



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Daniel P. Wheeler

Publisher
James Tuttle

Volume 49 Issue 2

February 2025

Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly, Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers, Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



Beverly letter carriers took part in the Beverly Holiday Parade on December 1, 2024. The carriers walk the parade route handing out candy and accepting letters to Santa from children as they have been doing for years.

President's Message

On January 5, President Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82) into law. The legislation, which had overwhelmingly passed in both the House and Senate, ensures that affected Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees will no longer face unfair reductions in their Social Security benefits. The Social Security Fairness Act repeals the WEP and GPO provisions in Social Security law.

The Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) are federal laws that reduce Social Security benefits for individuals who receive pensions from jobs where they did not pay Social Security taxes. GPO affects spousal or survivor benefits, while WEP impacts retirement and disability benefits for those who also have a pension from non-covered employment.

This law will affect many CSRS retirees from the Postal Service. December 2023 is the last month that WEP and GPO will apply. This means that those rules no longer apply to benefits payable for January 2024 and later. Important Reminder: Social Security benefits payable for January 2024 would generally have been received in February 2024. We have already received calls from retired members asking when they can expect payments. The answer is probably later than sooner. The Social Security Administration issued the following statement on their website on January 24:

“SSA's ability to implement the law in a timely manner and without negatively affecting day-to-day customer service relies on funding. The Act did not provide money to implement the law. The law requires SSA to adjust benefits for over 3 million people. Since the law's effective date is retroactive, SSA must adjust people's past benefits as well as future benefits. Though SSA is helping some affected beneficiaries now, under SSA's current budget, SSA expects that it could take more than one year to adjust benefits and pay all retroactive benefits.

Callers to SSA's National 800 Number hear a message about the Act. This message has helped tens of thousands of people avoid holding for a representative. However, more than 7,000 people each day still choose to wait to speak to a representative about the Act. These calls, as well as visitors and appointments in local offices, will continue to increase over the coming weeks and months.

Helping people with this new and unfunded workload is made more difficult by SSA's ongoing staffing shortages, including operating under a hiring freeze since November 2024. This hiring freeze is likely to continue. All SSA customers, including those not affected by the Act, will face delays and increased wait times as SSA prioritizes this new workload.”

We will pass on any new information to our members as soon as we get it.

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler

Congratulations to Lawrence's Dan Abate who won the attendance prize at the January branch meeting!



Executive Vice-President's Message

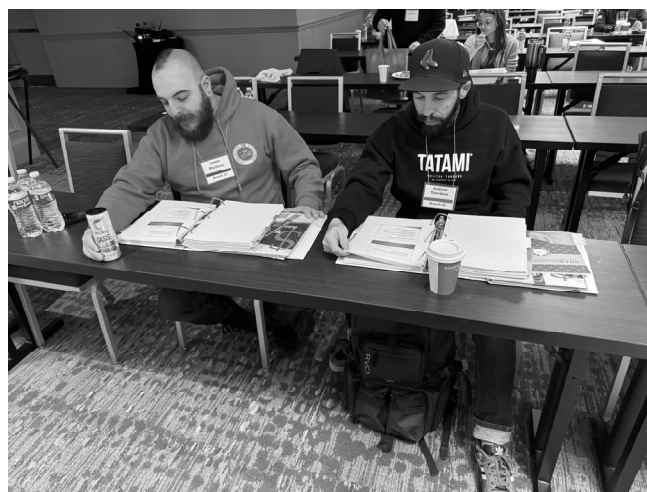
I just want to start by saying that letter carriers absolutely have no obligation to use their own cell phones to contact management or take photos of something that management is requesting. There have been reports that management is asking carriers that are scanning collection boxes that have no mail in them to take a picture and send it to them, with their own phones. This is not required. If management asks you to send them a message via the scanners that is ok. You are also not required to answer your cell phone if management calls you at any time. It is up to you. They can contact you through the scanner.

I am not saying you should never use your cell phone to contact management while on the clock, but it is entirely up to you. I understand there are emergencies, but if your managers are abusing the privilege, you give them, by supplying your phone number, then you can ignore their calls. According to Article 41 in our National Agreement, management must supply you with any items needed to perform your carrier duties. As of this writing, I have not heard of any cell phones being supplied. Just to be clear, I am not asking you not to communicate with management via your personal phones, but it is your choice not a requirement. I want to remind all carriers to utilize Form 3996 anytime that you don't feel that you will be able to complete your assignment in 8 hours. This is not exactly science, but an estimate. If management disapproves your request do not argue with them or take matters into your own hands. Simply ask your manager if they want you to complete the assignment. If the answer is yes, then you have already notified them that you may not finish within 8 hours.

