



Tampa Letter Carrier

Volume 5 - Issue 3

A.R. "Tony" Huerta NALC Branch 599

Tampa, Florida

March 2006

President's Report

Labor Laws & Unity

Over the past few years labor laws have changed that have had a dramatic effect on the way our branch is required to do business. Because of these changes some concerned members felt a need to submit bylaw changes that will bring us in accordance with these new laws.

These bylaw changes (which are listed elsewhere in this newsletter) were submitted at the February 2nd branch meeting and will be voted on by the members present and voting at the March 2nd branch meeting. They must pass by a two-third majority in order to take effect. All deal with important issues pertaining to delegates paid by the branch to attend conventions, conferences and training seminars, and other issues such as when the qualification period begins and ends for the minimum number of meetings that must be attended to be a paid delegate, what hotel the delegation is allowed to stay in during the event, who reserves the rooms and airfare for the delegation and how additional friends and family members can travel and stay with the delegates. Some of these proposed changes contradict one another, so all can not pass. The members will have to decide which changes will guide the branch in what they feel is the right direction.

These are extremely important bylaw change proposals for a number of rea-

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sons.

First, and most importantly, the Labor Department has mandated many new legal regulations that must be adhered to by all labor unions. Any monies that are given directly to delegates by the branch must be backed up by receipts. That means that if the branch decides to give each paid delegate the average cost of a plane ticket to the national convention, that delegate must turn in to the branch treasurer a receipt for the ticket. It also means that if the delegate got a deal on the flight, that he/she will either have to refund to the branch the difference in what they received (as the average price) and what they paid, or pay IRS tax, Social Security withholding and Medicare on that difference because it would be shown as income.

The same goes for the hotel bill. If the branch allows the delegates to stay in a hotel of their choice, they will only be paid 1/2 of the nightly rate for that hotel and they must submit receipts to the branch treasurer. Receipts would also have to be turned in for meal expenses if the delegates are given anything except the per diem rate as issued by the IRS for each individual city.

On the other hand, if the airfare is booked by the branch through a travel agent, the branch will be able to get a reduced rate because of the volume of seats purchased. The delegates will be able to book their family members seats on the same flight and they will have the flexibility of arranging individual departure and return flights after the seats are reserved. Hotel rooms could be reserved through the NALC housing committee and paid for with one check by the branch. All members, and any friends or family members could also be booked in the same hotel

at the same time. Individual arrival and check-out dates could be arranged. If the hotel and airfare is booked and paid for by the branch, and the delegates are given the standard per diem rate, no receipts would have to be turned in.

Second, and in my mind almost as important as the first, is loyalty to the NALC, both locally and nationally. As I have said in previous articles, this is going to be a very critical year, both politically and contractually. WE NEED TO UNITE! Gone are the days when we should go to conventions and stay scattered throughout the city, not giving a second thought to the best interests of national or the advice of the Housing Committee. The rates that are paid for the convention center, as well as the rooms used for the numerous workshops and classes given throughout convention week, are based on a guaranteed number of rooms that the delegates will reserve and stay in. If branches choose to stay here or there, simply because they want to be closer to the nightlife or save a few bucks in lodging, they will end up paying for it in the long run because national will have to pay more for future conventions. The reason that members go to conventions and training seminars is to represent the branch membership and keep abreast of current events that may affect the branch. An added benefit of attending a national convention is being able to see the sights of the city after

(continued on page 4)



by **Jim Good**

President - Branch 599

Branch Meeting
March 2, 2006 - 7:30 PM

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FINANCIAL SECRETARY	Tony Diaz	(813) 598-9635
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TRUSTEE	Jose Oliva	(813) 873-2747
TRUSTEE	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
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LABOR - MANAGEMENT	Brian Obst	(727) 507-0135
MAPS COORDINATOR	Chris Albrecht	(727) 791-7162

