

Letter Carrier's Review

An Official Publication of NALC Branch 210

SPRING

Together we are Strong

2025

New Contract issued from Expedited Arbitration

Arbitrator Nolan issued a final and binding arbitration award that sets the terms of a three-year collective-bargaining agreement between the National Association of Letter Carriers and the U.S. Postal Service. It was announced on Monday March 24, 2025. This came after a strong rejection of the proposed tentative agreement (TA) the NALC sent to the membership for approval. National President Renfroe made the choice to move to “expedited” arbitration, shortly after the TA was widely voted down by the rank-and-file membership. Unfortunately, for most of us, this arbitration award did not sway much from the terms of the rejected TA. Although as a body, we rejected the TA in its entirety; the parties only addressed the economic terms through the expedited arbitration sessions. This left all the contractual stipulations from the rejected TA in the arbitration award. The terms of the new contract run through May of 2026. Here is a summary of the main economic terms of the National Agreement, considering that was all that was changed (again, unfortunately):

Wage provisions: 3 general wage increases, and 6 proportional COLAs were awarded.

The first four COLAs total \$2,725 at top pay. The remaining two will depend on the CPI at that time. General wage increases will be 1.3% for November 2023, 1.4% for November 2024 (both paid retroactively), and 1.5% in November 2025.

Pay table modifications: Steps AA and A will be eliminated from Table 2, raising starting career pay by 4.5%. The annual rate at Step P in Tables 1 and 2 will be increased by \$1,000. This increase is in addition to the general wage increases and COLAs mentioned above.

Back pay: will cover all letter carriers for all paid hours from May 20, 2023. Back-pay calculations will include all retroactive raises and COLAs.

CCA pay: CCAs will receive 3 additional 1% increases and an additional \$0.50/hour. 2.3% for November 2023, 2.4% for November 2024 (both paid retroactively), and 2.5% in November 2025.

All these modifications will be effective within 180 days of the date of the arbitration award signed (3/21/25). We will monitor and keep you informed as soon as we hear any more information regarding specific dates. We will also monitor and message out any information regarding when the contractual provisions will go into effect. If anyone has specific questions, please call the Branch 210 office, or speak to your steward. The complete award from Nolan, along with a more detailed summary can be found on nalc.org.

National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 210

The Branch Union Office is located at
2491 Brighton Henrietta Townline Rd.
Rochester New York
14623

and can be reached at (585) 427-2450

or

www.NALC210.com

Branch 210 Meetings: 1st Wednesday of every month @ IBEW Hall
2300 East River Rd. Rochester, NY 14623



The Letter Carriers Review is a newsletter published by NALC Branch 210. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the writers, and not necessarily the official view of the Branch Officers. The editor has written articles without a by-line. The editor reserves the right to edit or reject any material received for publication. Branch 210 members are invited to submit material to: Ann Pacher, Editor, Letter Carrier's Review, 2491 Brighton-Henrietta TL Rd., or e-mail me at ampacher@gmail.com.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT...

Monique Mate



Those who may not be aware, which I can't imagine it's many, Kenny Montgomery retired as Branch President in early October 2024. Per the NALC Constitution, when the President leaves in the middle of a term, the current Vice President shall then perform all duties incumbent upon the President for the remainder of the term of office. Though I became your current President, not through elections but because of Constitutional provisions, I accept this current position humbled and honored. We have had a great leader for several years with Kenny and I am lucky enough to witness his leadership skills firsthand by working with him daily since 2020. We are all lucky Kenny, though not fulltime anymore, remains an active officer in our branch. First as Interim Health Benefits Director until the end of 2024 and now as our current Benefits Trust Officer, since Sam Hogan retired this year. Kenny still remains our NY State Vice-President and our branch along with all of the New York city letter carriers continue to benefit from his extensive knowledge of the legislative aspect of the NALC. Bottomline, I can say not only have I learned the President position by Kenny's selfless teachings through the years, but Kenny continues to make himself available whenever I or any other member have questions.

