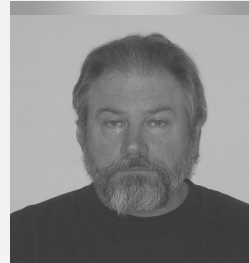


Tampa Letter Carrier

From the Desk of the President

As we begin to enter the months of summer, I need not remind you that the heat will be on once again. It is important that all carriers remember to take the standard daily precautions to prevent heat related illness. Keeping hydrated is not just a function of when you are at work, it is necessary for you to hydrate yourself off work as well. If you are not keeping yourself properly hydrated when you are off the job, dehydration comes on quicker when you are on the job. Drinking water is important, but you also must replenish the electrolytes that you lose when you are sweating while working. Sports drinks like Power-Ade and Gatorade are helpful in this. Soft drinks and coffee and tea are not recommended to drink when thirsty as they can increase dehydration rather than relieve it. Be smart so you can stay healthy—if you need to take a comfort break because you are overheating, do so, as it is something you are allowed to do, just do not overdo it. Also keep in contact with your supervisor if you are having issues with the heat so you can get assistance if it is needed.



Brian Obst
President
Branch 599

Branch 599

serving

Brandon

Plant City

Sun City

Tampa

Stamp Out Hunger

By the time you are reading this the *Stamp Out Hunger* Food Drive will have been concluded and hopefully we will have our final collection totals to report. I know that all will have put forth their best effort to help provide for the local food banks in our area. Neighbors helping neighbors for 33 years, that is what this drive is, and this is just one of the many things we do as letter carriers and members of the community that people remember us for. That is why we are the *most trusted government employees* year after year, so *thank you* all for your great work on the drive.

New Contractual Pay Rates

The new contractual pay rates were implemented on April 19, so you should have seen the increase in your paychecks by now. I would like to point out that while many members are upset about the way things went with the contract, it was done in accordance with the contract and the constitution. This new contract expires in May 2026, so if you are unhappy with how things went, now is the time to start preparations for the next contract negotiating period. List your concerns and what you would like our leadership to attempt to negotiate on our behalf for the next contract, and forward them through our local leadership to the national level. Remember, if you don't take part in the process, you have no reason or right to complain about the outcome. Apathy is the killer of many things, only 50% of our Branch's membership that qualified to vote, actually voted for or against the tentative agreement (retirees cannot vote on contracts). I do not understand how difficult it is to mark a ballot yes or no and mail it back, hell they even paid the postage. This is the reason we had to go to arbitration, as 66,000 members decided on the agreement for over 160,000 carriers able to vote, because over

(Continued on page 3)

Branch 599 Meeting

Thursday

June 5

7:30 PM

Tampa Letter Carriers Hall

315 W Busch Blvd

Suite C

Tampa FL 33612

Additional parking is
available in the lot
before our building.

Branch 599 Office

315 W Busch Boulevard, Suite C
Tampa FL 33612

813.875.0599

www.nalc599.com

Brian Obst
President
erif_lor@hotmail.com

Office Hours
Monday – Friday
7:30 am – 4 pm

Rodna Kimelman Kirk
Office Manager
nalc599@verizon.net

Tampa Letter Carrier

Brian Obst
Publisher

Phyllis R. Thomas
Editor
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Branch 599 Office
813.875.0599

National Association of Letter Carriers 599, 315 W Busch Boulevard, Suite C Tampa FL 33612, 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, NALC. It is the policy of this publication that all articles submitted for print must be signed by the writer.

Please submit any and all articles to be published in the Tampa Letter Carrier to the Editor via email at editor.nalc599@gmail.com and also to the Branch Office at nalc599@verizon.net no later than the 5th of each month in order for us to meet our time limits to the publisher.

Officers

<i>Position</i>	<i>Officer</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
President	Brian Obst	813.875.0599 cell 727.458.0679	erif_lor@hotmail.com
Vice President	Michael Smith	813.326.0717	mosmith46@gmail.com
Recording Secretary	Maria Afful	347.457.7316	
Financial Secretary	Alan Robinson	813.843.9762	
Treasurer	Tony Diaz	813.598.9635	
Sergeant-at-Arms	Luis Cruz	813.431.3223	
MBA/NSBA	Bonita Lattimore	813.756.9676	
Health Benefit Rep	Detlev Aeppel	813.505.7914	
Director of Retirees	John Gebo	813.503.1256	
Trustees	Milly Minsal, Ch.	813.446.2572	
	Andre Hinton	931.980-5169	
	Cynthia Williams	813.778.4373	
Labor Management	J.D. Lewers	813.528.5519	
	Clement Cheung	813.758.5910	
Presidents Emeritus	Garland Tickle • Orbe Andux • Donald Thomas Michael Anderson • James Good • Alan Peacock • Tony Diaz		

