JEROME J. KEATING BRANCH

BRANCH NINE NEWS

"AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL"

Volume 78 No 8 | Offical Publication of Branch Nine, NALC | October 2026

The PO does NOT Want you to retire!

by Pat Paplow

In the old days there was an office break, sometimes there was wisdom given between jabs about worthless stuff. Since 40 percent of our workforce has 5 years or less, many of you might not have heard that wisdom. These days there is hardly any office time and carriers take their breaks out on the street. You will never get a call from HR, asking how your retirement plans are going! It is up to you to figure it out!

You are given about 15 minutes on the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) during orientation. All you know is that you are missing 5% of your base pay with no idea where it is going or how to find it. The TSP is a fantastic saving machine for your retirement! Let me repeat, it is FANTASTIC! The devil is in the details, like all things in life, and getting there will not be easy. Life is full of choices; this would be the time to make good ones. Roth or traditional, know the difference and how it might affect you. Please do not put it all in the G fund for a safe investment. True, it will not lose money, but it also will not keep up with inflation and growth.



TSP.gov is where your account will be, and you must be the one to set it up.

https://www.youtube.com/@TSP4gov/videos

The official TSP YouTube page is a great source of information. Please educate yourself. The power of compounding and dollar cost averaging are not appreciated by most people; slow and steady investment will set you up for a great retirement later. Taking loans like it is a piggybank will not be to your benefit, put it in and leave it alone. PLUS, every raise, bump it up 1%, until you get to 15% or more. You will not miss the money since you never saw it. This is when the power of compounding really starts to work. You will save for years and still have a smaller balance, but over the course of 30-40 years the power of compounding interest will grow your balance substantially. You might only work 28 years, but the total sum is still working in the market for you, after you retire.



Charlie Munger, right-hand man to the famously wealthy Warren Buffet, said to get to $100,000 as quickly as you can, and then the magic starts. Meaning, this is when you start to see some real compounding start to happen. Nobody knows what the stock market will do tomorrow, but you are in it for the long term, and the track record is pretty good over time. Choices of how much to put away and into what investment is ALL up to you. Nobody is going to tell you how much or which fund to put it in; it requires YOU to act and plan for yourself. Nobody cares as much about your money as you do! The Post Office is hoping you do not save much and must keep working. It's easier to retire with a million or more vs $100,000. Maybe the markets are terrible, and you only retire with

(Continued on Page X)

Welcome New Branch Niners

Emiliano Arias
Raphael Berchie
Mark Boesen
Brian Collins
Tarran Crump
David Embree
Theodor Freier
Oliver Gbagbar
William Griffin
Jose Guinto
Wesley Hampton
Whitnee Houghton-Smith
Elijah Johnson
Nicholas Johnson
Mcfeely Jump
Wade Lescault
Eric Mulder
Davis Myers
Kylie Noel
Guinevere Pettigrew
Noah Royer
Zachary Thomas
Andrea Wilson
John Woida
Brian Ziolkowski

Announcements

Open season for health benefits will be from November 10th to December 8th for the 2027 plan year.

Articles MUST be submitted to the editor by the night of the monthly GMM, and must be signed. The Editorial Staff reserves the right to edit or refuse to print articles which are derogatory in nature.

Send articles to:

branch9news@branch9nalc.com

Any official NALC organization may reproduce our articles provided appropriate credit is given.

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

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

Branch 9 NALC

5831 Cedar Lake Road South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
Voice: (612) 781-9858
Fax: (612) 781-9849

President
Joe Rian
joerian@branch9nalc.com
612-860-4440

Exec Vice President
Chris Pennock
chrisp@branch9nalc.com
612-913-0252

Recording Secretary
Andrew Hagan
andrewh@branch9nalc.com

Treasurer
Barb Watczak
barbw@branch9nalc.com

Financial Secretary
Stacey Ellingson
stacy@branch9nalc.com

Editor
Tim Bash
branch9news@branch9nalc.com

Sergeant at Arms
Nate Serie

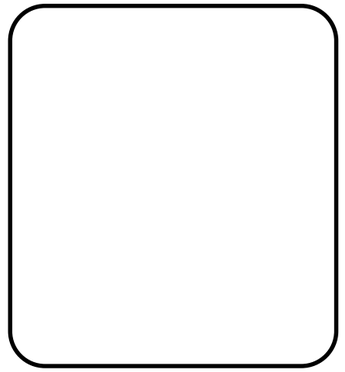
Trustees
Jorge Quintero
Zoe Bunzli
zoeb@branch9nalc.com
Alex Pouliot
alexp@branch9nalc.com

Dir of Retirees
Vince Froehlich
vincef@branch9nalc.com

Health Benefits Rep
Susan Becker
susanb@branch9nalc.com
763-329-8675

Did you know?

