



VOLUME 77 No 9

Official Publication of Branch Nine, NALC

November 2025

OPEN SEASON

November 10th - December 8th 2025

Postal Service Health Benefits Open Season



Health Benefits ● Dental/Vision ● Flexible SpendingAccounts

Enroll ● Make Changes ● Cancel ● Re-enroll (FSAFEDS)

The NALC Health Benefit Plan's 2026 Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) rates and coverage details have been released. NALC members and their families can now review the updated plan offerings, benefit changes, and premium rates to prepare for the upcoming Open Season. Full details are available on the Plan's PSHB Open Season page at nalchbp.org.

Open Season for the 2026 plan year began on Monday, Nov. 10, and continues through Monday, Dec. 8, 2025. This is the annual opportunity for Postal Service employees and annuitants to evaluate their health insurance options, compare plan features, and make any necessary changes to their enrollment.

To better support members during Open Season and beyond, the Plan is implementing a second customer service shift beginning Nov. 10, 2025. With this change, representatives will now be available Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time.

For more information about 2026 benefits, rates, or Open Season enrollment, visit nalchbp.org or contact the Plan directly during the new extended service hours at 888-636-NALC (6252).

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- P. 8 Members' Voices
- P. 9..... LCPF Update

And more!

RETIREMENTS



Congratulations to Anita Ernst from Belle Plaine. 30 years plus for the USPS. You finally made it!



Lake Street



Columbia Heights

IN MEMORIAM

Hartman Hanson
Ralph Buystedt

NEW MEMBERS

Daniel Borgia
Michael Cote
Sean Dailey
Lachlan Folstrom
Anthony Hollinshead
Margaret Katan
Jay Ko
William Kuchtiak
Steven Lahoday
Alexander Majerus
Kamille McCain
Garrett Munkholm
Keisheara Runnels
Daniel Schindler
Eric Tibbetts Jr.
Dylan Vidas
Jordan Wallmow
Paul Yang



Golden Valley

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The Branch Nine News is a monthly publication of NALC Branch 9, and is published in the interest of and for the members of NALC Branch 9.

The opinions expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the OFFICERS, or of NALC Branch 9.

Articles MUST be submitted to the editor by the 1st of the month, and must be signed. The Editorial Staff reserves the right to edit or refuse to print articles which are derogatory in nature. Any official NALC organization may reproduce our articles provided appropriate credit is given.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Joe Rian

One of the things that I find interesting as President of Branch 9 is our by-laws. They're interesting because there are so many things in the by-laws, it's hard to keep track. Here's one we all might want to consider

Article 5 SECTION 2. Effective July 2004, (for future conventions) eligibility for payment of any delegate or alternate will include attendance at nine (9) out of twelve (12) General Membership Meetings of the preceding year for yearly conventions, and/or eighteen (18) out of twenty-four (24) General Membership Meetings of the preceding two (2) years prior to the biennial convention. Verification of attendance will be by meeting attendance book only.

Any person unable to meet this eligibility requirement because he or she is incapacitated by a documented extended illness, or on family medical leave shall be exempted from the aforementioned criteria and will be entitled to delegate pay. Delegates may receive attendance credit for electronic meeting attendance, if pre-approved by a full-time officer, on a case-by-case basis for valid reasons including, but not limited to vacation, labor and/or Union classes, wintering out of state, and bona fide emergencies.

Many members might believe that they automatically receive convention attendance credit by attending general membership meetings via an electronic meeting platform (ZOOM). According to our by-laws, this attendance credit is not automatic. As you can see,

"Delegates may receive attendance credit for electronic meeting attendance, if pre-approved by a full-time officer, on a case-by-case basis for valid reasons including, but not limited to vacation, labor and/or Union classes, wintering out of state, and bona fide emergencies."

I point this out as we enter winter because illness, injury, vacation, bona fide emergencies and "wintering out of state" are all valid reasons for missing meetings and they occur more often in the winter. Just let me know ahead of time you'll be gone. And, if you're wintering somewhere else and are gone for more than one meeting, just let me know how many meetings you'll be missing.