Presidents Emeritus

Michael Anderson	Orbe Andux
James Butler	Don Thomas
Garland Tickle	Lenin Perez

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Brandon	33510	Terry Franklin	(813) 657-9690
Brandon	33511	Phil Chirico	(813) 657-3180
Carrollwood	33618	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516
Commerce	33602	Dook Ramotar Sr.	(813) 780-6254
Forest Hills	33612	Warren Sumlin	(813) 486-7612
Forest Hills Annex	33613	David Camuy	(813) 892-6553
Hilldale	33614	Gilbert Cabanas	(813) 855-0516
Hilldale Annex	33634	Lance Jones	(813) 220-1292
Hyde Park	33606	George McEndree	(813) 935-0244
Interbay	33611	Dean Minter	(813) 767-6538
Interbay	33629	Jim Knotz	(813) 832-6644
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Palm River	33619	J.C. Howard	(813) 621-1976
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Port Tampa	33616	Dean Minter	(813) 767-6538
Produce	33610	Eric Fleming	(813) 310-8274
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Seminole Heights	33603	Tony Diaz	(813) 872-1542
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Ybor City	33605	Detlev Aeppel	(813) 505-7914

**RETIREES BREAKFAST
(In Tampa)**

First Monday of Every Month

9:00 AM at

The Coffee Cup

4407 N. Hubert

in Drew Park

**RETIREES BREAKFAST
(In Brandon)**

Second Tuesday of Every month

8:00 AM at

Buddy Freddy's

134 Gornto Lake Rd S.

in Brandon

The National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 599, 3003 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33609-1617, publishes The Tampa Letter Carrier monthly. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Branch 599. It is the policy of this publication that all articles submitted for publication must be signed by the writer. All articles are subject to editing and revision at the discretion of the publisher & editor. Please submit articles to the branch office no later than the tenth of the month. Submit articles as .txt, .doc or .wpd documents attached to email sent to: newsletter@nalc599.com

Jim Good - Publisher

Kit Kelley - Editor

Executive Vice-President's Report

by Detlev Aepfel

Executive Vice-President - Branch 599

Manager and Carriers Were In Agreement

Last month I voiced my hope that a new minor route adjustment process was about to be developed and used in Tampa which would provide a cheap and easy way to adjust letter carrier routes using carriers own average actual office and street times over the past year. I am sad to report that as of this writing it has not come to pass. Mr. Fred Cullaro and I spent nearly two weeks at Temple Terrace Annex trying to hammer out a method that the union and management could agree upon. First I asked all the carriers if their routes were over or under and if so by how much. Next I asked station manager Mr. Kent Moyer this same question about each route. In nearly every case the carriers and Mr. Moyer were in agreement. So far so good. Now we needed data to base our adjustments upon. The obvious source of the carrier's average demonstrated time was the DOIS generated Work Hour / Work Load Report. The DOIS generated Work Hour / Work Load Report could be applied to the past year or any time span such as a specific month or from the date that a carrier started on a route to the present. This report also contains average volume figures for the same time span. That's when the problems started. Even though the station manager and the carriers were in agreement as to which routes were out of adjustment and by how much, the DOIS report showed that most of the carriers were not making their projected office times. We analyzed numerous time

periods choosing different representative months, avoiding the summer months and December, including the summer months and December, and even looking at the total route times for all carriers on a given route. We also analyzed the variances by hand and compared them to per cent to standard from the last formal inspection. Management insisted that the office times needed to be adjusted to the projected times while the union held that the actual average demonstrated times should be used. At that time the union informed management that it would be futile to go any farther until this basic disagreement was settled.

As I recall, during the last rounds of formal mail count and inspection all carriers (except for two or three with special circumstances) in the city, including those at Temple Terrace Annex, did better than the basic eighteen and eight minimum casing standard. Temple Terrace Annex has a reputation as an intensely managed station. If the carriers were indeed not meeting standards management would have identified the problem and corrected it as the M39 requires. It is impossible to believe that so many carriers are doing such a poor job in such a tightly supervised environment.

There are however many factors that could skew the DOIS data. Supervisors may not be counting volumes properly. Supervisors may

not be crediting auxiliary assistance properly. Carriers may not be ringing the clock properly.