Retirements



John Burshek retires from West Edina Station with 40 years of service

IN MEMORIAM

Joe Pasiowitz
David Stenglein
Drew Weber
Richard A. Kelly

EAP Monthly Focus

Suicide Prevention

One conversation can make a difference. September is Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month. While suicide can be a difficult topic to discuss, open and compassionate conversations can help save lives. You don't need to have the perfect words to show someone you care. Listening, checking in, and encouraging support can help someone feel less alone.

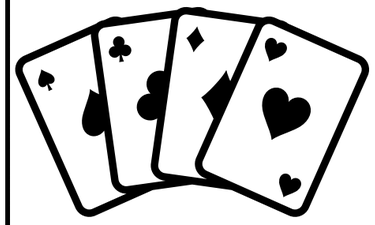
EAP

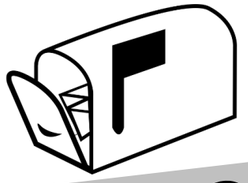
800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU) | TTY: 711

Branch 28 Retiree Cribbage Tournament

When: Thursday Nov 5th
@ 10:30 AM
Where: Branch 28 Union Hall
1715 Van Dyke St.
Maplewood, MN 55109

All Members Welcome





MOVING?

Please notify the branch directly when you move, we are not notified otherwise!

Mail us notification of your new address to:

5831 Cedar Lake Road South

St. Louis Park, MN 55416

or call

(612) 781-9858

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Joe Rian

Letter Carriers Deliver the Vote

The election season is upon us in so many ways.

First, of course, is the increase in mail volume due to political mail. I think it is just great that not only do letter carriers deliver the votes; we deliver the information that helps our customers know who to vote for. People can say digital advertising is cheaper, but it's just not the same as having a political flyer to hold in our hands and read. Then, if I like what the candidate is saying, I can put it on the ice box as a reminder to vote for that person. And on the flip side, there is nothing like crumbling up the flyer of a candidate I don't like and tossing it in the trash thinking, "They sure wasted their money on me." I just don't get that much satisfaction from trashing an email. It's so much more personal trashing a physical piece of mail.

Second, who will we vote for? Everyone has their most important issue. Which candidate though? It's natural to vote for the candidate that comes closest to supporting how you feel about things. Or maybe you're a "vote againster", casting your ballot against the candidate you dislike the most. We all know there will be more negative ads than positive ones as election day gets closer. How those ads make us feel can't help but influence our decision. Whichever way you feel, vote.

How ever you decide, try to work the needs of your brother and sister letter carriers into your decision-making process. Our wages are so pitifully low and dropping fast, with inflation and gas prices going higher and higher. I urge you to support candidates who have pledged to help letter carriers secure the wages and working conditions we deserve.

There are many candidates to consider. At the top of the ballot are races for U.S. senator, U.S. representative, and governor. Statewide offices—including attorney general, secretary of state, and state auditor—are also up for election, along with local state representatives and senators. Every candidate wants our support, but we decide who earns our votes. Some call voting a responsibility, others call it a right, and still others a privilege. Attending several naturalization ceremonies and hearing new citizens take the oath has shown me that voting is all three: a responsibility, a right, and a privilege. So, take the time to cast your vote. It means something to the future of our country.

The other election I'm talking about is already over. That's the NALC election of our National Officers and Business Agents, the leaders in the union. I hope you voted. We had plenty of choices and opportunities to educate ourselves. So now we'll see what will happen with the leaders we chose.

The biggest challenge right off the bat after this election is our National Contract. Unless outgoing President Renfroe came to an agreement while this issue of Branch 9 News was at the presses, our contract will be in arbitration after the first of the year, maybe even before. This is our fight and we really must support our President no matter who wins, as they advocate for better working conditions for all letter carriers and their families. I hope we are all ready for it.



