



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Daniel P. Wheeler

Publisher

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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



Rockport retiree William Fleming is pictured with the pin he received recognizing his 55 years of NALC membership. Congratulations on your long-time dedication, William!

President's Message

I have written about LMOUs in previous editions of *Wake Up!* but I wanted to discuss them a little further this month. LMOU stands for Local Memorandum of Understanding. Every office has its own LMOU. The LMOUs for all the offices in Branch 25 can be found on the web at nalcbranch25.com/pgs/lmou.html.

Most things we negotiate are done at the national level, however under Article 30 of the National Agreement there are certain issues that are left up to the local parties to decide. There are twenty-two items listed under Article 30 to be negotiated locally. The items that we get the most calls about here at the branch office are the ones dealing with annual leave, both prime time and non-prime time, selecting employees for the holiday schedule, and T-6 bumping issues.

We get questions from time to time on how these items get decided on or changed. Simply, they are negotiated between the branch and local management. Once our next contract is settled, be it through a negotiated agreement that is ratified by membership, or through arbitration, there will be a thirty-day time period in which these negotiations will take place.

If the LMOU is opened for negotiations, then the twenty-two items listed in Article 30 must be discussed by each side in good faith. Either side may also raise issues outside of the scope of the twenty-two mandatory issues as well. Many LMOUs in the branch contain other items, if they are not in conflict with the National Agreement. There should be no worry that management can just take something out of the LMOU, as I have heard a few say they will do. If either side does not wish to discuss one of the items not on the list of twenty-two then there is no obligation to do so.

I would encourage every carrier to look at their LMOU. If there are items that letter carriers in any particular office wish to change, we may not know unless the issue is brought up to us. Even though the branch has negotiated these agreements many times over the years, there are always things that would benefit from making changes. Sometimes it is an actual change in policy and sometimes it's something small like re-wording ambiguous language.

I don't have any contract update for you this month, therefore I don't know exactly when the thirty-day negotiation window will open, but it shouldn't be too far off at this point hopefully.

I encourage you to look at your LMOU and discuss it with other carriers in your office. Please let either your steward or the branch office know of any potential issues we would be looking to negotiate going forward.

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler

Health Benefits

I must begin my article with a sincere thank you to all the branch members who allowed me to once again represent you as a delegate to my 15th national convention. It is always something special to sit in a room of between 5 and 8 thousand letter carriers from across this great country.

This year, as your Health Benefits Representative, I was particularly interested in the Health Benefits Seminar. As we all know by now our system is undergoing a change this open season, we all are going to make a new choice of health plan under the mandate of the new Medicare inclusion plan. This open season there will be a new subset of plans only available to postal employees and postal annuitants.

The National Director of Health Benefits for the NALC Stephanie Stewart opened the session explaining that she was prepared to offer more insight into the process. Unfortunately, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) hasn't made all the necessary decisions about the available plans for us to choose. Basically, more information will be coming in the next several weeks. To me this means that there may be a lot of information to process in a short period of time for decisions to be made for open season which will run from November 11 to December 9. As soon as more information becomes available, I will process it and be ready to answer questions and help you members to the best of my ability. My best suggestion is that everyone clear their schedules and attend the branch meeting on November 12th for any last-minute information and questions. As always, I am available for questions with a call to the office.

Ken Dusombre

Executive Vice-President's Message

We are closer to the transition from FEHB to the new Postal Service Health Benefit (PSHB) program. Employees can receive updates to this program by texting "PSHBP" (all capital letters) to 39369. I have done this and have received updates since doing so. From what I have seen on the OPM website, OPM is looking to simplify the process this coming Open Season, by automatically enrolling Postal Service members into a PSHB plan based on their current enrollment. Also, it is expected that all eligible employees and annuitants will receive a letter in October stating they can stay in the plan they already have without doing anything.

They can also switch plans if they desire during Open Season just like any other year. At this point we don't know the cost of any plans, and don't have access to the brochures. There will only be a small percentage of employees whose current plans will not be in the PSHB program, and they will need to choose a plan. Hopefully, this will simplify the process and ease a lot of anxiety carriers have been having about this. If there are any questions about this, call the Union office.

As we are no longer involved in any alternate route evaluation process, the method of evaluating and adjusting routes in section 2 of the M-39 currently prevails. This means that we may be undergoing route inspections soon in our stations. We have been notified of a few special inspections to be conducted, but as of today no full-office inspections have been scheduled. It is important for everyone to properly punch to the street and not to skip any breaks. If you are setting up a route other than your own, please punch to that route, for proper credit to be given to each route. When we do get back to a full-office inspection, the 1840B times, the random 7 weeks average, will be compared to any actual averages for the week of inspection.