Carriers may be helping other routes without clocking over to them. Carriers may be doing street functions such as unloading vehicles and putting up collection mail after they have clocked into the office so as to meet the "5 o'clock window". Carriers may be doing work in the PM that should be done the next morning instead. The list goes on and on.

So what's the problem as long as everyone agrees on the adjustments? The problem is that the adjustments have to be approved by the district office. The carriers and the supervisors and the managers agree the adjustments are needed. Postmaster Nancy Fryrear agrees that adjustments are needed. Until the district agrees there will be no adjustments. The only thing that the district understands is hard data even if that data is terminally flawed. I don't know if we will find a solution to this dilemma but I do know that the union will not agree to adjusting carrier's routes to a DOIS projection.

In Solidarity...



President's Report*(from page 1)*

hours or possibly staying longer and making a vacation out of the extended stay. But we all need to remember the main reason why we are there, and that is for the benefit of the members back home and the unity of the NALC.

So please, come to the March 2nd Branch meeting and make your voice heard on these important proposed bylaw changes.

March Meetings:

- Tues 2-28-06 - Shop Stewards Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM
- Thur 3-2-06 - Branch Meeting
Union Hall, 7:30 PM
- Tues 3-24-06 - TLC Board Of Directors Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM
- Thur 3-30-06 - Executive Board Meeting
Union Hall, 7:00 PM

TLC, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Obst at 7:00 pm. Reading of the minutes of the previous meeting accepted as read. Treasurer's report by John Gebo. The meeting was recessed so that the directors could walk through the hall with building manager Jack Newman to see the work and repairs that needed to be done. Building Manager's report by Jack Newman. Bids, which ranged from \$2745.00 to \$3300.00, were received on connecting hot water to the men's and women's restrooms as well as the front office restroom. Recommendation by Newman to accept the bid of \$2745.00. Motion by Noble, seconded by Aepfel to accept the \$2745.00 bid. Passed. New double doors will be installed in rear store-rooms as soon as possible. Estimates were received for new ceiling in the hall ranging from \$14,000.00 to \$14,965.00. Donation Committee report by Quintanilla. Recommendation to donate to Children's Home. Motion by Noble, properly seconded, to donate \$500.00 to Children's Home. Passed. Kelley said that he is working on a website for Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc. The address is <http://tampalettercarriers.com>. Three members applied for the vacant position of director on the board. They were Mike Stewart, Barney Weatherford and Phil Burnison. Mike Stewart won the election. A motion was made by Newman for TLC to give money for the convention delegates to the union to distribute to the delegates. Discussion. Passed. Motion by Good, seconded by Stewart that TLC buy out the inventory of the Postal Store from the branch. Discussion. Passed. Motion to adjourn. Passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Jim Good, Secretary - Tampa Letter Carriers, Inc.

ARSLAN UNIFORMS

Bill & Shirley Moran

Retired Letter Carrier Branch 1477 St. Petersburg

Honorary Member Branch 599 Tampa

NEED UNIFORMS IN A HURRY?

SHOP BY PHONE FROM HOME

320 PATLIN CIRCLE EAST PHONE: 727-584-4307

LARGO, FL 33770-3063 CELL: 727-543-0705 FAX: 727-585-9367

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Unionism

by Brian Obst

Chief Steward - Branch 599

Discipline & The Just Cause Principle

Discipline as defined in Article 16 of the National Agreement must be for *Just Cause* and any discipline issued shall be subject to the grievance arbitration procedure provided for in the National Agreement. In the processing of any grievance for discipline administered we will always examine the *Just Cause* principle.

The *Just Cause* principle is the standard that management is held to and simply put requires "fair and provable justification for any issued discipline." Labor arbitrators created the *Just Cause* term and it has no precise definition or rigid set of rules that apply the same way in each case of discipline. However the arbitrators have divided the *Just Cause* question into six sub questions whose answers are used to determine if discipline was issued for just cause. These six sub questions are the basic criteria that the supervisor must use before initiating disciplinary action.