As President, the first thing I did (and one of the smartest in my opinion) was appoint Michael Masters as Vice- President. Mike and I have come through "the ranks" together through the NALC. We both began as stewards, worked at the DRT, worked at National in different positions, and have been officers in the branch for several years. This only made sense.

Since our new positions began in October, we have definitely had a full plate. Our health benefits, which were Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB), changed to the Postal Service Health Benefit (PSHB) in January 2025. This brought some unforeseen issues. For one, the Postal Service along with OPM, changed how and where we now log in during open season. Active careers are no longer able to sign up or change health benefits in lite blue and retirees are no longer able to use OPM's services online to change their health benefits. Instead, both retirees and actives had to, and will continue to going forward, create a secure log-in at secure.login.gov and then go to OPM to change their health benefits. We had many issues where the secure log in was not recognizing the person logging in. In addition, the phone number provided by OPM to help was simply useless. It was so bad that OPM extended open season by a week. The only good part of this chaos was meeting the countless members who came into the hall who needed our help. Most who we have never met before. Not exactly how we want to meet members but glad that Mike and I were able to help them through this confusing time. We can only hope USPS and OPM fix these issues before our November 2025's open season.

Along with the health benefit changes, we happened to be in the middle of a long-expired contract. Within a week of becoming President, a tentative agreement was proposed. Mike and I went to the Committee of Presidents (COP) in Atlantic City, where National President Renfro introduced a few of the proposals. Shortly after they had a RAP session in Washington D.C. to thoroughly go over the Tentative Agreement. Mike, myself, and two delegates attended the RAP. We brought back the information and had a special local zoom meeting to go over the proposed TA and answer any questions for our members.

PRESIDENT cont...

Prior to the zoom meeting, the branch executive board discussed the TA and unanimously determined we were NOT in favor of the proposal and were recommending a no vote. At the zoom meeting we discussed why the board came to a no decision. Apparently, other branches felt the same way, because the TA was handily turned down by the members. In turn, the NALC went to expedited arbitration where Arbitrator Nolan gave us a final award. His award was not much different than the original TA which was disheartening. The only thing to look forward to is the contract took so long to be ratified that it will expire in May 2026, where we can only hope it ends up better than what we have now, but that is to be determined.

Along with the changes to health benefits and the long-awaited contract, in Washington D.C., we had a new administration voted in who took office in January. Since then, it's been constant attacks on Federal workers, this includes the Postal Service. This administration does not care that the Postal Service is an independent agency. This administration does not care it takes an act of congress to change current rules. The USPS is in the Constitution but that means nothing to DOGE. Some proposals being flirted with (without going through Congress) are reducing six-day delivery, changing our retirement from high three to high five years, and ending the FERS Social Security Supplement (bridge). Bottomline, this administration wants to privatize the Postal Service. This would not only harm the 640,000 workers USPS employs but would cause a trickledown effect which would raise prices for our customers, small businesses and the mailers. Basically, it would be a disaster for the entire country who relies on the USPS on a daily basis.

For this reason, National put out a call to have "HELL NO!" rally from the branches across the U.S. on March 23, 2025. We scheduled ours outside the main post office (GMF) between 1-4pm and it was a huge success. We had about 300 people come and line up along Jefferson Rd. The news stations along with Congressman Morelle attended. Congressman Morelle stood with us and gave an inspirational and educational speech explaining the harm that would come if privatization would happen. The pictures from the rally are included in this newsletter. No doubt this is not the end of the threats, but we will be ready for anything that comes our way. We've been through this before.

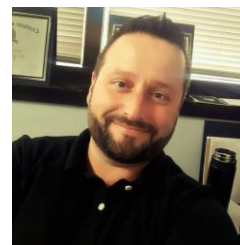
It goes without saying it's been a heck of a busy six months, but I have been enjoying every minute of it and look forward to the upcoming months. Things to look forward to are our annual MDA Aaron Wallace golf tournament on May 18th at a new golf course, Timber Ridge; State Convention in June in Syracuse, NY; and our annual picnic at Seabreeze on July 13, 2025.