If you feel that your route is overburdened and you would like to request a special inspection, that is your right. To qualify, the route must show 30 minutes of either OT or assistance on 3 out of 5 days a week for any consecutive 6-week period. You are not obligated to request an inspection but that is your right.

We have had many calls to the Union office about the amount of AL that can be carried over at the end of this year. The amount is again increased to 520 hours for the carryover into leave year 2025. Hopefully, this becomes

a permanent part of our National Agreement, which currently says the carryover amount is 440 hours. Please make sure you are at or below this number by the end of the leave year. If you are going to be close, I would suggest using some AL now.

On another note, the amount of sick leave you can carryover is unlimited. This can be a great asset if you have an off the job injury or illness and need an extended absence, and when you retire, the unused sick leave is applied to your years of service for a permanent increase in your annuity.

In most of our stations the prime-time AL calendars are now winding down and hopefully this will reduce the need to force some carriers to work OT. It is getting dark earlier every day and the leaves are falling, so please be aware of your surroundings. Early darkness is no reason to skip your lunch or breaks. As of today, we are still awaiting the final negotiations to our National Agreement, hopefully that is done soon. I hope to see as many carriers as possible at the next branch meeting on October 8th at the Wilmington K of C. Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond



Calendar of Events

October 8	Regular Branch Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:15 PM
October 10	World Mental Health Day
October 13	U.S. Navy Birthday
October 14	Columbus Day
October 31	Halloween

Branch 25 Directory of Officers

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

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

 **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

Safety 24'

There is a lot of buzz about the upcoming Presidential election on November 5th. It's been called the most consequential election of our lifetimes. You hear and read phrases like "Save America" and "Democracy is on the ballot." Guess what? Your safety is on the ballot, too.

Earlier this summer, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) proposed a rule outlining steps that employers must take to protect workers from the risk of heat illness. This regulation would be the first of its kind to address the risks of extreme heat. Including, of course, the risks that letter carriers face every summer.

The only protection that OSHA gives us from the heat right now is the obligation of the Postal Service to provide a workplace free of known safety and health hazards. While that's a fundamental part of the OSH Act, it's vague and subject to interpretation. In an investigation, OSHA uses WBGT to determine if a heat hazard was present. I hope you've been reading my articles.

The new rule would take effect when carriers are working in a heat index of 80°F or higher. In these conditions, the Postal Service would be required to provide carriers with drinking water. This would likely be for indoor workers, but an employer would be required to provide a rest area that employees can use as needed. Finally, the Postal Service would have to make a plan for new and returning carriers to gradually increase their workload while their bodies adjust to the heat. Carriers like John Watzlawick, who died in the heat after he returned from a six-week medical absence. Or Daniel Rosenbech, who died the day he was assigned to deliver a whole route for the very first time.

There would be more protections for carriers when the heat index hits 90°F. 15-minute breaks every two hours would be MANDATORY. The Postal Service would have to issue hazard alerts to carriers about the heat and monitor for signs of heat illness. Finally, managers would be required, BY FEDERAL LAW, to get off their asses and check on carriers every few hours. This rule would absolutely save letter carriers lives. It would also greatly improve summertime working conditions for everyone. No more management telling you to take extra breaks then hassling you about stationary time. No more offices running out of water. No more working carriers to death.

This article may not seem timely. I'm doing a bunch of writing about heat, and this issue is hitting your mailbox at the beginning of October. But, with an election one month away, maybe the timing is perfect. You see, OSHA is a part of the Department of Labor. The United States Secretary of Labor is appointed by the President. Also, all advisory committees used by OSHA must include one or more designees of the Secretary of Health and Human Services, who is also appointed by the President. Vote your conscience in November, but you should do your research first. Who is a champion of workers' rights? Who supports the Postal Service? Who will keep you safe? The candidate you choose will have a profound impact on our future as letter carriers. Choose wisely.

Stay Safe,
Jeremy Provost

Secretary's Report

Here we are another month has gone by. It seems this year is flying by. Summer is over, fall is kicking in, and it is starting to get dark earlier each day. School is back in full swing so please be aware when driving around your towns. Kids will be coming home from school and out playing while the weather is still nice. Keep an eye open for them. This month has a lot going on. We have Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for those who celebrate them. Monday the 14th is Columbus Day, which is a holiday for all of us. Then of course one of my favorite holidays is the end of the month. **Halloween!!!!** The decorating has already begun at the Stearns Household. Maybe I will get a picture for next month's wake-up. Try not to have too much candy.

I had the great opportunity to give Nicky Freeman a retiree from Marblehead his 55-year NALC membership pin. I never had the chance to work with Nicky, but did get to know him over the years. Nicky used to join with the late William "Spyder" Healy and help out on the annual food drive. They would drive around and pick up food from the carriers, which was always a big help. I am lucky to see him weekly on my route while he is working around town. Congratulations again Nicky and I can't wait to give you your 60-year pin in 5 years. There is a picture of him with his pin in this issue.