Question One: IS THERE A RULE? If so, was the employee aware of the rule? Was the employee forewarned of the disciplinary consequences for failure to follow the rule? It is not enough to say, "Well, everybody knows that rule..." or "...we posted that rule 10 years ago." Management may have to prove that the employee should have known the rule. Arbitrators assume certain standards of conduct employees are aware of such as theft, fighting on duty, intoxication on duty, sabotage and insubordination to name a few, may be generally assumed to be understood as unacceptable behavior even though management may not have issued specific regulations to that effect.

Question Two: IS THE RULE A REASONABLE RULE? Management must ensure that rules are reasonable, based on the overall objective of safe and efficient work performance. Management's rules should be reasonably related to service

efficiency, safe operation of our services, and the performance we might expect of the employee.

Question Three: IS THE RULE CONSISTENTLY AND EQUITABLY ENFORCED? A rule must be applied fairly and without discrimination. Consistent and equitable enforcement is a critical issue and where management has been found to have failed in this regard the union has been successful in defending discipline cases. Constant overlooking of actions and then issuing discipline without warning is one issue. If employees consistently are allowed to smoke in a *No Smoking* area, it is not appropriate to suddenly start to discipline them for this action. Due to their inaction management effectively loses the right to discipline for this infraction unless they first put the employees (and the union) on notice that they intend to enforce the regulation again. Singling out an employee is the second issue. If several employees are committing an offense, it is not equitable enforcement if management elects to discipline only one of the employees.

Question Four: WAS A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION COMPLETED? Before administering discipline it is incumbent on management to conduct a complete, thorough and objective investigation to determine whether the employee committed the offense. Employees have the right to know with reasonable detail what the charges are and to be given a reasonable opportunity to defend themselves before discipline is initiated.

Question Five: WAS THE SEVERITY OF THE DISCIPLINE REASONABLY RELATED TO THE INFRACTION ITSELF AND IN LINE WITH THAT USUALLY ADMINISTERED, AS WELL AS TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE EMPLOYEE'S PAST RECORD? Inequitable discipline is shown in the following example. All carriers in the unit have been issued 7

day suspensions for a particular violation but carrier Smith, whose record is similar to all the others previously disciplined, receives a 30 day suspension for the same violation. This would be considered not reasonable nor in line with what is usually administered. An employee's record of previous offenses may never be used to establish guilt in a case presently under consideration, but it may be used to determine the appropriate disciplinary penalty.



Question Six: WAS THE DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN IN A TIMELY MANNER? Disciplinary actions should be taken as promptly as possible after the offense has been committed.

These questions used to determine *Just Cause* are helpful in determining whether management has met the burden required when issuing discipline and establish the basis of defense for grievances on discipline. The information presented is simply an overview of the information from the JCAM, some of which has been duplicated for this article. Please consult your copy of the National Agreement, Article 16, as well as the JCAM for a complete rendering of this information and follow up with your steward if you have any questions on this information.

Remember: Knowledge is the key.

Yours in Brotherhood,

Brian Obst, Steward, Town and Country

Health and Welfare

Letter Carrier Chester Roach, Produce Station, passed away.

Retiree Guillermo Vasden passed away.

Retiree John Anderson passed away.

A Point of Personal Privilege

*Liar, Liar,
Pants On Fire*

Well the State of the Union address was delivered by President Bush and it seems to me that it spells out more of the same. During his speech he mentioned terrorism approximately 97 times. An AP-Ipsos poll of 1000 adults found that Bush's job approval is at 40% and approval of his handling of the economy is 39%. Bush's approval rating of foreign policy and terrorism is at 47%. The poll found that 47 % of those polled want Democratic control of Congress while 37% are satisfied with Republican control. What the President failed to mention in his speech was that since he first stood before Congress and the nation in 2001, the median income in this country has decreased, the jobless rate has jumped from 3.9% to 4.9% and the number of families living in poverty has increased from 8.7% to 10.2%. Over 45.5 million Americans (or over 15% of our total population) have no health care coverage at all. This is occurring during the administration of the supposed leader of the most powerful country in the world, a country that wants to bring democracy to Iraq and the rest of the world while it can't take care of it's own citizens.