If management gives you a piece on the street or extra office duties and you are told it for "under time", then you must decide if that is accurate. If this happens and you do not agree that you have under time, fill out Form 3996. Under the reason you may need OT, list the assignment given to you. There is no reason to argue, if your manager tells you to finish within 8 hours ask if you should finish if it is OT. Any questions or issues that arise please call the Union office or speak to your steward.

Hopefully, by our next branch meeting we will have the results of the ratification vote on our Tentative Agreement. If so, there will be more directions to come after that to whether we are going to arbitration or simply the process of implementing the agreement. I hope to see you all at the next meeting on February 11. Every day we gain a little more daylight. Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond



James Metilinos and Andrew Dencklau at Branch Officers' Training in Minneapolis



VP Gilbert Paredes at Branch Officers' Training

Calendar of Events

February 2	Groundhog Day
February 9	Super Bowl LIX Eagles vs. Chiefs
February 11	Regular Branch Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:15 PM
February 12	Red Sox Open Spring Training
February 14	Valentine's Day
February 17	Presidents Day

Daniel P. Wheeler	President
Paul G. Desmond	Executive V.P.
Gilbert Paredes	Vice President
Joe Stearns	Secretary
James Metilinos	Treasurer
Wes Tugman	Health Benefits Rep.
Jeremy Provost	Safety Officer
Doug Murray	Sergeant At Arms
Dan Raske	Chairman of Trustees
Bruce Johnson	Trustee
Tony Porciello	Trustee
Bob Cronin	Trustee
Sandi Mannas	Trustee
Andrew Dencklau	Assistant Treasurer
Jeremy Boucher	Assistant Safety Officer
James Tuttle	Wake Up Publisher

Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.



National Secretary-treasurer Nicole Rhine with James Metilinos, Andrew Dencklau, and Gilbert Paredes

Branch 25 sent three members, Treasurer James Metilinos, Assistant Treasurer Andrew Dencklau, and VP Gilbert Paredes, to Branch Officers' Training in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Branch Officers' Training sessions consist 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.

Branch Officers Training covers the basics for financial officers: reporting to the Department of Labor, fiduciary duties under the Landrum-Griffin Act, bonding of branch officers, and IRS reporting requirements.

Through an approval vote for ratification or arbitration, 2025 will bring us a new collective bargaining agreement. Alongside that agreement comes the opportunity for installations to open their local contract up for renegotiation. Whether a steward or carrier would like an amendment to a provision, something added or removed, or to clean up ambiguous language, local contract negotiations are happening this year. Remember, if either local management or local union wants to open up the local for change, it must be discussed.

If you're unfamiliar with Article 30, *Local Implementation*, take a moment to skim through it to see what items are agreed to locally. These provisions range from things like longer wash up periods for dirty work to choice vacation leave periods and more. This also doesn't prohibit stewards from discussing and negotiating provisions that are not outlined in Article 30. Keep in mind, parties will need to bargain in good faith and attempt to resolve disagreements.

I spent some time reading through local contracts recently in preparation for the overtime equitability training the branch hosted earlier in January (thank you all who attended, I hope you guys took something away from it.) Many locals in the branch have language that can be ambiguous and misleading. President Wheeler said it best: "oftentimes, when these locals are negotiated, the parties who made the agreement understood the language and the newer parties coming in don't see eye to eye." I want to really bring into focus a couple items in the local contracts that people should pay attention to and potentially consider revisiting for potential amendments or changes.

First, percentages of employees off during choice vacation (prime time) period. It's very common for locals to have language regarding the complement of employees off and by which specific date. It appears most installations have a complement percentage that is guaranteed off based on current employees in the craft by a specific date. For instance, Lowell permits 7.5% of all carriers (PTFs and CCAs included) on the rolls as of February 1 of the current year. This is doubled (15%) for the choice vacation period that starts on the first Sunday in June and ends in September following Labor Day.

Treasurer's Report (Cont.)

This language is relatively clear and demonstrates how choice vacation period works in the installation. Conversely, we've seen installations like Haverhill where the complement is a static number (7 or 6) based on CCA's on the rolls by January 31st of the year preceding the leave. Language like this might dictate a specific number of employees off which is clear, but creates ambiguity where the number is based on. Does this indicate it's 2024 or 2025? This is an example where language can be cleaned up to give concise contractual provisions for both parties to operate on.