For the record though, we love having you at the meetings, especially in person. The attendance credit is designed to encourage more members to come to the meetings in person and get involved, not to hang around at home and watch from the sidelines. Please try to make it to our first meeting of each quarter, our food and beverage nights. Free drink and pizza for all.

Another by-law of interest

Article 3 SECTION 19.

In the event of a strike or work stoppage, no full-time officer or part-time officer of Branch 9 shall draw any salary.

I never really had to think about this one. Never imagined it could happen. Afterall, letter carriers were always essential, especially during the COVID days. But with longest US government shutdown in history, it really hits home to know how lucky we are to have been working for the old USPS.

Of course, if there were to be a USPS strike, lockout or work stoppage, the branch office would probably have to shut down operations until we could collect enough dues money by hand to keep going. That would be a full-time job on its own! And how could you collect dues from people who aren't working? Tough sell.

Finally, dues. Please feel free to do the numbers. I rounded some numbers.

Article 11 Section 2 SECTION 2, in part

The monthly dues of this Branch for all active and associate members shall be equal to 2 hours base pay of a Carrier Technician Step P, payable biweekly. This ratio between the current minimum dues structure of the NALC National Dues would be maintained as the permanent dues structure for Branch 9.

Members retiring after December 31, 1960 shall pay \$12.00 per annum. Members retiring after December 31, 1977 shall pay \$18.00 per annum. Members retiring after December 31, 1987 shall pay \$24.00 per annum. Members retiring after December 31, 1996 shall pay, per annum, an amount equal to two hours City Carrier pay at Step D letter carriers pay at the time of their retirement.

Yes, dues for working members will go up to about \$37.60 a pay period, \$977.52 per year.

Carriers retiring after November 15, 2025 and before the March 2026 COLA, \$73.30 a year/\$6.11 a month.

Happy Holidays

Minneapolis Federation of Educators Files Intent to Strike!

By Stefan Seaberg
(Powderhorn Station)

Many of us have teachers in our lives. My mother has been a teacher for my entire 34 years on this planet. Those of us that do have friends or family that are teachers, know well how demanding of a job it is. With low wages, long hours (I recall my mother routinely staying up late to grade papers and tests), and class sizes that just keep getting bigger, teaching can be a thankless



job. However, it is our teachers, educational support professionals, and special education professionals that make our society run. Without them, we wouldn't have educated doctors, engineers, mechanics, or even mail carriers! Educators are vital to our society, and they deserve the world!

This is why MFE 59 filed intent to strike, over such issues as pay parity between crafts (ESPs are facing a pay "increase" of 0.0%), enforceable class sizes (us letter carriers know what it means to have unenforceable contract language - that language simply does not matter), and actual vacation accrual beyond the scheduled school breaks. MFE 59 has been through several grueling months of bargaining with the school district, with the district giving them virtually nothing. That is, until they filed intent to strike! MFE membership had 92% turnout on the strike vote, with 92% of ballots voting to strike. After this vote, a ten day cool-down period, packed with busy mediation sessions began.

After this stunning show of solidarity between the three crafts represented by MFE 59, the district began to give into demands they had said were impossible for months. The district quickly caved, and agreed to give pay parity to adult educators in a mediation session early on in this cool down period. On the night of Saturday, November 8th, three days before the strike was scheduled to begin, the news dropped the MFE and the school district had agreed to a tentative agreement! This TA includes many of the union's demands: smaller, enforceable class sizes, more special education supports with caseload limits, and pay increases for all educators. The educators union has shown us, through this resounding victory, what solidarity and willingness to fight can win! Congratulations to every NALC 9 member that has a Minneapolis educator in their life!

Exec. Vice President's Report

I'd like to start with a discussion of issues facing our PTFs and CCAs. We've been hearing some concerning stories about what it's like working on Sundays for our most junior co-workers. One issue is Management telling carriers that they must use their own personal vehicle to go from one hub to another after they've punched in. I want to empower our carriers to tell Management that our personal vehicles are not for going from one station to another after we get to work.

We had an incident earlier this year where a carrier used their own personal vehicle on a Sunday to go from one hub to another and got into an accident. Of course, Management did not take any responsibility when it came time to deal with the repair bills. In addition, if your insurance company finds out that you were using your vehicle for work purposes during this time they will almost certainly seek to deny your claim. We can tell Management in these situations that we do not have insurance to use our personal vehicles for work and refuse this order.