Now this country has an issue straight out of the Nixon era: spying on American citizens. Spying is illegal and a violation of federal law. Yet Bush is traveling the country defending his spying by stating it is within his "inherent power" as President of the United States. He also continues to mention 9/11 as the reasoning for our actions in Iraq. What is so troubling about this is that most Americans still believe that the attacks of 9/11 were Saddam Hussein's plan. Yet 15 of the 17 hijackers were Saudi Arabian citizens. Bin Laden was born in Saudi Arabia and funding for his terrorist organization comes directly from Saudi Arabia. The U. S. military had Bin Laden cornered in Afghanistan but most of

those needed troops and weapons were diverted for the invasion of Iraq instead of completing the mission to get Bin Laden, "dead or alive."

Bush has finally signed a bill sponsored by Senator John McCain, regarding the treatment of prisoners and torture. After signing said document, Bush stated that he reserved the right to ignore the bill. This country got a report by Bush of a foiled terrorist plot to fly an airplane into a building in Los Angeles in 2003. Yet the democratic mayor of that city was never notified until the day before the announcement by Bush on 2-8-06. If this plot was that serious, why wasn't the mayor of that city alerted to this possible catastrophe in 2003? Could it be because of "faulty intelligence"?

Vice President Dick Cheney has put a new and improved definition to "Compassionate Conservatism." What he did was to shorten his stay in Asia and quickly return to Washington to cast a tie-breaking 51st vote in the Senate for the budget bill that this scribe previously mentioned in another article. It seems this bill was described by Republicans as an attempt to curb federal spending. This bill is nothing more than a smoke screen. It doesn't scratch the surface of our national budget deficit because of the GOP's increase in war spending and all the carefree pork barrel projects! A full 1/3 of the \$39.7 billion will directly affect a reduction of college aid, demanding higher interest rates on student loans. This cuts educational assistance to the middle class. Another 2/3 of these cuts zero in on the elderly and poor who have major medical problems. Medicaid recipients who now pay a \$3 co-payment for a range of health care services will now be charged between \$20 to \$100, depending on their specific needs. Additional budget cuts directly affect Medicare recipients over 65 by decreasing home health services. These services normally assist many elderly, reducing the need to have them placed in nursing homes. This cut will nega-

tively affect many of the elderly that voted for the Bush / Cheney ticket in 2004. These cuts also will cause many states to institute strict new work requirements for welfare individuals or the states will face the loss of badly needed federal aid. This seems to be the top priority of the Republican-controlled Congress. I guess this another chapter of the "Contract With America" by Newt Gingrich.

In an MSNBC poll of 151,440 respondents on the subject of impeaching President Bush, 85% voted "yes" to impeach. Between the secret spying, the deceptions leading to war and more, they stated there is plenty to justify putting him on trial. Five percent voted "no", indicating that, like any president, he has made a few missteps but nothing approaching *high crimes and misdemeanors*. Eight percent voted no because "...the man has done absolutely nothing wrong and impeachment would just be a political lynching." Two percent of those polled stated "I don't know".

It is now obvious that the prewar assertions by Bush and Cheney that Iraq has WMDs, biological weapons, aluminum tubes to be used for a nuclear weapons program, *yellow cake* purchased from Niger, and that Saddam Hussein had links to al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden were all lies. As of this date there is no evidence to support any one of the reasons G. W. Bush gave for going to war in Iraq. Certainly there is enough evidence to prove that Bush, Cheney and other administration officials exaggerated available intelligence and lied to the American people about the need to go to war. I wonder what would have happened had a Democrat been in the White House from 2000 till 2008?

"When the rich wage war, it's the poor who die."