State Fair Fun

Left: Ken Jambois, Rep Kelly Morrison, Andrew Hagan, Aleesha Berg, and Connie Beissel **Middle Top:** Andrew Hagan, Joe Rian, Rep Emma Greenman, and Susan Becker **Middle Bottom:** Heidi Iverson, Steve Simon, Melia Derrick, and Connie Beissel **Right:** Zack Flipovich, Mike Meier, and Andrew Truckenmiller



State Fair Fun

Left: Ken Jambois, Sen Amy Kobuchar, Andrew Hagan, and Connie Beissel **Middle:** Crystal Spiel, Eddie,and Erin Blazevic **Right:** Vince Froehlich, Candidate Matt Little,and Stefan Seaberg

EXEC VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Chris Pennock

Navigating FMLA

The last thing we need when facing a serious health condition is for Management to be breathing down our necks about our attendance. Many carriers know that we have Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) protection if you or a family member have a serious medical condition. But there's also a lot of confusion over how the process works. I'm going to share some resources with you all today to shed some light on the subject.

First off, nalc.org has a webpage on the subject. If you google NALC FMLA or go to nalc.org and search FMLA it will be the first thing that pops up. The nalc.org webpage is great, but it is a little difficult to navigate to where to send your completed forms to if you're not already familiar with where it's located on the page. We've also just set up an FMLA page on branch9nalc.com that prominently features this information, and can be found at the end of this article.

FMLA can grant you up to 12 weeks per year of protected leave. This is leave where you have legal and contractual protections against Management issuing you discipline or removing you for that period.

To be eligible for FMLA you must have one year of service under your belt at the Post Office, and you must have accrued 1,250 workhours in the 12-month period immediately before your leave starts. A full-time work year consists of 2,080 hours, so the 1,250 requirement is about 60% full-time.

Once you've determined you're eligible the next step is to fill out the proper form. There are six forms. Form 1 is for your own serious health condition, form 2 is for a family member's condition, form 3 is for qualifying exigencies for military family leave (short notice deployment, military events, etc.), form 4 is for when you're requesting leave to care for a family member with a serious condition who's a current member of the military, form 5 is when you request leave to care for a family member with a serious condition who's a veteran, and lastly, form 6 if when you have a new child in the family.

Make sure you fill out the right form. If you fill out form 1 but you're requesting leave for a family member's condition it will be denied, and you'll have to start over. We recommend you use the NALC forms rather than the forms that the Post Office would send you in the mail if you requested FMLA over liteblue or by calling HRSSC. Our forms are simpler and easier to use, and they are accepted by HRSSC.

Once you have the right form there is a short section for you to fill out and a section for your doctor to fill out. A big thing that you must work with your doctor on is the frequency and duration of the covered condition. If you're approved for 2 episodes per month of 1-2 days per episode and you call in for 3 days straight, your last day will not be covered even though you theoretically had 4 days you could use in a month.

Once you and your doctor have filled out the forms you can mail them to:

HRSSC FMLA Western
PO Box 970910
Greensboro, NC 27497

If you have questions about FMLA you can call the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC) at 1-877-477-3273. One last thing is to keep in mind that every FMLA case expires at the end of the calendar year. So, if your condition continues into the new year you'll have to submit for it again in the new year.

Branch 9 Members Attend "Women in Leadership" DFL Event

On August 26th the Minnesota DFL held a "Women in Leadership" event to recognize and celebrate local female leadership. Speakers included State Senators Zaynab Mohamed (District 63), Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy (District 64) and U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar.

PAL9, Branch 9's Political Action Committee (PAC) received several tickets to this event as a gift for our PAC's donation to the MN DFL. Attendees of the event included: Aleesha Berg (Diamond Lake); Susan Becker (Richfield); Cathy Jones (Loring); Jenn Schreiter (Columbia Heights); and PAL9 President Joel Carter (retired).



From Left to Right: Aleesha Berg, Susan Becker, Jenn Schreiter, MN Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy, Cathy Jones, and PAL 9 President Joel Carter

Cathy told me she was struck by the number of women in leadership who feel genuine concern about letter carriers and the political challenges we're facing right now. There was a real understanding that what happens to U.S. postal workers is connected to the larger fight for working families, strong unions, and public services. It was invigorating to have those conversations and feel that support, and she was delighted to meet former State Senator Becky Lourey. Cathy deeply appreciated the opportunity to connect with someone who has spent much of her life in public service, fighting for working-class people.