Shop Stewards

<i>Station</i>	<i>ZIP</i>	<i>Steward</i>	<i>Station No.</i>	<i>Steward's No.</i>
Tampa Stations/Branches Chief Steward, Mike Smith				813.326.0717
Brandon	33510/11	David Rivadeneira	813.661.1636	656.215.2467
Brandon	33510/11	Osceola Williams Sr.	813.661.1636	210.445.1369
Carrollwood	33618	Edward Carrillo	813.961.2963	
Commerce	33602	Deonte Barron	813.247.2416	
Forest Hills	33612	Lord McWilliams	813.935.2954	
Forest Hills Annex	33613	Robert Rosenfeld	813.935.2954	954.991.2672
Hilldale	33614	Jose Gomez	813.879.4309	917.743.6948
Hilldale Annex	33634	Maria Afful	813.879.4309	347.457.7316
Interbay/Port Tampa	33611/16	Mike Dennis	813.831.2034	813.361.9103
Interbay/Peninsula	33629	Brian Obst	813.831.2034	727.458.0679
Palm River Annex	33619	Sheryl Jones	813.663.0048	
Plant City	33563/64		813.754.3590	
Produce	33610		813.237.4084	
Ruskin/Sun City Ctr	33570	Bert Fristad	813.634.1642	813.541.8540
Seminole Heights	33603	Paul Sardinas	813.237.4569	813.650.3504
Sulphur Springs	33604	Sean O'Connell	813.237.4569	
TCA/Hyde Park	33606	Josh Villa	813.873.7189	203.278.6485
TCA/Peninsula	33609	Brian Obst	813.873.7189	727.458.0679
TCA/West Tampa	33607	Brian Obst	813.873.7189	727.458.0679
Temple Terrace	33617		813.988.0152	
Town & Country	33615/35	Brian Obst	813.884.0973	727.458.0679
Ybor City	33605	Leddyon Lewis	813.247.2416	

Iligan and Yepes presented with Million Miles Award!

Jesus Iligan [Interbay] on the left, and **Juan Yepes** [Carrollwood] on the right, were presented with Million Mile Awards, representing 30 years without a preventable accident. The event was held April 17 at Robert W. Saunders Sr. Public Library.

Congratulations on attaining this remarkable achievement!



From the Desk of the President

(Continued from page 1)

80,000 didn't vote. It is your right to vote on the agreement, so when a tentative agreement is mailed to you, please exercise your right and vote, yes or no, it doesn't matter, but please vote. Remember YOU are the U in Union.

Safety

It seems that many of you are not paying attention to the service talks and policy discussions on safety being held in the stations. I am talking about the *use of seat belts when the vehicle is in operation, and leaving the vehicle running when getting out of the vehicle*. These issues are direct violations of the safety guidelines we work under, and management is not backing off and ignoring these, they are putting carriers on emergency placement (Off the Clock) and issuing discipline for these violations. Do not be lazy or foolish, wear your seat belt when the vehicle is in operation and before you get out of the driver's seat turn off the vehicle, set the hand brake, and take the keys out of the ignition.

The other issue is the use of *Bluetooth earpieces*. District policy says that we are not permitted to use them on the street unless we are on break or lunch, as they are a distraction from

our driving. I don't care if you believe them or not on the issue, it still is a direction from management not to use them on the street. Again, if they find you with one in your ear on the street driving, you are being emergency placed and discipline may follow. It is simply not worth dealing with the ramifications of failure to follow instructions on this issue. Do not wear Bluetooth earpieces on the street while delivering mail.

CCA Town Hall Meeting

We had a CCA Town Hall meeting on April 24 at 7 PM; attendance was underwhelming, to say the least. Those who attended got some good information on job requirements, job protection, uniforms, and general information designed to assist CCAs in getting acclimated to their new position with the Postal Service. It is my hope that the attendees will take the information provided, to ensure a smooth transition into their new positions and help them develop into productive Postal Service employees and active Union members for many years to come.

Take Action!

Congress has forwarded out of committee a bill that directly attacks carriers' retirement pay and benefits.

It is time for all carriers to contact their Congressional Representatives and *tell them to stop trying to destroy our retirement benefits!* Congress is using arguments stating that attacking our retirement benefits will help balance the budget, but nothing could be further from the truth. Remember, *we are a self-funding company and any money changes to our retirement funding does not affect the Budget, as we receive no TAX DOLLARS, so any reductions to our retirements do not go to the Budget battle.* Call your Congressional Representatives and let them know to keep their hands off our retirement benefits. Also, please consider signing up for the NALC Legislative Carriers Political Fund, contact Detlev Aeppel and he can help get you signed up.

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. —Barack Obama

Until next month I leave you as always....**Knowledge is the Key.**

Brian Obst
President

Calendar

Shop Stewards

Tuesday

June 3 7:00 PM

315 W Busch Blvd, Suite C

Executive Board

Thursday

June 5 6:30 PM

315 W Busch Blvd, Suite C

Branch 599

Thursday

June 5 7:30 PM

315 W Busch Blvd, Suite C

Retirees' Breakfasts

Tampa

Monday

June 2 9:30 AM

The Cuban Sandwich Shop
10434 N Florida Avenue 33612

Temple Terrace

Tuesday

June 10 10:00 AM

Bob Evans Restaurant
off Fletcher near I-75
12272 Morris Bridge Road

Note:

Any carrier, active or retired, is welcome to attend the retirees' breakfasts, and on your birthday, the Branch will pick up the tab for your breakfast; simply provide the receipt to the Branch office for processing.