Jean-Paul Sartre



And The Beat Goes On

by Ray Wallace

The Bad and The Good

I recently was wearing something with the Branch 599 logo on it and a guy who I had just met in the park where I live asked, "Are you a retired letter carrier?" I said yes and he said, "So am I." Well, right away you have a bond of sorts as, no matter where you have worked as a letter carrier in the USA, we all have gone through the same BS. I said, "I hope you were a member of the NALC." He replied, "Yes, I was until I retired. Then I quit the union as what does the union do for the retiree?" That was disappointing to hear from a brother, especially one who was a union member since he should know more than anyone what the union has done for us all. To name just a few things: our retirement money, COLA's, and our health insurance. Recently we all got in the mail notification of a COLA increase of 4.1%. Not many employees in other jobs retain there COLA's. In all of the above-mentioned benefits not once did the post office ever say, "We just can't give you people enough money and benefits for all your years of dedication." They would like to give us as little as possible but thanks to the union at the national level, we have what we have today. Lets pray that we can retain what we have.

As an active carrier your deduction for self & family with the NALC health plan is \$59.07 bi-weekly. When you retire your payment into the health plan is in-

creased so your take home pay as a retiree is cut by that amount. Your health benefit cost as a retiree is \$251.64 monthly.

Some carriers have a misunderstanding about the Tampa retiree breakfast in Brandon. I've said this before, but this is really for Tampa retirees. Brandon retirees have a lunch and it is for all craft and management. When you work in Brandon, you don't bid out so consequently we all work together (clerks, management and carriers) for years. Years ago it was like one happy family, with many post office picnics, etc. Don't get me wrong, there were always labor-management problems. But each respected the other and we all were doing our job. Retired carrier Helen McMakin has been putting together these luncheons at Buddy Freddy's. I went to the last one in January and it was attended by Helen McMakin, Ron Burkett, Dick Arnold, J. Hufstetler, Don Sorrel, Lori Tellefson, Phil Singletary, U. Stephens, Bob Carter and wife, Bob O'Neil, and this writer and wife. So come to the next one on Tuesday, June 13th at 2pm at Buddy Freddy's, Rt. 60. Hope to see you there.

The *Zero Tolerance* policy is in effect in all post offices nationwide. There have been a few instances lately in Tampa where carriers have lost their cool with each other. Whether it's with another craft employee or with a manager, you will be put in for termination. So watch your temper until you get away from the

post office and off the clock. Years ago you could get away with these sort of things but not today. Nothing is worth losing your job for.



The Retiree/Shop Stewards Dinner Dance was attended by about 250 but as Jack Newman said at the February meeting, it's a damn poor showing from Branch 599 to the National President Bill Young (who was there to install the shop stewards) from a branch with close to 1,000 members. But the same goes for the monthly union meetings where less than 100 attend.

As I was driving down Kennedy to MacDill to Cypress on Thursday night, February 1st, I was thinking to myself, "I have been making this same trip for a lot of years." It was 1976 when I merged the Brandon local in with Branch 599 and I went to the Tampa meeting and didn't know one person except for John Bailey, the president at the time. Wow! Thirty years and I have missed very few. Now I think back to all of the nice carriers I met who worked in Tampa and quite a few of them have since died. Time goes all too fast, as I have said 100 times before. Not many do it, but try to attend your union meetings and see the people you work with off the clock and afterwards have a free sandwich, and a beer or a Coke. Will I see you there? Most likely not.



Around The Horn

by Tony Diaz

*Financial Secretary - Branch 599***DPS Disarray**

Brothers and Sisters I am writing my article this month, after having just learned about the loss of a union brother. Chester Roach passed away on February 4 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Respectful of everyone he met, Chester was a genuine friend who treated others as if he'd known them all his life. Only 48 years young, he leaves behind a wife, young daughter, a mom and dad and seven brothers and sisters. He had many friends and we'll all miss him. Chester was also an Army veteran and retired from the Florida Army National Guard. He worked at my station (Seminole Heights) years ago and since had made Produce Station his home station. I feel fortunate to have crossed paths with Chester; he was one of the good guys. I will remember him for his big smile and his upbeat attitude. Friends and co-workers at both stations collected around \$400.00 for his wife and daughter to help with expenses. Great effort! My condolences go out to his entire family.