I was able to make a connection with Sen. Erin Murphy, whose Saint Paul district includes the Merriam Park, Macalester-Groveland, and Highland Park areas. Sen. Murphy expressed



fervent appreciation for the tireless efforts from letter carriers here in Minnesota, city and rural both. She also conveyed her horror about extreme right-wing schemes to dismantle the Postal Service, to move us away from the universal service mandate as well as to use the Service itself to restrict Minnesotans' voting access through the proposed "final rule." She expressed that she loves receiving letters and postcards and invited us to write to her.

We very much appreciated the invitation from PAL9 to attend the "Women in Leadership" meet-and-greet fundraiser event and felt grateful for the opportunity to represent Minneapolis city carriers to Minnesota's female DFL leadership.

Divided We Fall: Why Letter Carriers Must Stand Together on the Workroom Floor



If you walk into almost any post office installation, you can feel the tension before you even clock in. Mail volumes shift, routes grow heavier, management pushes for impossible street times, and supervisors loom with clipboards in hand. But instead of focusing energy on the systemic pressures of the job, letter carriers sometimes turn on one another.

Whether it is arguing over who finished their route first, who took a pivot, or who called in unscheduled leave; floor drama is a growing poison in the United States Postal Service. To survive the daily grind and protect the craft, every carrier needs to remember a piece of wisdom as old as the job itself, "Keep your eyes on your own bobber."

When letter carriers are busy fighting each other, local management reaps the rewards of this infighting. The division among workers creates a convenient distraction from actual operational issues, contract violations, and short-staffing. It is an age-old tactical game. Management frequently plays favorites, gives preferential treatment on auxiliary assistance, or subtly drops hints to union letter carriers about their coworkers' work habits. They say things like:

• "If your union brother didn't take so long on his route, you wouldn't have to carry that extra pivot today."

• "Your sister carrier called out again, so now you have to absorb the piece."

By deliberately pitting union members against each other, management shifts the blame from their own administrative failures onto the craft workforce. When letter carriers argue amongst themselves over overtime rotation or casing speeds, they waste critical energy that should be directed toward contract enforcement and shop-floor solidarity. When craft members fight, management gets to sit back and watch the union unravel from within.

While supervisors may attempt to foster friction to keep the workforce fractured, the National





State Fair Fun

Left: Ken Jambois, Connie Beissel, Andrew Hagan, and Candidate Zack Flipovich **Right:** Chris Pennock, MN AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham,and Joe Rian

Agreement strictly prohibits management from permitting or inciting a hostile environment. Under Article 19 of the 2023–2026 NALC National Agreement, postal handbooks and manuals carry the same weight as the contract itself. Specifically, Handbook M-39 (Management of Delivery Services), Section 115.4 places a clear, enforceable requirement on supervisors:

"Management must maintain an atmosphere between employer and employee which assures mutual respect for each other's rights and responsibilities"

Furthermore, the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace (M-01243)—incorporated into the contractual framework—unequivocally obligates postal management to maintain a safe, dignified, and harmonious work environment. The Joint Statement clearly states that:

"Dignity, respect and fairness are basic human rights... We can—and must—work together to resolve the factors contributing to disputes in our workplace."

When supervisors pit carriers against one another, encourage infighting, or fail to address toxic workroom behavior, they are in direct violation of Handbook M-39, Section 115.4 and the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace.

Keeping Your Eyes on Your Own Bobber

Fishing taught us the essential lesson: if you spend all your time watching someone else's bobber, you'll miss the bite on your own line—and you'll end up tangling your fishing lines in the process. On the workroom floor, "keeping your eyes on your own bobber" means:

1. Focusing on Your Own Route: An eight-hour day is evaluated based on your pace, your safety, and the physical realities of your specific assignment—not the carrier casing next to you.

2. Refusing to Be Management's Enforcer: It is management's contractual responsibility to manage the workforce, not yours. Watching a fellow carrier's clock ring times or monitoring their pace only serves supervisor interests, not craft unity.

3. Recognizing the Real Source of Stress: If you are overworked or overburdened with extra splits, the fault lies with staffing levels and management scheduling—not with the union brother or sister who requested assistance or exercised their contractual rights.