Wait a Minute

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Sending all love to those who...

Struggle with mental illness.
Suffer with suicidal thoughts.
Feel misunderstood by society.
Feel alone in their struggles.
Are scared to speak up/out.
Are trying to heal...

Maria



Maria Afful
Recording Secretary
Shop Steward
Branch 599

Retired...but Not Tired

It is time for those of you wanting to become Branch 599 officers to get involved. With Branch elections six months away, it is not too early to become active in union activities. I believe from what I have observed, the Executive Board may be hard pressed to fill all the positions available going into the next term. We need brothers and sisters to step up, retirees still dominate our top officer positions. Future leaders are needed, as our retirees will not be around forever. We are approaching a critical time to find new and fresh Branch leaders. There is different training available to those who would want to become involved. *For beginners, monthly Branch meetings are filled with information to become familiar with the operations of our Branch.*

I am worried about our future leadership; there appears to be a lack of interest with our new members. Should you have an interest, you may want to begin by becoming a steward. This could open up avenues for future officer positions. In addition, it will allow you to help educate yourself

with your own job. I hope I am wrong with my opinion and I hope we will have many new members step up and become leaders.

The next Retirees Breakfast will be on June 2, at 9:30 AM. Location: The Cuban Sandwich Shop at 10434 N Florida Avenue. This group meets on the first Monday of the month.

We have another retiree group that meets on the second Tuesday of the month, June 10 at 10 AM. Location: Bob Evans, 12272 Morris Bridge Road, in Temple Terrace.

Remember retirees, if it is your birthday month and you attend a monthly breakfast, your breakfast is paid by Branch 599.

So as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans said,
Happy trails to you, until we meet again.

John



John Gebo
Director of Retirees
Branch 599

Call 211

Providing 24/7 support to everyone in the community...
We are here for all the people who are struggling with a variety of crisis situations including sexual assault or abuse, domestic violence, financial distress, substance abuse, medical emergency, suicidal thoughts, and other emotional or situational distress. With care and without judgment, we can connect people to hope, help and healing.

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay ♦ crisiscenter.com

From the Vice President's Desk

Local Negotiations

In March 2025, we received the long awaited new collective bargaining agreement or contract through arbitration. The focus of the union is to look out for the wages, benefits, and working conditions of all carriers. The terms of the contract allow for much more than just a wage increase. The new contract also calls for negotiations at the local level to be completed if the local union and management representative, who in our case is the postmaster, agree. This agreement is referred to as opening the Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) or Local.

Article 30 of the National Agreement enables the local parties to negotiate over certain work rules and other terms and conditions of employment. A period of local implementation follows the completion of each National Agreement. A thirty-day period of negotiations is set by the National President of the Union in agreement with the Postal Service. The negotiation period will begin May 27, 2025. During this timeframe, any LMOUs that are open will be negotiated.

Article 30 additionally sets guidelines on what items the parties can negotiate on in accordance with the National Agreement. There are 22 items in the LMOU that are open to negotiation. These items range from wash-up periods, choice leave periods, overtime desired list, and even assignment of parking spaces. Our Branch and management will conduct periods of negotiations over the thirty-day timeframe to come up with an agreement on the 22 items.

The negotiated items are not just the thoughts of the union or management. All carriers are encouraged to submit any topics for discussion prior to the negotiation period. Please submit any items of concern to your steward or call our Branch office. Local negotiations are your way of voicing your concerns that affect you and your fellow carriers.

Safety

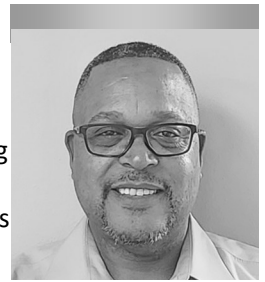
I must again voice my concerns on the topic of safety. The union has noticed an uptick in accidents and emergency placements. Please take the time to review your own actions. Everyone

talks about being safe but still there are carriers being removed because of not being safe in the performance of their duties.

There is an increased number of carriers not using a seat belt and/or harness, leaving the LLV door open crossing a street, or just jumping out of the vehicle with the engine running. *No excuse for being unsafe.*

These actions result in carriers being taken off the street on emergency placement. Management has the right to invoke emergency placement if they feel it is warranted. *Carriers are directed to notify their steward immediately if they are taken off the street.* Stewards are trained and know how to proceed with the placement. **It is the carrier's responsibility to notify the steward.** Additionally, it is each carrier's responsibility to be safe. Safety begins with me.

Mike



Mike Smith
Vice President
Chief Steward
Branch 599

Please keep our Branch Office updated with your contact information.