Also, we are looking to update some things at the hall. We are currently getting estimates to put a much-needed sign in front of the building and will bring those estimates to the next union meeting. Also, we have designated a wall for our veterans. I want to make sure our retirees and active employees who have served are never forgotten. Therefore, we are requesting our members who served, to send a 4x6 picture of themselves preferably in their service uniform if you have one and they will be hung on the big wall in the conference room. With those pictures write a small summary of your military branch and years of service, your letter carrier years (start date, end date if retired), station you worked out of, and any other information you would like to share. FYI, the picture will not be returned.

Lastly, I want to say how grateful I am to be in this position and look forward to hopefully many more years of continuing to work for the members. It is an honor I do not take for granted!

FROM THE DESK OF THE VICE PRESIDENT...

Michael J. Masters

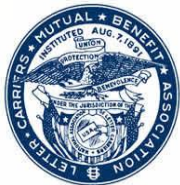


For those of you who do not know me, I'm Michael Masters. I was appointed Vice President of Branch 210 this past October to fill a vacancy left by Monique Mate, our past vice president. My involvement with Branch 210 began back in 2008 when I became steward at Beechwood Station. From there, I was elected to several positions in the branch over the last 17 years including: AFL-CIO delegate, Trustee, then eventually I was elected to the officer position of Branch 210 Insurance Director. Throughout that 17-year period I also worked on several details and assignments locally here, regionally at the NBA office, and nationally at NALC Headquarters. I was a Dispute Resolution Team member, an arbitration advocate, a Formal (A) representative in Branch 210, and I graduated from NALC's Leadership Academy in 2014. I am very excited to continue working with your now president, Monique Mate. "Mo" and I have been working together as union advocates for many years; we complement each other well so I feel it's a very natural fit. I am proud to serve, and am looking forward to continued collaboration with Branch 210's first female president. Throughout my time working for the NALC in various roles, I've tried my best to put the membership first, no matter what the sacrifice. I am here to tell you I will continue to do so in this new position, and look forward to meeting more of you, and working for all of you.

What a wild ride the first 6 months has been: planning a retiree's breakfast, then a retirement party, then the TA came out, followed by an emergency RAP session in Washington, sitting as a technical assistant on a local removal arbitration, then the holidays, then the passing of a great mentor of mine Norm LeFrois, then the TA gets voted down, organizing a local rally, and most recently an expedited arbitration award. All the while, appealing and processing over 150 (and counting) grievances; busy is an understatement.

Moving on, I would like to thank everyone who came out to the "HELL NO!" Rally. What a successful day of unionism and solidarity. In particular, I wanted to recognize two groups: the shop stewards and the retirees. We had several stewards from the city of Rochester, but we also had stewards from as far as Palmyra and Penn Yan. As a shop steward you are the first line of defense, the first one a member should go to for council or advice; in short, you are a leader and representative of Branch 210. For some of you to drive from 30, 40, even over 60 minutes away, on a Sunday to stand in solidarity against those who wish to dismantle us – you lead by example. You understood the assignment. As for the retirees, what can I say? Some of you risked it all on a picket line in 1970, and are still fighting and standing with us to this day. Although the sun was out, it was a very brisk, cool, breezy day, but that did not deter you. While some of you were more recently retired, there were some of you well into your 70's and 80's. That type of loyalty and commitment to our branch and its members is priceless. So let me say on behalf of our membership; a heartfelt thank you!

By the time you receive this newsletter, President Mate and I will have returned from the spring Committee of Presidents (COP) meeting. We hope to have some good information to relay on several topics, including: the new contract, the replacement for the PMG, and hopefully some legislative news. I also hope to see many of you at our annual MDA Golf Tournament on May 18th. It's always a good time for a great cause! We will be back at Sea Breeze in Irondequoit, for our annual Summer Picnic on July 13th; \$30 per ticket for park admission, water park, and all you can eat – you can't beat that deal! I hope to see many of you at these branch events, along with many of you at our monthly branch meetings; the first Wednesday of every month at the IBEW Hall, 2300 East River Road. Remember, union starts with "U"! I'd love to see more active participation from our members, especially those who have recently began their career as a letter carrier. Until then, as vice president, know my door is always open, and my phone will always be available to all of you.