Another issue on Sundays is Management threatening carriers with discipline for not making a certain number of packages an hour. This is yet another instance of Management lying to carriers about what's required of them. As I've discussed in this column previously, there are no street standards. That is not just a rule that applies only Monday through Saturday, it applies on Sundays as well. All that's required of us is to do our jobs safely. For Management to tell carriers that they must deliver 25 packages an hour or else they'll be disciplined is a violation of our contract. Check out the Branch 9 webpage <https://branch9nalc.com/no-street-standards/> which has several national level documents establishing that there are no street standards. And if Management ever threatens you with discipline for failing to make "standards" we need to hold them accountable because they have just violated the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace (also found on the B9 webpage) as "Making the numbers is not an excuse for the abuse of anyone." Talk to your steward if this happens and stick up for each other if you witness this happening to a coworker.

Moving onto the topic of our next contract I want to remind everyone that contract negotiations are coming up soon! Even though our last contract was just fully implemented we need to be prepared for collective bargaining that will commence next March. Build a Fighting NALC has released a contract demands survey here <https://www.fightingnalc.com/survey> where members can make their voices heard about what's important to them in the next contract. It's important for our union to coalesce around demands that we have of Management and figure out how we can fight to get what we deserve.

There will be a motion put forward at the November GMM for a contract campaign rally on Sunday February 22nd. Anyone who's interested in organizing that action please reach out to the branch.

February 22nd was picked because it is part of a push by the reform movement in the NALC to make this a national day of action to have the biggest impact possible in support of our negotiations. It's also in line with work that Branch 9 did to pass the open bargaining resolution at the last national convention that also called for a contract campaign of rallies across the country at the start of negotiations. The 200 some rallies that NALC called for on March 23 earlier this year made national headlines and helped to oppose the recent push for privatization. We'd like to see similar action in the runup to this next contract. Branch 9 calls on our leaders at NALC HQ to put out the call for rallies across the country in support of our contract!



Chris Pennock

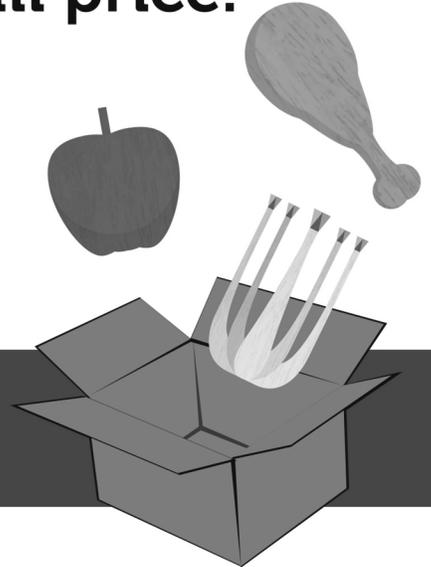


Fare For All

Get packs of fresh produce and frozen meats up to 40% off of retail price.

All are welcome, no questions asked

Fare For All is a program of The Food Group, a nonprofit sharing food today and making change for tomorrow.



Grocery pack sales:

Mega Meat Pack \$25

6 - 8 hard frozen meat items (chicken, turkey, pork, beef, and/or fish)

Mini Meat Pack \$11

3 - 5 hard frozen meat items (pork free)

Produce Pack \$10

6 - 8 types of fresh fruits and vegetables

Hot BUY specials

Monthly deals on items or seasonal packs

SCAN to
find a site
near you



\$ we accept:

EBT
cash
credit



thefoodgroupmn.org/groceries

@fareforall

763-450-3880

OIG Integrity Tests

OIG Integrity Tests

This recent Holiday Season we have reported that there have been Postal employees disciplined and even removed for using gift cards that they found in collection boxes, on the street, and in some cases, given to them by customers saying they found the gift cards in front of the Post Office. In all of these instances, the gift cards were planted by the OIG. Our office has learned that the OIG is again planting gift cards to test Letter Carriers.



In the recent examples we have heard of, the OIG is conducting "integrity tests." In these tests, the OIG agents are placing gift cards that have values of \$25-\$50 in the outgoing mail slots, collections boxes and even in single-family mailboxes. As letter carriers, it is common for our customers to leave gifts in their mailbox even outside of the holidays, and we normally accept those gifts.