Branch 599 Centennial Challenge Coins



In honor of the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of Tampa Branch 599 and our continuing commitment to the representation of our members, the Branch has made a one-time purchase of 500 of these Challenge coins. This is a limited edition and there are only 500 coins for purchase at a cost of \$5 per coin. Any profits garnered from the sale of the coins will be donated to MDA. Get your coin now as they will go fast, and you don't want to miss out.

Brian Obst, President

Sharing Our Members' Joys and Sorrows

Our deepest sympathy and prayerful support is extended to **Michelle Lucas** [Town & Country] at the passing of her father, Lawrence Henke, May 8.

Healing prayers and get well wishes are extended to Director of Retirees **John Gebo**, as he recuperates from a recent hospitalization; to President Emeritus **Don Thomas** as he recovers from a vehicular accident; to **Annette** [Financial Secretary Alan Robinson's wife] as she continues to recover from a serious automobile accident; and to **Bill Mandikas** [retiree] as he continues with cardio rehab.

Employee Assistance Program

info is at nalc.org

Choose Workplace Issues, hover over Safety & Health, and choose Employee Assistance Program.

It's confidential for you and your loved ones.

Veterans Buzz



I am changing this column a bit. For the remainder of the year, I

would like to highlight the veterans who are amongst us daily. Any member that would like to be in our newsletter, please contact me through the Branch's email: nalc599@verizon.net. Include your name, (picture – optional), station, and biography while in the military.

Semper Fi, *Mike Smith*, Vice President

I come from a military family. My grandfather was in the Army in World War II; my father and his two brothers were in the Navy. I made the decision to join the Navy when I was in the tenth grade. I was in NJROTC in high school in eleventh and twelfth grades. I signed up on a delayed entry on my 17th birthday and on May 7, 1975, I departed for boot camp in Orlando, Florida.

After boot camp I attended Submarine School in New London, Connecticut, followed by Class A Electronics School and Fire Control Technician School in Dam Neck, Virginia. I left school after a period of close to two years for my first ship, USS Hunley (AS-31) in Charleston, South Carolina. Over the next four years I served in the Weapons Department on this ship, and we transited from Charleston to Guam, Mariana Islands, and back (with stops in Rio, Valparaiso, Hawaii, Panama, Mexico, and the Virgin Islands). I left my ship and went to Naval Ordnance Test Unit in Cape Canaveral for a period of four years before returning to sea duty. I was assigned to the USS Nathan Hale before changing my rating to Electrician Mate and being reassigned to the USS Mount Baker, an ammunition ship in Charleston. I left the Navy in October 1985 prior to my ship transiting to Deigo Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

During my time in the Navy, I was selected as Sailor of the Month in 1979 while in



Guam and I received promotions through E-5 as a Second-Class Petty Officer while serving in numerous positions in my department. I enjoyed the military, and I highly recommend it to all as a way to learn about life and obtain an education and job skills.

After I left the military, I worked for a number of years before I made my way to the Postal Service, where my military training was helpful in learning the job skills needed to succeed here. I became a steward in my first year and served as the Steward for Town and Country Station for 25 years as well as serving as a Branch Trustee, Labor Management Representative, B-Team Representative, Safety Captain, OJI Trainer, Chief Steward, Vice President, and finally my current position as your Branch President.

I am no different than many of you reading this article and I would like to point out that someone out there is a future President of this Branch, all you have to do is learn your job skills and learn the contractual guidelines that you are required to work under. Invest some of your time and energy into this as your Union depends on new blood to come along to replace those of us who have served and departed. Step in and Step Up, you're next!

As we say in the Navy, I wish you fair winds and following seas.

Brian Obst, President

From the Treasurer's Desk – 29th Edition

Brothers and Sisters,

On April 8, our Trustees conducted a thorough quarterly audit of Branch 599's finances. All three Trustees were present and reviewed warrants, credit card expenditures, deposits, and transfers. Their questions were all answered on a variety of items much to their satisfaction. In addition, I explained transactions made and how I document those transactions for clarity and to help educate. For instance, should there be any questions on any warrants, I will share entries in QuickBooks with the detailed transaction description I provide. I have worked closely with the Trustees, making them aware of Branch financial operations.

Postal Service is Under Attack

There is a lot of news regarding the privatization of the Postal Service, possible elimination of Saturday delivery, and the outgoing Postmaster General striking a deal with DOGE to cut 10,000 jobs. With this said, I was expecting to see more active carriers at our Branch meetings. I was expecting more active carriers wanting to know the latest news. More active carriers wanting to know what plan the NALC had in mind to help combat the upcoming changes, and what members can do to protect their jobs. The Postal Service is under attack, make no mistake about it.

President Donald Trump is critical of the service, which delivers to 163 million addresses nationwide and employs 530,000 workers. Trump aims to see it make a profit and has floated the idea of merging it with the Commerce Department. That would halt the USPS's independent status and put it under his administration. *It'll be a form of a merger, but it'll remain the Postal Service*, Trump said. *And I think it'll operate a lot better than it has been over the years. It's been just a tremendous loser for this country.*

The Washington Post, citing postal sources, said the plan would probably violate federal law.

