, MOU Re: City Delivery Staffing Adjustment – Hiring Part-Time Flexible City Letter Carriers (M-01986), providing installations in which the Postal Service will convert all city carrier assistants to part-time flexible (PTF) career status as well as hire new PTF city letter carriers in these installations in order to reach and maintain an identified number of PTF city letter carriers on the rolls for each installation. The Postal Service is required to convert all city carrier assistants in the identified installations to PTF career status as soon as practicable, but no later than the first day of the second full pay period following the date of the respective agreement. Additionally, identified installations where the staffing level has been reached and maintained for four consecutive pay periods will return to hiring city carrier assistants after a 30-day notification period. A cover sheet to M-01988 has been created to identify installations currently hiring PTF city letter carriers.





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Brian L. Renfro, President

# NALC Activist

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## Training opportunities (continued)

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to the Plan members. The branch HBR is responsible for promoting and organizing members into the NALC Health Benefit Plan. The person elected or appointed to office as the HBR must be a member of the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

To provide training to HBRs on their duties and responsibilities, as well as the benefits the Plan has to offer, a biennial Health Benefit Plan seminar is conducted at a select location. The multi-day seminar focuses on educating HBRs on the Plan's benefits and on what would be new for the coming year, as well as their role assisting NALC members as an HBR. The training seminar includes a variety of classroom topics, special speakers, panel discussions and a question-and-answer booth to assist attendees.

The next seminar will be conducted in 2025. Information on the seminar, and registration instructions will be announced well in advance on the NALC website, *The Postal Record*, and the *NALC Bulletin*.

### NALC Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy consists of three weeklong sessions held over a five-month period at the Maritime Institute. During the classes, students discuss effective leadership skills and the union's legislative agenda. They learn about topics such as the Dispute Resolution Process,

strategic planning, branch financial responsibilities, retirement issues, route protection, workers' compensation, effective negotiation techniques and communicating through traditional and social media.

Students are required to complete outside learning projects upon returning home following Weeks 1 and 2 of the training. Upon graduation, students spend a fourth week working in their NBAs' offices.

The Academy curriculum is designed to both develop and enhance the knowledge and skills that are essential for NALC leaders. In addition to the Leadership Academy staff, each of the resident national officers, as well as many staff members from Headquarters, help teach at the Academy, providing students with NALC's top experts in each field.

Each year, an application period to apply for NALC Leadership Academy is announced on the NALC website and in *The Postal Record*, as well as other publications such as the *NALC Bulletin* and the *NALC Activist*. Generally, two classes of NALC Leadership Academy are held each year and two letter carriers from each of the 15 NALC regions are selected for each class. This training is open to all active NALC members.

Currently, five resident officers, 12 NBAs, 23 regional administrative assistants, 34 Headquarters and regional staff members, and hundreds of state and branch representatives are graduates of the NALC Leadership Academy.



## Branch presidents:

This edition of the *Activist* was sent to each branch. To have future editions mailed to your branch's activists, please send their names, branch and addresses to:

NALC  
Attn: Ed Morgan  
100 Indiana Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20001

The *Activist* also will be available online in the Workplace Issues Resources section of [nalc.org](http://nalc.org).