Next, carrier technicians and regulars coming in on NS days. Some installations require the carrier technician to move off the assignment when a regular is scheduled to work their day off. This is a relatively common practice and language that exists in many locals. This can be negotiated at the local level. Installations like Salem will require the technician to move while Lowell requires the regulars to choose a different open assignment for that day. While this language should be clear, this tends to be a hot topic in many installations. Before anyone considers altering this language in their local, you should attempt to get a temperature of the majority of the installation. If the majority of employees would like to see this language change, then this could be a negotiation that is necessary to consider.

Another common issue that's addressed in few locals is opts and hold downs. While unassigned regulars, CCAs, and PTF's can opt to hold down temporarily vacant assignments, many locals are absent of any language that would dictate how opts and hold downs are posted. In the majority of locals I've read, I've seen nothing that indicates management must post a vacation schedule and hold down opportunity. This is something that many stewards should consider negotiating. With the current MOU's expanding all-career workforces across the branch, PTF's are becoming the normal part time help. With the base rate of pay being higher and access to benefits that CCA's do not receive, staffing is considerably up in many offices. This means hours are going to be lower. Language in your local requiring management to post hold downs locally may benefit PTFs.


Lastly, stewards may consider "retreat rights." While many locals do contain language regarding retreat rights,

I've seen almost as many without them, including my own. If you're unfamiliar with retreat rights, they're simple: an employee who successfully bids another assignment may invoke the right to retreat back to their prior assignment within a small window following the successful bid. This is a great piece of language that can be used to benefit a carrier who decides they prefer their prior assignment, whereas if the language does not exist locally, the carrier may be required to bid back. Depending on their seniority, this may not be feasible. These are just a handful of local pieces of language that may be beneficial to exist or change.

Many stewards will be eager to meet with management and open their local contract. Paul, Dan and myself will be making a concerted effort to clean up language and meet on local contracts. If you'd like to see a change or believe something should be added, contact the branch so we can inform the installation of our intent to negotiate a local contract. If you intend on meeting yourself, still give the branch ring so we can assist in advising on whether or not the change is necessary or beneficial to the membership.

Definitely not writing this in Minneapolis.

James Metilinos



BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER


Name: _____
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: _____

Phone number: _____

Retirement date: _____

Please note: Retiree must be a member in good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876



Vice-President's Report

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is a cornerstone of American society, providing universal mail service and connecting communities nationwide. However, discussions about privatizing the Postal Service often surface, with some suggesting that an executive order could accomplish this. The reality is that an executive order alone cannot privatize the Postal Service. Privatization would require congressional action due to the Postal Service's status as a government entity established by federal law.

The Postal Service is an independent establishment of the executive branch, created by Congress through the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970. This law transformed the former Post Office Department into the United States Postal Service, an independent agency tasked with providing universal mail service to all Americans. Congress holds the power to alter or dismantle the Postal Service structure, mission, or ownership. For privatization to occur, Congress would need to pass new legislation that repeals or amends existing laws governing the Postal Service. This includes laws that mandate the Postal Service to provide universal service, maintain affordable pricing, and serve rural and underserved areas. Without legislative approval, any attempt to privatize the Postal Service would be unlawful.

Executive orders are powerful tools that allow the president to direct federal agencies and influence policy. However, they cannot override or repeal federal laws. Specifically, executive orders cannot privatize a government entity created by Congress. While a president can advocate for privatization, they lack the authority to dismantle or transfer ownership of the Postal Service. Executive orders are directives, not laws, and they can only instruct federal agencies within the boundaries of existing laws.

The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) plays a critical role in overseeing the Postal Service operations, pricing, and services. Any move toward privatization would require changes to the PRC's authority, which again would necessitate legislative action. Furthermore, privatization would involve complex decisions about the future of Postal Service assets and liabilities, the impact on universal service obligations, and the fate of all postal employees. Such monumental changes cannot happen through an executive order; they require Congress to

address these issues directly.

While an executive order cannot directly privatize the Postal Service, it could lay the groundwork for future efforts. For example, an executive order could direct federal agencies to develop a privatization plan or make recommendations to Congress, establish a task force to study postal reform or privatization strategies, or propose budget cuts or restrictions to weaken the Postal Service, potentially paving the way for privatization efforts. These actions would still require congressional approval to implement significant changes. Privatizing the Postal Service is a complex process that would require legislative action. To protect the Postal Service from privatization, it is essential to elect lawmakers who value its public service mission and oppose efforts to turn it into a profit-driven corporation.