As much as things must change in the

Postal Service, things seem to remain the same. Two examples I want to touch on are DPS errors and raw flats coming back to the stations. Seems the Tampa GMF is in a state of disarray with late arriving DPS, missing DPS, mark-ups re-run back in DPS, trays over stuffed, overflow trays thrown carelessly around, etc. DPS is as inconsistent as ever and may never reach the projected efficiency levels the Postal Service once envisioned. Lately Mondays have been a DPS nightmare with excessive volumes and excessive mistakes. Of course, it's the carriers who are expected to pick up the slack, make things right and to be timely about it.

We are being called upon to help identify and isolate DPS problems by separating our errors into three categories daily. But will it really matter, will management make the effort to correct the mistakes, or is DPS as good as we will see it in our lifetime? Now raw flats are being brought back to the stations to be worked and distributed. It has been a mad scramble. Surely this was not a well-thought out plan. Seems the flats are being dumped on the stations, with the pressure on the installation to create their own plan. Clerks are scrambling to get the first and second class flats worked to distribute to

the carriers and stations are trying to find room to set up staging areas to also work bulk flats. Carriers are having to withdraw the flat racks numerous times while also being cautious and hopeful all their mail is being counted. What a mess!



I believe the whole process would work much better if all parties were on the same page (GMF and stations). Management seems to be playing tug-a-war against each other and it is not very productive. I guess with all the confusion the one constant is the carrier will professionally deliver the mail.

Look forward to talking to you again in the next *Around The Horn*.

TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS PRESENT

BINGO

COME JOIN THE FUN

EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30

GAMES START AT 6:30

AT THE TAMPA LETTER CARRIERS HALL

3003 W. CYPRESS ST.

Tampa, Fl. 33609

813-877-4785

Proposed Bylaw Changes

(February 2006)

Proposed By-Law Changes**To be voted on at the March 2, 2006 Branch Meeting**

Article V

Section 15: Change to Read:

Any member elected as a delegate to either the national or state convention or any national conference must attend at least eight meetings per year preceding the convention he or she attends to qualify as a paid delegate. These mandatory sixteen meetings shall begin on January 1st two years prior to the convention year and end on December 31st the year before the convention.

Section 17: Change to Read:

State Training Seminars

All paid delegates will share a room at union chosen hotel with odd room occupied by president lone female in extra room.

Section 19: Change to Read:

National Conventions

Delegates will receive half the average price of union hotels or any other hotel with receipt, which ever is the lesser. Airline will be paid on average price. Delegates will be paid expense allowance prior to departing for destination with all receipts shown.

Article V Elections

Section 15:

Currently reads:

Any member elected as a delegate to either the National or State Convention, or any National Conference, must attend at least either meetings per year for the two years preceding the convention he/she attends to qualify as a

(Continued on page 10)

Proposed Bylaw Changes *(continued from page 9)*

paid delegate. These mandatory sixteen meetings shall begin on May 1st two years prior to the convention year and end on April 30th of the year of the convention.

Proposed to read:

Section 15:

(A) Any member elected as a delegate to either the National or State Convention, or any National Conference, must attend at least eight meetings per calendar year for the two years preceding the convention he/she attends to qualify as a paid delegate. These mandatory sixteen meetings shall begin on January 1st two years prior to the convention year and end on December 31st of the year prior to the convention or conference. (The qualifying period for the 2006 National Convention will remain May 1, 2004 through April 30, 2006. The qualifying period for the 2007 FSALC Convention will be January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2006. The qualifying period for the 2008 National Convention will begin on January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007. For purposes of the 2007 FSALC Convention and the 2008 NALC National Convention potential delegates will receive credit for the January, February and March branch meetings of 2005 and 2006 as applicable).

(B) Paid delegates and/or attendees to a FSALC Convention and/or training seminar will stay in a FSALC designated hotel. The hotel rooms will be double occupancy and will be reserved and paid for directly by the branch. If a paid delegate/attendee desires a private room he/she will pay the branch in advance for ½ of the hotel room bill. Paid delegates will be paid mileage at the applicable federal IRS rates computed from the branch union hall. Paid delegates/attendees will be paid the applicable federal per diem rate.

