



CARL J. KENNEDY BRANCH 704  
**THE LETTER CARRIER REPORTER**

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July 2021

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Printed by Branch 704

# Congratulations...

## On your Retirement!



**SUE HALLOWELL~FT. LOWELL**

**DENNIS PETERSON~SILVERBELL**

**JAMES MOLONEY~CORONADO (no photo available)**

**WEBSITE:**

**[www.nalcbranch704.org](http://www.nalcbranch704.org)**

**Branch Meeting Thursday July 1, 2021, is to begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. Please call Office to make your reservations to attend in person or call us with your email address information if you plan on attending remotely via the Web-Ex.**

**\*Reservations must be made every month**

# President's Report

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It looks like we are going to be in extremely hot weather in the coming months; for the older employees we know this means hydrating thru the night so when we come in to work, we don't start the day with a deficit in the minerals and liquids we require to make it thru the day. The heat can make people cranky, irritable, and prone to short tempers. Try to do what you need to make sure you cool down your body thru the day by spraying water on yourself or using a wet rag to cool your face down. For those of you not used to working in extreme heat, please take the sun seriously and do what you need to cool down. If you get dizzy and stop sweating or feel nauseous, pull over into the shade and call the supervisor. Let them know you are not feeling well. If you do not feel better in 10 minutes, call an ambulance, and let management know. Management should come out to check on you when you call. If you do not feel better after taking a hydration break, and you cannot reach anyone call your steward or the branch office.

Regarding, Covid-19 the district has been doing much better. This last month we have had a total of 19 positive cases for the month and 18 cases under observation with some degree of separation. I am hopeful this means a lot of employees have been fully vaccinated and along with their families are doing well and remaining safe from the virus. From what I have been informed, District will be coming out with a new mask policy for employees, in the coming week, to loosen restrictions while in the office. As soon as I know what the new policy is, I will make sure stewards pass the word; I am pretty sure management will inform all employees of the updated mask policy as soon as they know.

There have been many inquiries to our office regarding the new Juneteenth National Independence Day signed into law on June 17, 2021. There has been even more misinformation spreading throughout the Region. Due to the timing of the Act, the USPS could not cease operations and thus continued normal operations on June 19<sup>th</sup>. NALC National Officers will engage with USPS in bargaining over the new holiday for 2022 and beyond.

July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday is around the corner, and this will be the first time an employee who works on their holiday or day designated as their holiday to work, can exchange the holiday pay for annual leave per:

*Article 11 Section 3. Payment*

*A. An employee shall receive holiday pay at the employee's base hourly straight time rate for a number of hours equal to the employee's regular daily working schedule, not to exceed eight (8) hours. Effective with the 2021 Independence Day holiday, employees who work their holiday, at their option, may elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight (8) hours of annual leave in lieu of holiday leave pay.*

*B. Holiday pay is in lieu of other paid leave to which an employee might otherwise be entitled on the employee's holiday.*

If you work your holiday or designated holiday and want to exchange the pay for annual leave, you must fill out the PS Form 3971 in triplicate and give to the supervisor. The PS Form 3971 from 2011 or 2017 has a box designated for holiday leave exchange on the left side of the form; make sure you check this box.

Rincon and Coronado have been selected as Customer Connect test sites for leads to be input into the MDD for processing. This will eliminate the need to pass the leads to your supervisor or 204b and possibly the customer waiting for days before someone calls them to follow up on their inquiries. The test will be for 8 weeks to receive input and testing the MDD to make sure we work out any bugs before they use the scanner nationally. Sherry Brown, USPS Customer Coordinator, has been checking and following up with me at the stations to hear any suggestions or feedback on the process. Customer Connect is important for us to continue to support. I hope you help your customers by inputting leads directly into the scanner to be acted on as soon as possible at Rincon and Coronado. All other stations, please continue to pass the information to your supervisor.

In Solidarity  
Kathy Walter  
President

# Vice President Article

Hope all Mothers had a great Mother's Day! Hope ALL received some recognition to show just how special and important they and motherhood are! Hope everyone had a good Memorial Day! I would like to thank all Active and Retired military and all Veterans who have or are serving this great nation! I want to especially honor those U.S. military personnel who have died in the performance of their military duties! Without them we would not have the freedoms that we have!

Last month, the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021 (H.R. 3076/S. 1720) was introduced in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. NALC strongly supports these bills. This Branch felt so strongly about these bills that it sent out a special newsletter detailing how to reach out to our Representatives and our Senators urging them to pass the Postal Service Reform Act. This is the first major postal reform legislation in 15 years! The bills address two of NALC's top priorities:

- 1.) The repeal of the mandate that the Postal Service pre-fund decades worth of health benefits for its future retirees.
- 2.) A reform of the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) to maximize participation in Medicare when active postal employees (as of January 1, 2023) retire and reach age 65.