At the October meeting we will have two nomination events. Branch Officer nominations will be held at this meeting. The notice for this was posted in the May 2024 Postal Record. All positions are up for election this year for a 3-year period starting in January. If you would like to be nominated for an officer position come down and get nominated and get involved.

The other nominations are for the 2025 Mass State Convention which will be held May 16-18, 2025, in Hyannis Mass. This convention is held every 2 years on the opposite years from the National convention. If you are interested in this then come down and put your name in.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the upcoming Presidential and other elections as well as the Questions up for voting being held in November. As most of you know the NALC is endorsing the Harris-Walz ticket, but no matter who or how you are going to vote, just make sure you do vote. It is so important to not just think "its ok this person will win in my state" you never know what

can happen. Make your own informed decision and remember it is our right and duty to vote and let those in the office know how we feel.

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 October 8th.

Joe Stearns

Snapple Fact # 1397 Gorillas burp when they are happy.

New Members

We would like to welcome the following new members to Branch 25. Please help us in welcoming them and help them out in your stations.

Jeffry Dauboul, Scott Fillmore, Ephraim Mugwanya,
Ryan Gagne **Haverhill**

Zachary DeFreitas, Tarekegh O'Neill, Isaac Hay,
Samantha Harger **Peabody**

Ashley Goucher **Acton**

Christina Harris **Topsfield**

Javier Hernandez **Lawrence**

Jose Hernandez , Jake Carnevale, Keegan Mullins
Beverly

Samuel Manning **Ipswich**

Timothy McCarthy **Gloucester**

Steven McCormack **Concord**

Tara Nilan **Amesbury**

Alfredo Santana **Holliston**

Alexander Voulgaris **Dracut**

Abig Delgado-Velez **Lowell**

Kirby Murray, Dominic Oteri **Merrimac**

Jackson Renda **Manchester**

Samuel Spano **Marblehead**

Andrew Korman **Sudbury**

Treasurer's Report

By the time you've received this, it will be roughly a month away from election day. I do want to raise some awareness to two questions this year on the ballot: starting with question three. Hopefully you've all received your 2024 Ballot Questions booklet we've been tasked with delivering. All postal installations have received and should have sent out this flier, so if you've yet to receive it, certainly reach out to your local post office and inquire why. Our elections and ballot questions are the most important and crucial parts of democracy as American citizens.

So, what is question three? Question three covers the governance for unionization for transportation network drivers. Many delegates attended the convention and were using Lyft and Uber for the first time. Many of us go out and bar hop, see friends and family, and spend time out in cities like Boston. Using these transportation networks ensures safe commuting and helps keep intoxicated drivers off the road. They've vastly expanded their network and services over the last five or so years and have become a staple in many people's lives. Earlier this year in June, the two largest transportation networks (Uber and Lyft) settled a lawsuit filed by the Attorney General's office that sought a determination classifying these drivers of said companies as employees, not contractors, and entitling them to a minimum wage, sick leave, stipends for Paid Family Medical Leave, and insurance benefits. Prior to this, "contractors" through rideshare programs received wages but were vastly underpaid. This led to a requirement under the settlement for these companies to pay a combined \$175M to employees of both companies. A **YES** vote on question three would provide these employees with the ability to unionize and have access to collective bargaining, just like my brothers and sisters here in the NALC. Additionally, it would ensure the state oversees negotiations and allow unionized transportation drivers to file unfair labor charges against the employer. We've currently been working with the Department of Labor and filing labor charges in an installation here in Branch 25. They've been instrumental in ensuring we receive the information we request and the time to process grievances from this information. Allowing our brothers and sisters who work for these selfish companies like Uber and Lyft to access these channels to better their conditions of employment and wages is substantial. Many

of us here as letter carriers have driven for these companies part time to make ends meet. I can't stress it enough: Vote **YES** on question three. It's imperative to create organization for these companies so they can no longer shortchange the working class.

The second question I'd like to elaborate on is question four: Limited legalization and regulation of certain natural psychedelic substances. In 2016, Massachusetts followed several earlier states in legalizing recreational marijuana. Whether you use it or not, the legalization has been substantial for the state. This year alone, sales have grown 2.9% with a 1.3% month-over-month growth and over \$143M in sales to date. Studies have shown it to be safer, non-habit forming, and on the benefit of the state, attached with a 10.75% excise tax on sales. This year, Massachusetts is testing whether to legalize the use of naturally occurring psychedelics in mushrooms and plants.

The reason I wanted to raise awareness to this question, which I personally intend to vote yes on, is the science behind limited psychedelic use regarding mental health. Those of you who know me personally may know, and I'm sure the vast majority of you reading this who don't know me are unaware, but I struggle with an array of mental health problems. I've been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), General Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). These are not things I typically speak about and do not typically want to as they can be very challenging to control.