Where a letter carrier may get into trouble is when they accept cash in any amount or gifts (including gift cards) valued above \$20. This is where the OIG agents are testing our integrity. Although, one wonders how these OIG agents would score on any test of integrity. That said, the rules are the rules and below is language from the Code of Federal Regulations 2635.204(a), which should be considered the next time one of your patrons gives you a gift:

Gifts of \$20 or less:

An employee may accept unsolicited gifts having an aggregate market value of \$20 or less per source per occasion, provided that the aggregate market value of individual gifts received from any one person under the authority of this paragraph shall not exceed \$50 in a calendar year. This exception does not apply to gifts of cash or of investment interests such as stock, bonds, or certificates of deposit.

Where the market value of a gift or the aggregate market value of gifts offered on any single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may not pay the excess value over \$20 in order to accept that portion of the gift or those gifts worth \$20. Where the aggregate value of tangible items offered on a single occasion exceeds \$20, the employee may decline any distinct and separate item in order to accept those items aggregating \$20 or less.

If you have any questions regarding gifts from your customers, contact your supervisor to get verification that it is proper to accept the gift in question. If you disagree with the supervisor's opinion based on the language above, contact your steward for clarification.



Br. 9 Retired Letter Carrier
Kerry Herdine
Home: 952.854.2655
Cell: 612.805.8407

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Take waist in/out and change hem length

Ame's Uniforms are a UNION PREFERRED vendor

FOOD BANK RESOURCES

By Tim Bash

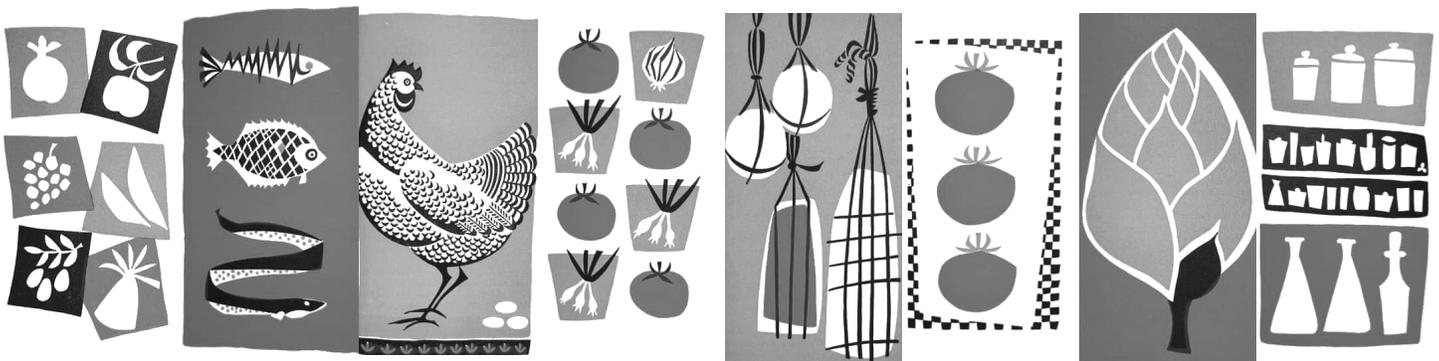
Grocery Bill Got You Down?

Whether it's you, a co-worker, a family member, or a customer; you're likely to know someone who is struggling to afford groceries right now. There are many reasons we might be seeking food assistance. Between the rising prices, the government shutdown, or unexpected expenses stretching your paycheck, times are tough. There are a number of places to find help and I thought it would be worthwhile to point our members in their direction.

Working Partnerships is an organization affiliated with the Minneapolis AFL-CIO that provides union households with economic assistance. Fare for All is an event held all over the city that offers discounted grocery packs of meat and fresh produce. Working Partnerships also provides emergency financial assistance grants on a "once in a lifetime" basis. Please see the flyer below for more information.

United Way 2-1-1 puts you in contact with a "trained Community Resource Specialist" who can help you find a wide range of resources available to those in need, including Food and Housing Support. You can dial 2-1-1 on your phone or go to their website where you can search for places to get a free meal or find a food bank near you.