Here are some questions about the Postal Service Reform Act of 2021, that you might have.

## ***What plans would be available under the legislation in this restructured FEHBP program?***

All the major plans now available like Blue Cross Blue Shield, NALC Health, Kaiser, etc. would continue to be offered to postal employees and retirees as a postal-only version of their FEHBP plans.

## ***Would the premiums for this restructured FEHBP increase?***

The premiums would be significantly reduced because postal participants would be placed in a separate risk pool with new rules regarding Medicare enrollment.

## ***Would the new legislation change a current postal annuitant's right to decide whether they want to enroll in Medicare?***

Ninety percent of current postal annuitants are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A (hospital services) and nearly eighty percent of them are enrolled in Medicare Part B (medical services). Thus, no current annuitant would be required to enroll in either Medicare Part A or Part B.

## ***What will happen when this legislation becomes effective on January 1, 2023?***

Active postal employees who are 64 and older and all current postal annuitants would be given the choice to join the postal-only version of the FEHBP plans (integrated with Medicare) or remain in the non-postal version of such plans, depending on whether they want to enroll in Medicare Part B, which currently carries a premium of \$148.50 per month. All active employees under the age of 64 would be automatically placed in the postal version of the health plan they choose and if retired upon reaching Medicare age, they would be enrolled in Medicare.

## ***What happens if you do not wish to enroll in Medicare or do not need Medicare?***

Future postal annuitants, who do not need Medicare [because of coverage by the Veterans Administration or by another non-FEHBP program or who cannot use Medicare because they live in a place (for example, overseas) without Medicare providers] would be allowed to enroll in the non-postal version of their FEHBP plan.

## ***What about annuitants who did not sign up for Medicare when they turned 65, can they enroll in the new FEHBP plan without taking a penalty?***

The legislation provides a one-time opportunity to enroll in Medicare Part B without the late enrollment penalty. This could be a great savings for those who missed getting Medicare at 65, since the penalty raises Part B premiums by 10% for each year after age 65 that a retiree delays enrollment.

If you have any questions that I missed, feel free to contact me at the Union office or even better come to our General Meeting (*1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the Month*). I believe that this legislation would increase the participation in Medicare and the new postal only plans would save and reduce health care costs. So, please tell your Representatives and Senators to pass the Postal Service Reform Act (HR 3076/S. 1720).

It's starting to be extremely hot! Please be safe and drink a lot of water. Stay cool!

In Solidarity,  
Mark Follet-Vice President

**NALC CALL TO ACTION**  
**SUPPORT THE POSTAL REFORM ACT OF 2021 HR 3076**

THE NALC MAKES IT EASY  
FROM THE NALC APP – CLICK ON GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS (BOTTOM LEFT CORNER) –  
FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER SCROLL DOWN TO TAKE ACTION (READ MORE)  
HOLD DOWN READ MORE TAB FOR A FEW SECONDS  
THEN CLICK OPEN LINK-SCROLL DOWN  
ENTER FIRST NAME + LAST NAME + ZIP + LAST 4 DIGITS OF SSN  
YOU CHOOSE HOW TO SEND IT

TO TAKE ACTION THROUGH NALC.ORG  
CLICK ON THE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS TAB  
ON THE RIGHT OF SCREEN TAP ON LEGISLATIVE ACTION CENTER  
CLICK ON TAKE ACTION TAB (READ MORE)  
CLICK TAKE ACTION  
ENTER FIRST NAME + LAST NAME + ZIP + LAST 4 DIGITS OF SSN

(CELL PHONE SCREEN MAY LOOK DIFFERENT)

**PLEASE DO THIS DAILY & GET OTHER MEMBERS INVOLVED**

## **2021 Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive**



As the need for food assistance is still more significant than ever, we want to allow everyone to continue to meet that need and help your local community food pantry or bank. The Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive is a drive with a single mission—to feed the hungry in America, and as always, with your help, we will! Please donate what you can to a food bank in your community. All Collections Stay in the Local Community

<https://www.nalc.org/community-service/food-drive/2021-donor-drive>

# Chaplain's Corner

Good Night.

"In peace, I will both lie down and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Psalm 4:8

Have trouble sleeping? You're not alone. A recent study found 77 percent of Americans sleep fitfully. Nearly half of us say we're losing sleep because of anxiety about what's going on around us.

In God's Peace for You When You Can't Sleep, Christina Vinson suggests focusing our heart and mind on God's promises and on the sweetness of prayer as the day ends. "Take in a deep breath. Exhale the stress you are holding, and breathe in the peace of God, letting the promises of His Word flood your tired soul. And then, as you close your eyes and lay your head down, know that He is right there with you; He is your rock, your

strength, your ever-present help in times of trouble, even in the quiet hours of the morning."

