



VIEWPOINT

June 2021



John K. Rivera Rivera

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Saludos Hermanos/as

. Espero que se encuentren bien junto a sus familiares y amigos. La gerencia del Caribe está trabajando para hacer nuevas rutas. Hasta ahora están confrontando problemas en conseguir casilleros y la Región 15 (nuestra región) está haciendo lo propio para conseguir casilleros. Saludos y felicitaciones a los nuevos PTF's que se convirtieron en mayo 8, 2021.

En Julio 4, empezamos lo que se ratificó en el contrato sobre los días feriados, si lo trabajas tienes la opción de cobrar el día feriado o pasan las horas al "annual leave". para eso tienes que usar la 3971 en el cuadro de "Type of Absence" marcar el cuadro "Holiday/AL Leave Exchange".

Seguimos con la pandemia por lo tanto debemos seguir con los protocolos de seguridad. Quiero informarles que la página del Branch está funcionando NALCBranch869.com. Espero que sigan bien y cuidense y será hasta pronto.

Felicitamos a nuestros Hermanos que se convirtieron de CCA's a PTF's. Mantengan el buen trabajo y sigan siendo responsables.

Morales, John - Luquillo
Cintrón López, Edgar – Bayamón Branch
Cotto, Christopher – Trujillo Station
García García, Jorge – Calle Loiza CCU
Figueroa, Eliezer – San Juan
Torres Otero, Ricardo – San Lorenzo
Rivera, Paul – Toa Alta
Acevedo, Jan – Toa Alta
Luciano, Norberto – Vega Alta
Rojas, Pierre -Vega Baja
Marrero Rivera, José – Vega Baja

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRANCH 869 MEETINGS

Regular monthly Branch Meetings will be conducted Via Zoom until further notice.

In the best interest of the safety and health of our members and their families and given the government regulations regarding gatherings during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly Branch 869 meetings scheduled for June 15 & July 15, 2021 will be conducted via Zoom. Information regarding how to attend the meeting on your computer or phone will be provided to register ZOOM Members ONLY.

NALC Branch 869 Web Site:

<http://www.nalcbranch869.com>

VICE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Hermanos y Hermanas Postales saludos, les escribe su Vicepresidente Julio Santiago para exhortales que están presentes en la próxima reunión mensual que se estará efectuando el martes 15 de junio 2021.

Traigan sus inquietudes, preguntas y situaciones que puedan estar pasando en sus respectivas estaciones. La reunión se estará llevando de manera virtual a través de la aplicación ZOOM.

Les recuerdo que para poder tener acceso a la reunión deben registrarse primero. Cualquier duda que tengan con el proceso para registrarse puede comunicarse con la unión al 787-250-7011 o con este servidor al 787-463-8934. Estamos siempre a su disposición.

Bendiciones a todos

Julio Santiago

RECORDING SECRETARY'S CORNER

If any city carrier needs to be vaccinated in the Bayamon area or surrounding area

Servicios de vacunación contra el COVID-19

Disponibles vacunas PFIZER Y MODERNA

Para citas:

(787) 296-8532

(787) 251-2993

CDT GMSP, Inc

8-7 Calle Santa Cruz Bayamón

Rolando Franquiz

NEWSPAPER EDITOR

Esperamos haber cubierto información que necesitan tener todos, pero, cuando quiera comunicarte con el (787) 250-7011 de tener alguna otra duda, siempre esta oficina está abierta para ustedes, favor hacer cita a través de la Sra. Zulma Escobar.

Me pueden enviar sus escritos, fotos, artículos para compartir con la matricula. Estos serán evaluados y luego publicados.

Gracias anticipadas. La próxima publicación será Julio 2021.

Linda Ramírez

Branch 869 Information

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Emergency Federal Employee Leave

The American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. The bill provides an important leave benefit for letter carriers affected by COVID-19 in several ways. Effective March 12, it establishes a new category of leave called Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL). All career and non-career city carriers, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for EFEL.

Each full-time letter carrier may use up to 600 hours of EFEL for qualifying reasons, that I will explain below. Part-time employees will be credited with an amount of leave proportionate to the hours they work. The bill includes a fund to reimburse the Postal Service for the cost of EFEL.

It is important to note that this leave will remain available through September 30, 2021, or until the funding established in the Emergency Federal Employee Leave fund for reimbursement is exhausted.