That would be the end of the Postal Service as we know it. Violating federal law is nothing new to this current administration and we cannot sit back and think the federal laws will protect the Postal Service. Privatization would eliminate more jobs than the initial numbers being thrown around. Rural areas of delivery would be eliminated, affecting those who depend on us to deliver life saving medicines. Stay tuned!

Quick Hits:

Information you should know Tougher laws taking effect

CHICAGO – A federal grand jury has indicted two men who allegedly assaulted and robbed a United States Postal Service mail carrier in Chicago. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois said Kyler Reese and Chaun Allen robbed a mail carrier on November 16, 2022.

According to the indictment, Reese and Allen arrived at the scene of the crime in a stolen vehicle they obtained the day before. Reese then got out of the vehicle, pointed a gun at the mail carrier and demanded the carrier's USPS keys and mailbag. The gun Reese had was also equipped with a *switch* device, making it able to fire multiple rounds with a single pull of the trigger, according to investigators. Reese and Allen then drove off in the stolen vehicle. Both Reese and Allen have been charged with conspiracy, robbery of a mail carrier, and brandishing a firearm during a crime of violence. **The charges are punishable by a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 15 years and a maximum of life in prison.** Reese was arrested during the first week of April 2025 and a detention hearing was set for Monday, April 7 in U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona. Allen was arrested in March 2025

and has been denied pre-trial release, according to authorities.

U.S. Postal Service employees delivering mail to the American people must be allowed to do so safely and securely, said

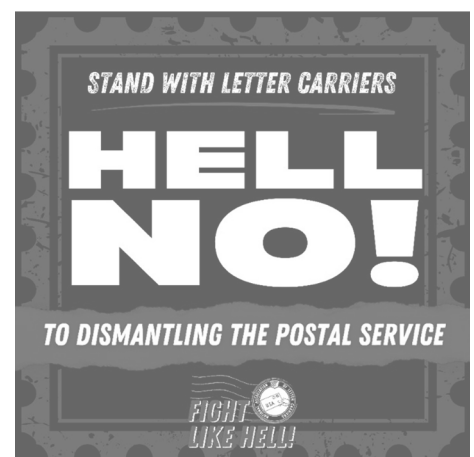
Acting U.S. Attorney Pasqual. *Individuals who use violence against postal carriers to gain access to the public's mail must be held accountable.*

—U.S. Attorney's Office,
Northern District of Illinois



Tony Diaz
Treasurer
President Emeritus
Branch 599
NALCREST Trustee

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



That Time of Year

It is the time of year that we need to start talking about our Annual Golf Tournament for MDA. As I have been the coordinator of this event for 10 years, it is time for me to step aside. My responsibility for caring for 2 elderly parents has become a time-consuming task. Although this event entails a lot of work, it has been so gratifying to be a part of this event. As most of you know, this tournament became personal to me when my cousin's son was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. Ardin Fisher and the Fisher family have been our guests at the tournament 8 out of the 10 years. Last year, our Branch voted to donate 50% of the money raised, directly to the Fisher family. The money donated was used as a down payment on an accessible van.

Our Branch is asking for someone to step up and assume the

position as event coordinator. If you or anyone else would be interested, please call the office (813-875-0599) and speak to President Brian Obst or Alan Robinson (813-843-9762). I will be willing to assist anyway I can help the transition of a new coordinator. The NALC has been supporting MDA since 1959. This is our Branch's number one fundraiser for the year, and it would be a travesty to see this event come to an end. Please don't wait, now is the time that we need to start laying the groundwork for our 2025 tournament.

Until next time
Alan



Alan Robinson
Financial Secretary
Branch 599

Coordinator needed for our 11th Annual Golf Tournament to benefit the MDA

Contact President Brian Obst 813-875-0599 or
Alan Robinson 813-843-9762
for more info.

Just for the Health of It

We are often reminded to take charge of our health by performing self-screening for one type of cancer or another. Women are encouraged to check their breasts, men are encouraged to check their testicles, and all of us are encouraged to keep an eye on our skin moles.

Some cancers require testing to detect. According to Cigna Healthcare, cervical cancer is one of the easiest cancers to prevent with regular screening and follow-ups. Two screening tests can help doctors find cervical cancer early.

The first screening is called the Pap test, also known as the Pap smear. This test looks for precancerous cell changes on the cervix that might become cervical cancer if left untreated.

The other screening is the HPV which looks for the presence of the human papillomavirus (HPV). This virus can cause cervical cells to change. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by the human papillomavirus. This is a common virus that can be passed from one person to another during sex. Since HPV usually doesn't cause any symptoms, you can't tell

when you have it. For most people HPV will go away on its own. If it does not go away there is a chance that over time it may cause cervical cancer. The earlier your healthcare provider finds cervical cancer, the easier it can be to treat and cure.