As you place your cares into His loving hands, His peace will replace your worries with a restful night of sleep.

Turning Point- Lord, You are the giver of rest. Help me trust that You have everything under control, and ...to hand all my burdens over to You, the all-powerful, able, strong God. Christina Vinson. Taken from Turning Points magazine. Dr David Jeremiah.

Blessing to All

Chaplain

Rick Evans

520-248-9643

[Rick7evans@gmail.com](mailto:Rick7evans@gmail.com)

## Health Benefits Report

Healthy Living Message: Be Physically Active!

What are you doing to be active every day? How can you add in a little bit more activity to each day? How much time do you spend sitting during the day?

Being physically active is an important part of overall health. Immediately, it helps boost your mood, sharpen your focus, reduce your stress, and improve your sleep. Long term benefits include brain health, heart health, cancer prevention, bone strength, and weight maintenance. Regular exercise helps people age more slowly and live healthier, more vigorous lives.

It is recommended to get a minimum of 150 minutes of physical activity each week for overall health. If you want to manage weight, aim for a goal of 300 minutes or more. Try swimming, walking, biking, sports, yard work, gardening - any focused activity that raises your heart rate. Including 2 days of

strength-focused activities are also recommended.

You can use either your own body weight or light hand weights.

Find a way to fit fitness into your daily routine - set aside a time of the day that works for you. Take a 5 - 10-minute break every hour and do anything to move around and be active. Do physical activities you enjoy. Turn on some music for indoor or outdoor chores. Find a friend to exercise with, join a class, or try a You Tube exercise video. Track your steps and activity.

Remember, any activity is better than none. If you're moving, you're winning! Find a way to be physically active every day!

source: [www.acefitness.org/education](http://www.acefitness.org/education)

The best of health to you and yours!

Bruce D Jenkins

Health Benefits Representative

## ~CONDOLENCES~

~The Family of Malcolm F. Harvey-  
Retiree Life Member

~The Family of Member Jose Gonzales-  
on the passing of your Father, Jose, Sr.

## ~GET WELL~

~Retired Member Maria Silva

~Member Angie Gutierrez

~Retired Member Peggy Wild-on the  
recovery of your Husband, John

~ Member Mike Valencia-San Xavier

# Contract Talk

## **OPTING/HOLD-DOWN**

### **What is meant by Opting or a Hold-Down?**

Opting and Hold-Down are the same thing. It occurs when a carrier temporarily covers a vacant full-time assignment. An assignment is a route or other work performed by a full-time letter carrier on a daily basis.

### **How long are Opt assignments?**

Opts are assignments that are vacant for five days or more (because the regular letter carrier is on vacation, ill, or the assignment temporarily has no regular letter carrier assigned, etc.)

### **Who may opt for hold-down assignments?**

Full-time reserve letter carriers, full-time flexible letter carriers, unassigned full-time carriers, part-time flexible carriers, and city carrier assistants may all opt for hold-down assignments. CCAs must fulfill a waiting period before they can opt on a hold-down assignment.

### **How long is the waiting period for CCAs?**

The waiting period is 60 days from the date of appointment as a CCA. Once the CCA has met this requirement there is no additional waiting period for applying for/being awarded a hold-down when the employee is converted to career.

### **How do you submit a request for a hold-down assignment?**

You submit a request in writing to the supervisor who oversees the full-time assignment. CCAs should make a copy of their request (round date the copy). If no eligible carrier has requested to work the assignment, the opt will be awarded to the eligible CCA with the highest relative standing who requested it and is not already on another opt.

### **What is the duration of an opt once awarded?**

Once the position is awarded, the opting employee "shall work that duty assignment for its duration." An opt is not necessarily ended by the end of the service week. Rather, it is ended when the regular carrier returns, even if only to perform part of the duties – for example, to case but not carry mail.

### **Are there any exceptions to the duration clause?**

There are situations in which carriers temporarily vacate hold-down position for which they have opted, for example, vacation. Such an employee may reclaim and continue a hold-down upon returning to duty. If the opting employee's absence

is expected to include at least five days of work, then the vacancy qualifies as a new hold-down within the original hold-down. These openings are filled as regular hold-downs, the first opting carrier resumes his or her hold-down upon returning to duty—until the regular carrier returns.

### **Can an opting employee bid?**

An opting employee may bid for and obtain a new, permanent full-time assignment during a hold-down. A national pre-arbitration settlement established that such an employee must be reassigned to the new assignment. If 5 or more days remain in the hold-down, it becomes available for bid by another opting carrier.