I know many of you have seen me speak at meetings, maybe train you in the Good Start Academy, or even represent you in a PDI, but these things can be challenging for me, as I'm sure it can be for many of you. However, exposure to difficult situations has allowed me to persevere where I've struggled in the past and I continue to grow each day. So why am I voting yes? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has researched psilocybin (psychedelic agent in mushrooms) as a form of treatment for mental health disorders for the last 32 years. Breakthrough clinical research has shown moderated use of psilocybin to substantially increase mood for a multitude of weeks as opposed to something like a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI, read: antidepressant) (continued on page 7)

From Spells to Stamps: Delivering the Mail Through Salem's Spooky Season

I'm a Letter Carrier in Salem and let's just say that being a Carrier in Salem during October is a unique experience. This will be my fourth October in Salem, and I just wanted to take the time to shoutout all my brothers and sisters in Salem as we are about to embark on the 4 weeks of Halloween. In 2023, over a million visitors flocked to Salem for its Halloween festivities, filling the streets with excitement and traffic. For us mail carriers, this means a busier workload, crowded roads, street closures with increased deliveries of packages, postcards, and promotional materials. Navigating the crowded streets requires us to be extra cautious, ensuring we deliver the mail efficiently while staying safe amidst increased amount of traffic.

With so many eyes on the town, it's important that we maintain professionalism and uphold our duties with integrity. The influx of tourists means we need to be more aware of our surroundings, avoid mistakes, and continue doing the right thing. As Letter Carriers, our work is more visible than ever, and we must meet the high standards expected of us while being safe.

The Hatch Act plays a crucial role for letter carriers, especially because of the diversity within our workforce and the range of political views we all have. The Hatch Act is a law that prevents federal employees, including postal workers, from engaging in political activities while on duty or in uniform. This is important for maintaining fairness and neutrality in our work, particularly because letter carriers come from all walks of life and hold a variety of political beliefs.

In a diverse workforce like ours, it is essential that everyone feels comfortable and respected, regardless of their political opinions. By following the Hatch Act, we ensure that no one feels pressured or influenced by the political beliefs of their coworkers. This keeps the work environment professional and free from conflict, allowing us to focus on delivering the mail without letting personal politics interfere.

With the upcoming political season, this becomes even more important. As letter carriers, we will be handling and delivering a large amount of political mail, including campaign materials and absentee ballots. Our responsibility is to deliver these items without bias, ensuring that everyone, no matter their political beliefs, receives their mail fairly. Following the Hatch Act helps protect the democratic process by keeping us neutral and ensuring that the mail service is trusted by the public.

Additionally, it's vital that we protect the integrity of the mail. As people send in their votes and receive election information, they rely on the Postal Service to handle their mail with care and accuracy. Failing to deliver political materials or mishandling ballots could

not only undermine the election but also damage the trust that the public places in us. By adhering to the Hatch Act and focusing on our duties, we help safeguard the election process and maintain trust in the Postal Service. In this way, we ensure that all political views are respected and that the public's faith in the system remains strong.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered & No Tricks, Just Treats!!

Gilbert Paredes

Treasurer's Report (cont. from page 6)

which requires several weeks of consistent use to see effects. Additionally, these antidepressants are temporary and are not meant to be used as an alternative to therapy and additional help. As of today, Colorado and Oregon have already passed legislation to approve recreational and in-patient use to help treat mental health disorders through psilocybin. Additionally, it has already been decriminalized in several cities here in Massachusetts (Salem, Medford, Somerville, to name a few). A **YES** vote here would not only bring in revenue (a 15% excise tax on the sale of psychedelics) to the state but bring long awaited alternate treatment to many folks dealing with substantial mental health disorders. Depression and mental health can be a very deep and dark recess for many of us. I won't bore you with my struggles or times where I've been ready to give up, but if you are currently reading this and going through a dark space in your life, find help. Reach out. Call the hall, speak with us. My email is jmetbr25@gmail.com. I'll happily give my cell phone to you and be a shoulder if you'd like. Stay strong and know that while life is definitely a challenge, it does improve. I can attest to this.

Thanks for your time reading this month. We do appreciate each and every one of you guys. I was fortunate enough to meet a couple of new aspiring stewards looking to join the branch and be a part of what we do each day as well as give them my number. If you are looking to get involved, want to become a steward, a branch officer, or know your rights, let us know. We're always happy to inform our members and get you guys involved.

Eating the pets of the people around me,

James Metilinos

WAKE UP

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



at the next meeting
October 8
K of C Wilmington
8:00 PM

Marblehead's Nicky Freeman recently received recognition for his 55 years as a member of the NALC. Thanks for all your years of dedication, Nicky!