Starting at age 21, your healthcare provider will recommend the frequency of testing based on your risk factors. Even if you have had a hysterectomy and still have your cervix, you should have Pap tests. Other risk factors are: smoking, having HIV, using birth control pills for five or more years, giving birth to three or more children, and having different sexual partners.

Schedule a Pap test or an HPV test today. This small step can make a big difference to your health and your life.

Here's to your health.....

Detlev



Detlev Aeppel
Health Benefit Rep.
Branch 599

Mail Call

Brothers and Sisters, it has been difficult writing these articles without displaying my concern for the future of our union and/or our employment. My background was military service and then hospitality. When I joined the Postal Service in 2015, there was no better job to have that did not require a degree, and which had so many benefits both while on the job and afterwards for retirement. In the fall of 2016, I was appointed as a Shop Steward, one of two in my installation. Management was routinely violating the contract and our most vulnerable, CCAs, were getting abused. Along with my fellow Steward, Terry Franklin Ret., we endeavored to make a difference. Tony Diaz, Brian Obst, Terry Franklin, and the senior carriers from my office encouraged and supported me while I got my bearings. After over three years, I took a break from being a steward to deal with personal issues, but once those were resolved I ran for Sergeant-at-Arms and won. The union has been good to me, and **I am concerned that our members are not taking the threats to our employment seriously.**

In March, we rallied to alert the public and politicians of our growing concerns over the changes proposed by the POTUS (President Of The United States) administration. Over 400 members were present, but we should have had a hell of a lot more; easily over 1,500 members, considering that three different locals were being represented. Participating in rallies is just one way we get heard; another is through the Letter Carrier Political Fund. For almost a year no one volunteered to help sign up new donors from our Branch. Detlev Aeppel, our Health Benefits Rep, decided to tackle that on top of his already heavy load. There is a misconception about the fund. The only politics the Letter Carrier Political

Fund concerns itself with is improving and protecting the jobs of letter carriers. The officers of the fund would work with Satan if it meant carriers get more, better benefits and working conditions, higher pay, better hours, job security, etc... It is in every carrier's best interest to donate to this fund. Yet, we struggle for donations.

Before working at the USPS, all I knew about unions was from the news and cinema, and all of it had some mafia connection. I grew up on stories of Jimmy Hoffa, former president of the Teamsters. In cinema, movies like F.I.S.T. have Sylvester Stallone using the mob to force independent truckers to join his union. But one thing was evident both in real life and in film, the members have the greatest power within the union, their voice and vote. Members need to participate to be heard by leadership. This means you need to stop acting like membership in the union is like a LA Fitness membership, paying dues and never lifting a weight or running on a treadmill, and then complaining you can't lose the pounds you gained over Thanksgiving. We also must stop treating the union like a law firm on retainer. That is not how the union works. Members voice their needs to leadership at meetings; leadership negotiates with management on their behalf; an agreement is reached and implemented; and our frontline officers, stewards, ensure the agreement, contract, is adhered to.

Too many bad ideas are out there for the Postal Service that spells doom for letter carriers, like:

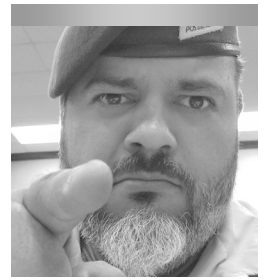
- Plans to fire the board of the U.S. Postal Service and place our independent agency under the control of the Commerce Department—a move that could be the first step in privatizing the service.
- Plans of folding the USPS into the Commerce Department.

It doesn't help that Louis DeJoy resigned; and in July, David Steiner, a Fed-Ex board member and union buster, will be our new Postmaster General. In addition, with four board of governors' seats open, the situation is ripe to make some destructive changes to USPS; even our National President Brian Renfroe has weighed in, *His (Steiner) selection isn't just a conflict of interest—it's an aggressive step toward handing America's mail system over to corporate interests*, Renfroe said in a statement. *Private shippers have been waiting to get USPS out of parcel delivery for years. Steiner's selection is an open invitation to do just that.*

We need to get off our collective butts and take control of our future!

- We need to participate in our rallies; bring our families along if we must.
- We need to donate to funds that help us.
- We need to volunteer and make time to do so.
- We need to go to Branch meetings to stay informed about not just postal political issues, but about benefits, our local's finances, etc...

Sarge



Luis Cruz
Sergeant-at-Arms
Branch 599



The Letter Carrier Political Fund is a non-

partisan political action committee (PAC). Find more information at nalc.org under Government Affairs.