The amount any employee can be paid for using FEEL is limited to \$2,800 per pay period. Every carrier must understand that time spent on EFEL does not count as creditable service towards an employee's retirement benefits, and employees cannot contribute to Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) while on EFEL.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is charged with administering the EFEL fund that will finance leave granted under the ARPA and, therefore, is required to issue guidance on how the leave is to be administered by covered agencies, including the Postal Service. As of the writing of this article, OPM has not issued any guidelines to the Postal Service, therefore leave is being approved on an interim basis.

An employee is entitled to take EFEL related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work because the employee is:

1. subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19.
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19.
3. Is caring for an individual who is subject to such an order as in (1) or has so advised as in (2).
4. Is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.
5. is caring for the employee's son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, requires, or makes optional a virtual learning instruction model, requires, or makes optional a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning instruction models, or if the childcare provider of the son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions.
6. is experiencing any other substantially similar condition.
7. is caring for a family member with a mental or physical disability or who is 55 years of age or older and incapable of self-care, without regard to whether another individual other than the employee is available to care for such family member, if the place of care for such family member is closed or the direct care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19.
8. is obtaining immunization (vaccination) related to COVID-19 or is recovering from any injury, disability, illness, or condition related to such immunization.

Postal employees are generally not subject to Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation orders related to COVID-19, so employees will generally not be eligible to use EFEL for qualifying reason (1). Additionally, no substantially similar condition has been identified that would qualify an employee to use leave for qualifying reason (6).

You are required to fill out a PS Form 3971 and check the box marked OTHER under “Type of Absence” and write code 086-21. In the remarks section, write the qualifying reason that applies to you. Make sure that you keep a copy of your PS Form 3971 and be prepared to provide documentation. Make sure to check Branch 38’s website when OPM issues the guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your area representative or the Branch office.

COVID-19& Workers Comp

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Res- cue Plan Act of 2021. The new law makes it easier for federal workers diagnosed with COVID-19 to establish coverage under the Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (FECA). Section 4016 of the law provides that a federal employee who is diagnosed with COVID-19 and carried out duties that required contact with patients, members of the public, or co-workers, or included a risk of exposure to the novel coronavirus during a covered period of exposure prior to the diagnosis, is deemed to have an injury that is proximately caused by employment. The impacts of this provision are as follows:

Any COVID-19 claim filed under the FECA that was accepted for COVID-19 prior to March 12, 2021, is not impacted because coverage for benefits has already been extended. Any COVID- 19 claim filed under the FECA that was denied or withdrawn prior to March 12, 2021, is eligible for review under the new eligibility requirements. Any COVID-19 claim filed under the FECA on or after March 12, 2021, will be reviewed solely under the new eligibility requirements.

Those who have previously filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA that was accepted by OWCP, can expect no change. If you previously filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA that was denied by OWCP, based on a lack of federal exposure or a lack of medical evidence establishing causal relationship, you can expect to hear from their office in the next 30-45 days.

If you have never filed a COVID-19 claim under the FECA, and you believe you have contracted COVID-19 because of your federal employment, you will need to file a CA-1 (Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation).

It is especially important that you file a CA-1 claim if you have been diagnosed with coronavirus. Whether you had severe or mild symptoms from this virus, no one knows the long-term effects of the virus. You should have it documented that you had the virus and your claim was accepted by OWCP. If you have medical problems in the future that your doctor believes to be COVID-19 related you can open another claim.

This information was obtained from the U.S. Dept of Labor website. Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs, claims under the Federal Employees’ Compensation Act due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) updated on March 12, 2021.

Wage & COLA increase in New Contract

A summary of the general wage increases and Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) in the 2019-2023 National Agreement are as follows:

All letter carriers will receive the following general wage in-creases:

- Effective Nov. 23, 2019, a general wage increase of 1.1% paid retroactively.
- Effective Nov. 21, 2020, a general wage increase of 1.1% paid retroactively.
- Effective Nov. 20, 2021, a general wage increase of 1.3%
- Effective Nov. 19, 2022, a general wage increase of 1.3%

Career letter carriers will also receive seven COLAs. These COLAs will be payable as follows:

- The first COLA will be effective February 29, 2019, a COLA of \$166.00 paid retroactively.
- The second COLA will be effective August 29, 2020, a COLA of \$188.00 paid retroactively.
- The third COLA will be effective February 27, 2021, a COLA of \$416.00 paid retroactivity.
- The fourth COLA will be effective in September 2021.
- The fifth COLA will be effective in March 2022.
- The sixth COLA will be effective in September 2022.
- The seventh COLA will be effective in March 2022.