(C) The delegation to the National Convention will stay in a hotel on the NALC Housing committee's list of designated hotels. The hotel rooms will be double occupancy and reserved through the housing committee. The rooms will be paid for directly by the branch in accordance with the housing committee rules and regulations. If a paid delegate desires a private room he/she will pay the branch in advance for ½ of the hotel room bill. Airfare will be arranged and paid for through a reputable travel agent by the branch. Departure and return schedules may be modified through the travel agent to accommodate delegates' needs. Delegates wishing to reserve additional seats for family/friends may do so by prepaying the branch prior to the scheduled cut-off dates. Delegates will be paid the applicable federal per diem rate.



Maximize Your Tax Return

(ARA) - There are two approaches to doing taxes. One is to wait until the last minute and rush through them, crossing your fingers that you don't owe the government an unexpectedly large chunk of money. Judging from the lines at post offices across the country at midnight on April 15, there are many, many people who take this approach.

Considering that a little advance planning can save you money and headaches, the second approach - being organized and taking control of your taxes - is a better way to go.

"It's also important to know that when taxes go unpaid, the IRS can place a lien on your assets. Unpaid tax liens can remain on your credit report for up to 15 years, while paid tax liens can remain on your credit report for seven years from the date paid. Both have a negative impact on your credit score," said Maxine Sweet, vice president of public education for Experian, the national consumer credit reporting company.

Having time to pull together the information you need, analyze it and calculate your taxes means you won't be frantically scrambling to find your W-2 form the day before taxes are due. Starting early also gives you time to double check your tax return for any mathematical errors, and to make sure you've claimed all the deductions for which you qualify.

Tax laws and people's tax situations change from year to year, so you may be entitled to different deductions this year than last year. Major life changes often trigger a modification of deductions, or there may be deductions that you have missed in past years. Here are a few examples of common, but often overlooked, deductions. Check

with your financial advisor if you have questions, or you can get more information from the IRS Web site or helpline.

* State and local sales tax - If you itemize your taxes, you may choose to deduct state and local sales taxes instead of state and local income taxes. While this deduction mainly benefits taxpayers with a state or local sales tax but no income tax, it may give a larger deduction to any taxpayer who paid more in sales tax than income taxes.

* Charitable donations - You can deduct financial contributions as well as "in kind" donations of things like clothing and household items.

* Education expenses - A variety of education-related costs may be deductible, including student loan interest and education costs incurred to maintain or improve job skills.

* Disaster or theft - Unfortunately, lots of people may be using this deduction on their 2005 taxes. If your home was damaged by floods, ice storms, earthquakes, other natural disasters or theft, you may be able to deduct what your insurance doesn't cover.

* Job search expenses - If you were job hunting this year, you can deduct most expenses related to the search, including cost of resumes, phone expenses, postage, career counseling and travel to and from your interviews.

* Medical expenses - The threshold for deducting medical expenses is high, but if you've accrued a lot of medical bills you may qualify.

* Tax preparation - You can claim the cost of tax preparation software or the cost of having a professional do your taxes.

* Real estate - Your mortgage interest is deductible, and if you refinanced this year,

you may be eligible to deduct some of the costs associated with the loan. If you sold your main



residence, you may be able to exclude up to \$250,000 of gains (\$500,000 for married taxpayers filing jointly) from your income tax return.

These are just a few of the legal tax deductions; there may be others you can claim. "Be sure you have proper documentation to back up any deductions you claim," says Sweet. And remember, while it may seem like a windfall to get a large tax refund, your goal should really be to break even. If you're getting a refund, you've basically been loaning the government money - without interest.

While you're focused on financial issues, take a few more minutes to check your credit report and make sure you're on track with your financial plans. Web sites like www.experian.com give you quick and easy access to your credit report and credit score. Make sure all the information on your credit report is accurate. If you notice anything questionable, such as accounts you don't recognize, or payment disputes, resolve those issues by contacting your creditors and the credit reporting companies.

For more information on checking your credit report, visit <http://www.experian.com>.

Courtesy of ARA Content



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