Food Drive Kickoff – May 9



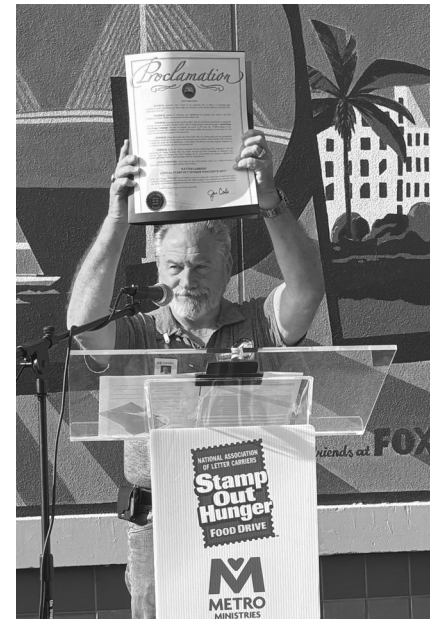
Our *Stamp Out Hunger* Food Drive's Kickoff Event was held at the Metropolitan Ministries Campus on May 9. Fox 13's Charley Belcher was broadcasting all morning to get the word out to the community on how important this drive is for the local food banks. There were several speakers from the Postal Service and the supporting Unions along with *ThunderBug* from the Tampa Bay Lightning and Metro's *Hope the Hippo* helping support the drive. Let's work hard to raise as much food as possible for the community *Neighbors helping Neighbors*. Thanks to Vice President Mike Smith for serving as our Food Drive Coordinator!



President Obst and FSALC President Al Friedman with the Food Drive's Champions Belt for 2024



TCA Carrier Mike Williams, FSALC President Al Friedman, Metro Ministries Michelle Hogan, Rural Letter Carriers Rep. Natasha Peterson, and President Brian Obst



President Obst with Proclamation declaring May 10 as **Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive Day** from the Mayor of Tampa.

If our Retirement Benefits are being changed

The Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) provides a comprehensive retirement package for U.S. federal employees, combining a defined benefit pension, Social Security, and the Thrift Saving Plan (TSP). In recent years, FERS employee contribution rates have changed for certain groups of employees. For federal workers hired in 2013 or later, retirement contributions may be increased from 3.1% to 4.4% for those hired in 2014 or later if Congress passes the bill. This shift has had notable financial and policy implications.



Clement Cheung
Labor Management Rep.
Branch 599

Increasing FERS contributions to 4.4 % means that new federal employees must allocate a larger portion of their paychecks toward retirement, reducing their immediate take-home pay. With the current inflation, this may affect recruitment and retention, especially when federal salaries lag behind comparable private-sector roles. Entry-level federal employees may find the higher contribution burdensome, particularly in high-cost living areas such as Boston, New York, and San Francisco.

1. Reduced Take-Home Pay

If your FERS contribution rate increases to 4.4%, and you are currently contributing less (e.g., 0.8% for employees hired before 2013), your net pay will decrease by the difference. For example:

- If your current rate is 0.8% and it rises to 4.4%, that's an additional 3.6% of your salary being deducted.
- On a \$80,000 salary, that's a reduction of \$3,520 (4.4%) compared to \$640 (0.8%).

Hire Date	Current Rate	Change If Increases
Before 2013	0.8%	+3.6% increase
2013 (FERS)	3.1%	+1.3% increase
2014 or later (FERS)	4.4%	No change

Reducing FERS annuity payment by calculating a retiree's annuity based on their high-five salary average (instead of three). Changing the high-3 salary calculation to high-5 for (FERS) employees would reduce the value of their pension annuity, effectively lowering retirement income. Here's a breakdown of the impact:

1. Background: High-3 Calculation (Current Rule)

Under FERS, the pension annuity is based on:

- Years of service
- A formula multiplier (generally 1% for the first 20 years and 1.1% after that)
- High-3 average salary earned over any consecutive 3 years of service.

2. Proposed Change: High-5 Calculation

- Switching to a High-5 would mean the average of the highest five consecutive years of earning instead.

3. Financial Impact

- Most federal employees earn raises over time, especially in their final years of service.
- The high-5 average will be lower than the high-3 in most cases because it includes earlier, lower-paying years.
- The annuity will be calculated on a lower average salary, resulting in smaller monthly pension payments.

Example: If your last 5 years of salary were:

- Year 1: \$85,000
- Year 2: \$86,000
- Year 3: \$87,000
- Year 4: \$88,500
- Year 5: \$90,000
- High-3 average: $(87K + 88.5K + 90K) / 3 = \$88,500$
- High-5 average: $(85K + 86K + 87K + 88.5K + 90K) / 5 = \$87,300$

At a 1% multiplier and 30 years of service:

- High-3 annuity: $1\% \times 30 \times 88.5k = \$26,550$
- High-5 annuity: $1\% \times 30 \times 87.3k = \$26,190$

Result: \$360 less per year and \$7,200 for 20 years – compounded over retirement, that's a significant reduction.

Please contact your local House Representatives and Senators and let them know the impact of our retirement system from these changes.

Clement



State Training Meeting in Miami – May 16-17

Branch 599 sent a 7-member delegation to the State Training Seminar in Miami over the period of May 16-17. The seminar was developed to assist Branch Officers and Stewards with ongoing training classes to help them stay educated on the changing face of the Postal Service and the jobs we perform for the Branch.

The classes offered this time consisted of topics ranging from the basics of the grievance process and the crafting of appropriate remedies for grievance issues to grieving Route Inspections, and the upcoming LMOU Negotiations. There was also a class detailing the new National Agreement and the changes that were made from the previous agreement.