This is where the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) comes in. The LCPF is a vital tool for ensuring that our voices are heard in Washington. Through voluntary contributions, the LCPF supports pro-labor candidates who fight for postal workers' rights and the future of the Postal Service. Pro-labor candidates advocate for fair wages, benefits, and working conditions for postal employees. The LCPF also supports initiatives to modernize and strengthen the Postal Service, ensuring it remains a viable public service for generations to come.

Contributing to the Letter Carrier Political Fund is one of the most effective ways to protect the Postal Service and our livelihood. Every dollar we contribute helps strengthen our voice in the fight against privatization and ensures that decision-makers prioritize the needs of postal workers and the communities we serve. We should all be donating to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, specially with the current political climate. Encourage your fellow letter carriers to contribute to the LCPF and join the fight.

The Postal Service is more than just a mail delivery service, it is a lifeline for millions of Americans, especially those in rural and underserved areas. Lets work together to ensure it remains a public service, not a profit-driven corporation. Donate to the LCPF and help us protect the Postal Service for future generations. Together we deliver, together we fight!

Gilbert Paredes

For every regular 8 hour day worked, we are entitled to a 30 minute lunch and two ten minute breaks. I'm sure some of you think the ten minutes aren't even worth it. Maybe you get antsy sitting for 30 minutes. "I just want to finish and make it back earlier!" Please don't.

10 minute breaks are built into a route time, so if you skip them, you can be sure they'll attempt to add to you. Not only that but you'll skew the route time going forward for future carriers. They also provide a bit of relief from the day of work. Don't get overwhelmed and/or rush when you can take ten minutes to organize your thoughts or relax a bit. Did I mention they're PAID?!

As for lunch, it's mandatory by labor that after six hours of work an employee must be allowed a thirty minute break. Most importantly, you are NOT paid for lunch. Its automatically deducted from your pay every day (hence eight and a half hour shifts). If you skip it or cut it short you're technically working off the clock, which is in fact strictly prohibited by the National Agreement:

"41.3.K Supervisors shall not require, nor permit, employees to work off the clock."

On the back cover of this issue I've provided a table of pay levels showing how much money a carrier is LOSING by skipping a break, both breaks, their lunch, or all three. It shows the total money lost depending on the time frame of skipping.

Please remember, it's YOUR money and, above all else, the Postal Service should NOT screw with your money!

Bank That Pay,

James "JT" Tuttle, Editor

Well, the new year has arrived, and it brought our New England winter weather with it. I hope everyone is safe and staying warm and comfortable in the cold. Also, with this cold weather and snow make sure you wear ice grippers on your shoes. It's the ice you can't see that will be the most dangerous.

I am going to keep it short this month. I do hope everyone mailed in their ballots to vote on the TA. Once the count is complete the NALC will let us all know the results, and what comes next.

This month I have begun to send out a retirement package when I am notified of their retirement. It includes a letter explaining what you get for staying a union member, a form 1189 to fill out, directions to our meetings, and a self-addressed envelope to mail the form back to me. It is only \$9.76 a year to stay in the NALC. This will get all notifications from the NALC, our own branch 25 Wake-up, the ability to have the NALC Health Plan (with the increasing premiums from other plans this will be a huge help on a fixed income), and be able to attend monthly meetings and more. Any questions about what you need to do about this just email me and I will get back to you.

As I always end this, if you have moved, please update your address with the branch. You can call, write, or email me at JESBR25@gmail.com. See you at the branch meeting on February 11th.

Snapple Fact # 1411 – There are more stars in the sky than grains of sand on earth.

Happy Presidents Day and Valentines Day!!!!!!!