INSURANCE REPORT

NALC Health Benefit Plan/MBA Insurances

Director of Insurance, Derek Lynch

dlynch74@gmail.com | 585-737-9297



We have many new union members enrolled in the NALC Health Benefit Plan in 2025 and I am new to this role as branch Director of Insurance. My first report will start with some basics after the awkward implementation of the Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) and integration of Medicare Part B for retirees in 2025.

New coverage began on January 1st. Update your medical providers and pharmacy with new insurance cards and coverage information. Contact Member Services at 888-636-6252 if you don't have your cards yet. Go to www.nalchbp.org or download the "NALC HBP Member Portal" app to access your claim history, view digital insurance cards, order new cards and much more.

Retirees 65 and older should also provide their doctors and pharmacies with their new NALC High Option – Aetna Medicare Advantage ID card if enrolled in Medicare Part B. Call 866-241-0262 for Aetna support. Aetna becomes the primary insurer, with NALC becoming secondary. You have been automatically enrolled in Medicare Part D. **DO NOT OPT OUT** of Medicare Part D or you will not have prescription drug coverage. Drugs are not covered without Medicare Part C or D. If you enrolled in a Medicare Part C Advantage plan, you are covered. But with only Part A, you must keep Part D. Confused with all the parts? Call us for help!

April is Stress Awareness Month and May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Stress rarely takes care of itself. You aren't alone in your battle when you find the strength to ask for help. Rely on your resources and a trusted team to have your back. Annual Routine Physical Exams at your primary care physician cost nothing with the NALC High Option, so take advantage and take ownership of your health issues. A free Health Assessment is also available under Quicklinks at www.nalchbp.org, an online program that analyzes your health-related responses and gives you a personalized plan to achieve specific health goals. It takes just a few minutes, and your profile provides information to put you on a path to good physical and mental health. Incentives like (2) \$25 waived co-payments or a FitBit Aria Air smart scale are earned for completing the assessment, so own your health and win!

Free resources are available from the same website at www.my.cigna.com (Food, Stress, Sleep, Exercise, Weight and Prevention) under the "Wellness" tab. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to combat stress and delivering mail door-to-door doesn't count – it breaks down your body slowly over time. Get discounts at \$28/month for standard gym memberships with Active & Fit Direct at national clubs like Planet Fitness and LA Fitness. Local gyms like the JCC of Rochester or Palmyra Community Center also have discounted premium services. If you have space to work out but just need classes to keep you focused, virtual training programs including yoga, Pilates, kickboxing, and strength training through Daily Burn are available for 30 days free then \$14.95/month.

Massage therapy and chiropractic adjustments are also beneficial to keeping your mind and body healthy. The NALC High Option allows 24 visits per year at \$25 per visit In-Network. Submit a claim form for reimbursement if your provider doesn't accept insurance. Massage therapy and chiropractor co-pays are reimbursable items if you use your Flexible Spending Account (FSA). The NALC HBP also offers behavioral, tobacco cessation, substance/alcohol, and mental health counseling services through Optum Health at <https://www.liveandworkwell.com>.

I am honored and grateful for President Mate's confidence in me and can only hope to fill this role half as well as my predecessors. Please text me or call my virtual assistant with questions or issues about our insurance offerings. Let's learn together – if you find out something new and interesting about our insurance, share it for the benefit of all.

KENNY MONTGOMERY
Benefit Trust Officer



Were you hired before January 1, 1984? Then you are covered by CSRS and this article is for you. This information applies to FERS employees as well, but it is **NEW** to CSRS retirees, and this information will apply more to those under CSRS retirement.