There was a General Session to open the meeting where FSALC President Al Friedman spoke to the numerous issues affecting carriers today, followed by Region 9 NBA Eddie Davidson who highlighted many of his and his staff's actions on behalf of the Region 9 membership, of which Florida is a part, dealing with the many issues we are addressing daily with postal management. The FSALC also had scheduled numerous guest speakers to include several Congresspersons, a Public Defender in the Miami area, to provide additional information on issues under the legislative front.

All in all, the seminar was a welcome assist to the members of the Florida delegation and our attendees will benefit greatly from the additional knowledge, allowing for better representation for our membership as a whole. We thank the Branch for sending our members to this important training.

Delegation members: President Brian Obst, Vice President Mike Smith, Health Benefits/Legislative Coordinator Detlev Aeppel, Steward Paul Sardinas, Sargent-at-Arms Luis Cruz, Steward/Recording Secretary Maria Afful, and Trustee Cynthia Williams.

Brian Obst, President



We participated in Fight Like Hell Rally in Miami.

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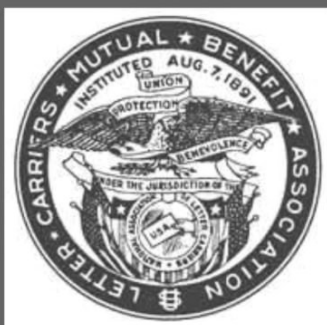
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BRANCH 599

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BONITA LATTIMORE

MBA/NSBA
Representative

(813)-756-9676



Branch 599 adopted a building at NALCREST



This is a copy of the plaque on Building 15, that Branch 599 adopted at NALCREST. We made a donation for maintenance on the building.

Attention Federal Workers!

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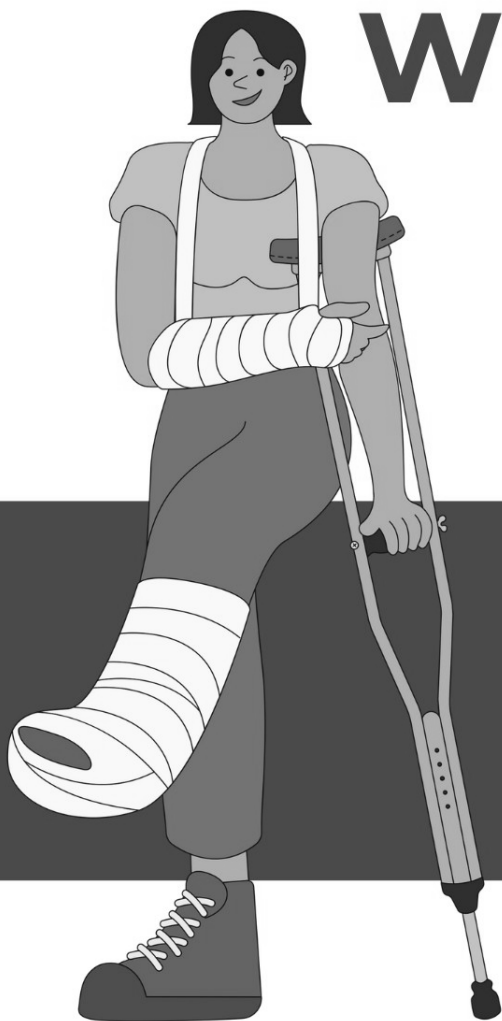
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The Villages, Tampa, Lady Lake, Wildwood & Ocala

Addressing OWCP issues...let's get it right

There have been many articles in our newsletter over the years regarding on-the-job injuries. These are regularly asked questions you need to know:

1. What do I do first?
2. Who do I notify?
3. What paperwork do I need?
4. Who will help me through this?

Correcting OWCP issues are time consuming, frustrating, and if not corrected can delay medical treatment that could cause more severe prolonged injuries. So how do you avoid these issues? How do you get it right?

The **answers** to the above questions should help the process.

1. Report the accident immediately, explain exactly what happened, with a time and place (address).
2. Your supervisor or manager, and if you cannot reach anyone, your steward or our Branch office. It is important to notify someone.
3. Register an account on ECOMP at ecomp.dol.gov. The forms needed are, CA-1, CA-16, and CA-17, know your forms, ask questions, and do not rely on management to submit your forms without verification.
4. Your supervisor and/or manager should assist you, however, this is not always the case. Do not allow management to delay you going to ecomp.dol.gov; this is critical to your case.

Other tips:

1. Your online account at ecomp.dol.gov will be available to download should you need a paper copy of any of your forms.
2. Write a detailed, thorough, complete, and legible statement. Some important information to consider, if applicable: the time, the place, the conditions, the surface(s), any contributing factors, possible witnesses, and any hazards.

On the Job Injury – Forms needed, simple math,

$$\text{CA-1} + \text{CA-16} = \text{CA-17}$$

CA-16 must be signed by management,

Authorization for Examination and/or treatment.

Any questions...call the Branch office; ask for Brian Obst, 813.875.0599.



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