A cost-of-living allowance is an increase made to our income to counteract the effects of inflation. The amounts of the fourth through seventh COLAs (September 2021 through March 2023) will be determined by the rate of inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the remaining four COLAs will increase our salaries by approximately \$1227.

City Carrier Assistants (CCAs) In lieu of COLAs City

Carrier Assistance will receive an additional 1% increase on the effective dates of the four general wage increases for a total of:

- 2.1% in November 2019 paid retroactively.
- 2.3 % in November 2020 paid retroactively.
- 2.3% in November 2021
- 2.3% in November 2022

For CCA's, the combination of the general wage increases along with the additional 1% increase that are paid to CCA's in lieu of COLA's will raise starting salaries for CCA's from \$17.29 per hour to \$19.33 per hour over the term of the 2019-2023 National Agreement. The new pay rates will take effect in pay period 9, and the new pay chart for city letter carriers is available on the NALC website.

Planning to retire.

Information for NALC members planning to retire soon.

While the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) makes all decisions regarding retirement entitlement, current employees are required to *apply* for retirement through the USPS Human Resources Shared Services (HRSSC). HRSSC can be reached by calling **877-477-3273, option 5**. When calling HRSSC, be prepared to provide your Employee ID and PIN.

Upon request, HRSSC will:

- Mail an individualized annuity estimate based on a projected retirement date provided by the employee.
- Schedule and provide telephonic individual pre-retirement counseling.
- Mail a packet of information (usually called the ‘blue book’) of forms and guidance.

HRSSC retirement services can alternately be accessed by employees close to retirement eligibility on-line using the LiteBlue eRetire application. Employees must know their Employee ID and USPS Pin numbers to access eRetire. The LiteBlue eRetire application allows the following:

- View and print individualized annuity estimates.
- Request and obtain a retirement application packet in one of two ways:
 - Download and print a retirement application packet.
 - Order a retirement application packet and receive it in the mail.
- Schedule a retirement counseling session.

In addition to information available from the USPS HRSSC, retirement information is available from OPM; and retirement information and advice is available to NALC members from the NALC Retirement Department. The NALC Retirement Department publishes a leaflet titled “Preparing for Retirement,” and Question & Answer booklets on retirement matters for CSRS and FERS.

Retirement counseling

Letter carriers approaching retirement eligibility have a contractual right to **individual** pre-retirement counseling from the Postal Service, upon request. The purpose of the counseling is to promote fully informed retirement decisions by employees. The Postal Service individual counseling is provided telephonically by a retirement specialist at the USPS Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC). Letter carriers initiate and schedule the counseling session by calling HRSSC at **877-477-3273 option 5, or online at the LiteBlue eRetire application**.

Letter carriers have a right to this individual counseling **on the clock**, if desired. When a letter carrier wishes to receive the counseling on the clock, local management must arrange reasonably private space.

The letter carrier has the right to have his or her spouse and/or an advisor present during the counseling. The counseling will include (but not be limited to) assistance with completing forms (e.g., StandSF2801 and any other forms related to FEGLI, FEHB, and TSP) and military and civilian service deposit issues. If a letter carrier is unable to begin or complete a scheduled individual retirement counseling session, that issue will be addressed at the local level jointly by the union and management.

The Postal Service is required to provide individual and group retirement counseling. That obligation flows from law (the Civil Service Retirement Act and Federal Employees Retirement Act), Office of Personnel Management guidance (OPM is the federal agency that has authority to administer the CSRS and FERS), USPS Employee and Labor Relations Manual provisions and national level settlements with the NALC. Should you encounter any difficulties obtaining individual retirement counseling, contact the NALC Retirement Department for assistance.

Annuity Estimates

HRSSC mails individualized computer-generated report called the annuity estimate is mailed twice each year to the home address of those employees currently eligible for retirement. Employees who are within three years of retirement eligibility may request and receive individualized annuity estimates by calling HRSSC. HRSSC. Employees within 5 years of retirement eligibility may view and print individualized annuity estimates on-line at LiteBlue using the eRetire application.

The NALC Retirement Department provides generalized monthly charts showing [annuity estimates](#) under both CSRS and FERS.

You may also contact the Branch Main Office and Mrs. Escobar will be able to advise you and help you requesting and preparing your retirement package, Call (787) 250-7011 or uniondecarteros869@gmail.com , and setup an appointment with Mrs. Escobar.

Brother Lucca also can help you with any question regarding retirement. You could reach him at (787) 509-9090 or mlucca1@gmail.com .