These are just two resources available to you, but please share these or any others you know about with those close to you. As letter carriers, we spend all day serving our communities, and doing our part to make them stronger is one of the most satisfying parts of the job.



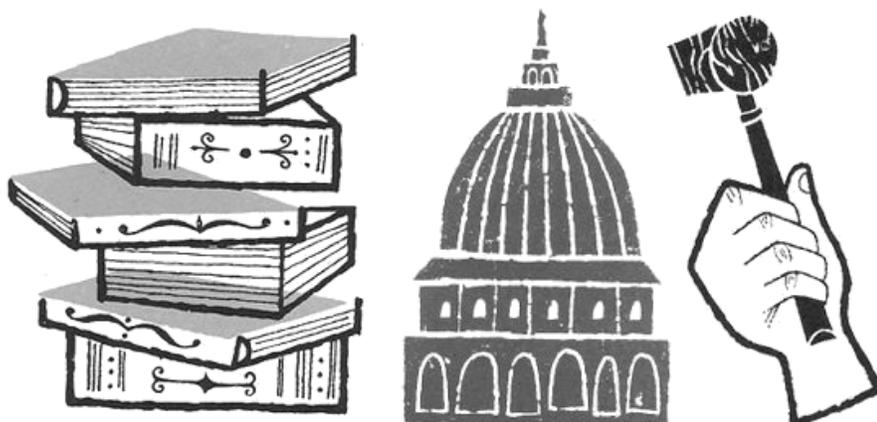
POLITICAL REPORT

By Andrew Hagan

Hello Branch 9! I am pleased to announce the political committee for the branch is full and ready to get to work. We have carriers on this committee from the Federal congressional districts 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th. We have different political viewpoints on this committee, which is great because we need and have support from both major political parties. I am hoping to bring endorsements to the General Membership meetings and have our membership be active in who our elected leaders are. We often get caught up in the Federal gov. issues and often overlook local gov. topics. I believe locals are just as important as federal. Local gov. has a more immediate response to local needs and our day-to-day lives. You see more crime on your routes, go to a city council meeting and express concern. You think parking on your route is terrible, we can raise that concern with local leaders. The list goes on of things we can do to improve our members' lives at the local levels. We can leverage our branch to have these leaders come to our GMM's and hear directly from us. Just like Oct. GMM we invited Bethany Winkels from the MN AFL-CIO. We can and should be the center of politics in our region. I, Tim Bash and Aaron Hutchison are Minneapolis Regional Federation delegates and represent Branch 9 at those meetings. Last thing I want to share is I have had recent discussions with U.S Rep. Omar



Andrew Hagan
LCPF coordinator/ Legislative Chairman



and Morrison regarding OPM concerns. If any of you are having issues navigating OPM to change health insurance, you can contact me at the branch, and I can get you in contact with their offices to help you get through to OPM. I hope you all have a great Thanksgiving!

Branch Nine News
5831 Cedar Lake Road South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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PERMIT NO. 91964

Branch 9 Calendar

November 11
Steward Meeting
7 PM
Crystal VFW

November 25
General Membership
Meeting
7 PM
Crystal VFW

December 9
Steward Meeting
7 PM
Crystal VFW

December 23
General Membership
Meeting
7 PM
Crystal VFW

Northside Retiree Breakfast

1st Tuesday of the Month
9:30AM
Elsie's
729 Marshall St. NE, Minneapolis

N Suburban Retiree Breakfast

1st Friday of the Month
8:30AM
Denny's Restaurant
9020 Quaday Avenue NE, Otsego

Fridley Retiree Lunch

2nd Tuesday of the Month
11:30 AM
Route 47 Pub and Grub
7820 University Ave

Stay informed by:

*Join Veterans Group [https://www.nalc.org/
member-benefits/join-the-nalc-veterans-group](https://www.nalc.org/member-benefits/join-the-nalc-veterans-group)

* Branch9nalc.com (website)

* "like" our Branch 9 Facebook Page

Contribute to the PAC

The Letter Carrier Political Fund is the anchor for NALC's legislative and political activities.

nalc.org/government-affairs/political-activity