Recently the government passed the Social Security Fairness Act (HR 82) which eliminated the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). For those who worked under CSRS in the postal service you didn't pay into Social Security, however some of you worked other jobs at the same time and paid into Social Security getting your 40 quarters at that other job and earning Social Security benefits in retirement. Because you were covered by CSRS the WEP law would then reduce your Social Security due to your postal federal pension. In essence you would not get your full earned benefit due to your postal pension. With the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act, you now are eligible to collect your full earned Social Security retroactive to January 2024 and your benefit is no longer subject to reduction. If you did not have a second job, please don't stop reading as this part may be for you.

What if you did **NOT** have another job or you don't have your 40 quarters? If you worked under CSRS, were married and did not have a second job and therefore you did not pay into Social Security, but your spouse did work, well then, we need to address the GPO part of the new law. Under Social Security there is a program known as spousal benefits. This will be an abbreviated explanation of that spousal benefit which very well might apply to you. This spousal provision has always applied to everyone else including FERS employees, but the GPO used to reduce your spousal benefit completely away based on your federal pension. Now with the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act, if you did not work another job or otherwise did not have your 40 quarters, then you can apply for up to one half of your spouse's Social Security without it affecting the spouse's benefit.

As an example (your figures will be different) if you didn't work for a second private sector employer paying into Social Security or did not get your 40 quarters towards Social Security and therefore you don't qualify for Social Security based on your own employment, and your spouse is collecting \$1,800 (example amount) a month based on their earned benefits from their employment, then you could still be eligible for up to \$900 in spousal benefits and it would not affect the spouse's \$1,800 at all. The same rule applies if you did earn your 40 quarters through another employer and your current Social Security is less than your spousal benefit, then you are eligible for the higher amount. Like the WEP, the GPO benefit is payable retroactive to January 2024. In order to qualify you and your spouse must be at least 62 years old.

There are specific formulas when computing the actual benefits that you are entitled to, and Social Security will figure it out for you once you apply. Bottom line, if your spouse worked full-time and is collecting Social Security and you are not collecting Social Security then you need to make an appointment with Social Security and apply for spousal benefits. If this has you confused and you're just not sure.... I invite you to call me to discuss your current situation and I can try to clarify (585-721-7397). You might have some money waiting for you. Again, this spousal benefit has always applied to everyone else including FERS employees and because of the new law it now applies to you in CSRS as well.





Kenny's Retirement Party

December 14, 2024



Kenny receives a proclamation from
Congressman Joseph Morelle



The Montgomery Family: Marian, Kenny,
Christine, Michael & Rebecca



Kenny w/ past president Art Muoio,
and current president, Monique Mate

NALC BRANCH 210 VETERANS WALL

If you are a veteran, active or retired, send us a 4x6 picture of yourself (in uniform, if possible) and we will add it to our wall, to honor all of Branch 210's veterans.





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The EAP wants USPS employees and family members to have the emotional support needed to navigate life's challenges.

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The EAP offers services and resources to navigate family dynamics, parenting, childcare, adoption, senior services, eldercare, military and veterans, disability care, and even pet care.

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Feel free to contact our Branch 210 EAP Coordinator Ann Pacher at (585) 217-6958 or ampacher@gmail.com



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Aaron Wallace

Annual Aaron Wallace Memorial Golf Tournament for MDA

When: Sunday, May 18th
Shotgun start: 10:00am

Where: Timber Ridge Golf Course
7601 Ridge Road
Brockport, NY 14420

Format: 4-person Scramble

Price: \$100/pp or \$400/team
(skins included)

Price Includes:

Food
Beverages on the course
Longest Drive
Closest to the Pin

Aaron Wallace is the son of retired Branch 210 letter carrier Scott Wallace from Panorama Station and his wife Amy Wallace.

Aaron lost his battle with Muscular Dystrophy January 10, 2014 at the age of 27.

Help us celebrate the life of Aaron through this fund raiser to increase awareness of Muscular Dystrophy





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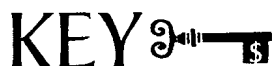
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I'm the son of "Scotty" Wallace.
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