Joe Stearns

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. Any guideline amounts are merely suggestions, and you may contribute more or less than the guidelines suggest, and the union will not favor or disadvantage you by reason of the amount of your contribution or your decision not to contribute. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, name of employer and occupation of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in

WAKE UP

2500 Main Street
 Suite # 201
 Tewksbury, MA 01876
 Phone: (978) 658-5820
 Fax: (978) 658-0888
 Web: www.nalcbbranch25.com

First Class Mail
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Permit No. 409
 TEWKSBURY, MA



at the next meeting

February 11
K of C Wilmington
8:00 PM

\$\$\$ lost CCA	BB	AA															
Pay Rate	\$19.33	\$19.83															
10 minute Break	\$3.22	\$3.31															
2 - 10 minute Breaks	\$6.44	\$6.61															
Lunch	\$9.67	\$9.92															
Lunch and Breaks	\$16.11	\$16.53															
Breaks for a Week	\$32.22	\$33.05															
Breaks for a Month	\$139.63	\$143.24															
Breaks for a Year	\$1,675.27	\$1,718.60															
Lunch for a week	\$48.33	\$49.58															
Lunch for a month	\$209.44	\$214.86															
Lunch for a year	\$2,512.90	\$2,577.90															
Lunch and Breaks for a Year	\$4,188.17	\$4,296.50															
\$\$\$ lost Regular	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	
Pay Rate	\$22.13	\$23.12	\$24.11	\$25.10	\$26.09	\$27.08	\$28.07	\$29.06	\$30.05	\$31.04	\$32.03	\$33.02	\$34.01	\$35.00	\$35.99	\$36.20	
10 minute break	\$3.69	\$3.85	\$4.02	\$4.18	\$4.35	\$4.51	\$4.68	\$4.84	\$5.01	\$5.17	\$5.34	\$5.50	\$5.67	\$5.83	\$6.00	\$6.03	
2 - 10 minute breaks	\$7.38	\$7.71	\$8.04	\$8.37	\$8.70	\$9.03	\$9.36	\$9.69	\$10.02	\$10.35	\$10.68	\$11.01	\$11.34	\$11.67	\$12.00	\$12.07	
Lunch	\$11.07	\$11.56	\$12.06	\$12.55	\$13.05	\$13.54	\$14.04	\$14.53	\$15.03	\$15.52	\$16.02	\$16.51	\$17.01	\$17.50	\$18.00	\$18.10	
Lunch and Breaks	\$18.44	\$19.27	\$20.09	\$20.92	\$21.74	\$22.57	\$23.39	\$24.22	\$25.04	\$25.87	\$26.69	\$27.52	\$28.34	\$29.17	\$29.99	\$30.17	
Breaks for a Week	\$36.88	\$38.53	\$40.18	\$41.83	\$43.48	\$45.13	\$46.78	\$48.43	\$50.08	\$51.73	\$53.38	\$55.03	\$56.68	\$58.33	\$59.98	\$60.33	
Breaks for a Month	\$159.85	\$167.00	\$174.15	\$181.31	\$188.46	\$195.61	\$202.76	\$209.91	\$217.06	\$224.21	\$231.36	\$238.51	\$245.67	\$252.82	\$259.97	\$261.48	
Breaks for a Year	\$1,917.93	\$2,003.73	\$2,089.53	\$2,175.33	\$2,261.13	\$2,346.93	\$2,432.73	\$2,518.53	\$2,604.33	\$2,690.13	\$2,775.93	\$2,861.73	\$2,947.53	\$3,033.33	\$3,119.13	\$3,137.33	
Lunch for a week	\$55.33	\$57.80	\$60.28	\$62.75	\$65.23	\$67.70	\$70.18	\$72.65	\$75.13	\$77.60	\$80.08	\$82.55	\$85.03	\$87.50	\$89.98	\$90.50	
Lunch for a month	\$239.78	\$250.51	\$261.23	\$271.96	\$282.69	\$293.41	\$304.14	\$314.87	\$325.59	\$336.32	\$347.05	\$357.77	\$368.50	\$379.23	\$389.95	\$392.23	
Lunch for a year	\$2,876.90	\$3,005.60	\$3,134.30	\$3,263.00	\$3,391.70	\$3,520.40	\$3,649.10	\$3,777.80	\$3,906.50	\$4,035.20	\$4,163.90	\$4,292.60	\$4,421.30	\$4,550.00	\$4,678.70	\$4,706.00	
Lunch and Breaks for a Year	\$4,794.83	\$5,009.33	\$5,223.83	\$5,438.33	\$5,652.83	\$5,867.33	\$6,081.83	\$6,296.33	\$6,510.83	\$6,725.33	\$6,939.83	\$7,154.33	\$7,368.83	\$7,583.33	\$7,797.83	\$7,843.33	

The above table is from JT Tuttle's article on page 7 of this issue of the Wake Up! It shows the losses that letter carriers suffer by skipping breaks and lunches. Don't give management your time for free!