### **What happens when a CCA is converted to career while on an opt?**

If a CCA is converted to career while on a hold-down opt, the CCA has the option to remain on the hold-down assignment for its duration or move to the new bid assignment.

### **Can a CCA be "bumped" from an opt?**

Yes, a CCA can be "bumped" from their hold-down to provide sufficient work for full-time employees. Full-time employees are guaranteed forty hours of work per service week. Thus, they may be assigned work on routes held down by CCA employees if there is not sufficient work available for them on a particular day. In these situations, the CCA employee's opt is not terminated. Rather, the employee is temporarily "bumped" on a day-to-day basis. Bumping is a last resort.

### **Are CCAs guaranteed eight hours or forty hours week by virtue of the hold-down?**

While CCAs must be allowed to work the assignment for the duration of the vacancy, CCAs are not guaranteed eight hours daily or forty hours weekly work by virtue of the hold-down alone. Additionally, CCAs on a hold-down opt are not entitled to the non-scheduled day of the assignment. CCAs may still be scheduled to work, perhaps on another assignment.

If the Postal Service is violating any of your rights outlined above, then be sure to promptly inform your shop steward or NALC branch officer.

In Solidarity,  
Mark Follet  
Vice President/Coronado Steward



# Retiree Representative Report

My name is Art Higven. I am a recently retired Tucson city letter carrier. I started carrying mail as a PTF at Sun Station in 1986. A year or so later, after being a reserve regular, I was awarded a bid to one of the station's choice park and loop routes. Eleven years later, I was encouraged by a coworker, to bid an open route at the Downtown station. I was told I had the biggest route in the city (85701)...Jokingly, of course. The leave board was nothing to laugh about; the quota was 1! After 5 years and a lot of annual leave saved, I was awarded a mostly mounted route at the, now closed, Kino Station. Eight years and mucho pounds later, I found my way back to Sun Station. Regrettably, I had to give up the gym membership. Twelve years later, I carried my last loop and gave up the satchel in 2020.

Having attended several retirement seminars, I felt I was ready and requested an annuity estimate and retirement counseling from HR Services Greensboro. I sent in my blue book forms and anxiously awaited my confirmation of receipt (OR forms returned for not being filled out properly). I received my Form 50 from HR Services and was dropped from LiteBlue on my last day. Looking good, I was told I should receive my first interim retirement check in about a month from OPM. Interim status lasted 6 months. I consider myself lucky, after speaking with other retirees.

So here it is, the year after COVID-19, and with the support of our Branch President, Kathy, and

## Meeting Dates

**Branch Meeting - Thursday,  
July 1, 2021 @ 7:00 pm**

**Stewards Meeting - Thursday,  
July 15, 2021 @ 5:30 pm**

**E-Board Meeting - Thursday,  
July 29, 2021 @ 6:00 pm**

members of the E-Board, I am extremely honored and humbled in assuming the task of serving as Branch 704 (rookie) Retiree Representative. I may not have all the answers, but I will do my best to get them for you. The retirement section of the NALC website has a lot of excellent up-to-date information. We also have access to our very friendly former Branch President, Dan Versluis, now, our experienced and hard-working Region 4 National Business Agent (NBA).

Much gratitude, recognition, and thanks go out to our retired volunteers that provide assistance to the branch: organizing uniform donations for the CCAs, answering calls at the branch when needed, and preparing the monthly newsletter for mailing. We have a group of seasoned retirees that are willing to help, but we are ALWAYS ready to welcome new and future retirees to our ranks.

Even though we are enjoying retirement, giving a little of our valuable time will go a long way in assuring the ongoing success of our Tucson NALC Branch 704.

Hopefully, the pandemic remains in our rearview mirror and all the retirees can get together in December for our annual Retiree Luncheon. As soon as we have information, we will pass it on. I am looking forward to seeing you at a branch meeting, in person or via WebEx.

In Solidarity,  
Art Higven 304-4196  
Retiree Representative



**Our Thoughts & Prayers Go  
Out to All Of Our Troops**

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JULY 2021 Newsletter

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MARK FOLLET	VICE PRESIDENT
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LETTY RAMOS	FINANCIAL SECRETARY
ALEXIS PADILLA	TREASURER
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ART HIGVEN	RETIREE REPRESENTATIVE
JOHN THOME	SERGEANT-AT-ARMS



**TRUSTEES**

PETE TADEO

MIKE DONNELLY	KIMBERLY DAVIS
TIFFANY EGGERT	JC MENA

**CHAPLAIN**

RICK EVANS

**STEP A REPRESENTATIVE**

ALEXIS PADILLA	323-2117
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**SHOP STEWARDS**

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