Building Real Solidarity on the Floor

The strength of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) does not come from a booklet or a national headquarters; it lives on the local workroom floor. Every time a carrier takes management's bait and attacks a coworker, the collective bargaining power of the entire station weakens. To counteract toxic workplace culture, union letter carriers must commit to concrete solidarity:

• Stop the Gossip: Refuse to participate in conversations that degrade or criticize fellow carriers' work speeds or personal circumstances.

• Support New Carriers and CCAs: Instead of resenting newer carriers for learning the ropes, mentor them on contractual rights, safe work habits, and street efficiency.

• Enforce the Contract Together: If management attempts to bypass Article 8 (Overtime Work) or violates Article 14 (Safety and Health), file grievances collectively through your shop steward rather than taking out frustration on coworkers.

• Hold Management Accountable: When supervisors try to incite conflict between carriers, call out the behavior and remind management of their obligation under Section 115.4 of Handbook M-39 to maintain mutual respect and harmony.

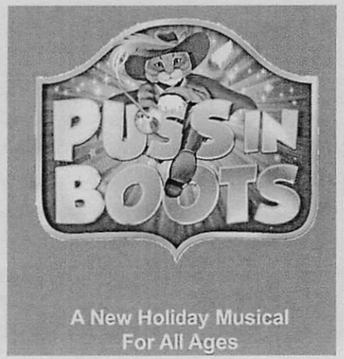
A divided union is a weak union. Management understands that a unified workroom floor—where carriers look out for one another, uphold safety, and enforce contract provisions together—is impossible to intimidate.

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

AME'S UNIFORMS
OUR BUSINESS IS MAKING YOU LOOK GOOD!
We offer "Life of the Garment" guarantee.
If fixable we will repair your uniform at no cost to you.
Take waist in/out and change hem length
Ame's Uniforms are a UNION PREFERRED vendor

Please join Branch 9 for Breakfast and a showing of Puss in Boots

This delightful new musical version of the beloved tale is set in old London during the holidays where Jack Whittington, a penniless orphan whose fortunes seem bleak, crosses paths with a mysterious, talking cat. This is no ordinary alley cat. He's clever, charming and has a flair for fashion, complete with magnificent boots! With cunning, loyalty, and wit, he transforms his new friend's fortunes, securing him wealth, a job and a princess. Packed with music, dance, comedy and audience participation, PUSS IN BOOTS is the "purr-feet" accompaniment to the holidays. Run time is 65 minutes.



Sunday, December 6, 2026

Santa will be our special guest from 11:00am - 1:00pm
(children will receive a stuffed animal).

Price is $ 20 per person

(Tickets available for pick-up on the day of the show.)

Contact Joe Rian (612.781.9858) with questions.

Sidekick Theatre, Minnesota Masonic Heritage Center
11411 Masonic Home Drive
Bloomington, MN 55437

Breakfast Buffet - included with price of ticket
(waffle bar, scrambled eggs, cheesy hashbrowns, bacon, fresh fruit, oj and coffee)
11:30am

Show Start Time
1:00pm
(space available for 200 people - Theater Seating - General Admission)

Return registration form and payment No later than Monday, November 30, 2026.
(checks made out and mailed to: Branch 9, 5831 Cedar Lk Rd S, St. Louis Park, MN 55416)

Branch 9 Holiday Party Registration Form

Member's Name:_____ Station:_____

Number of Guests:_____ Amount Paid:_____

Name of Guests (please include ages of children): #1 _____

#2. _____ #3. _____

#4. _____ #5. _____

#6. _____ #7. _____

(Continued from Front Page)

$700,000 There are no guarantees in life and the stock market. Long term, the markets tend to deliver or exceed your expectations.

The number of TSP millionaires is 185,000, and that number continues to grow. Most had regular paying jobs, not corner office jobs. Most raise their contribution percentage and stay invested for their entire career. Not jumping in and out of investments because something happened or some trend is developing, not taking loans or cutting back on the contribution percentage.

Years ago, I attended a retirement seminar at the National Convention. They advised that you should start planning for retirement the day you start work, and that has really stuck with me. Most people spend more time planning a week-long vacation

than they do planning for a 30-year retirement! What are you going to DO?

I wish you all a rewarding career. Retire when you choose. And someday, while sitting on a beach, you may think, "Maybe that old guy was right".



State Fair Fun

Left: Ken Jambois, Aleesha Berg, Andrew Hagan, and Connie Beissel **Right Top:** Andrew Hagan, Joe Rian, MN Attourney General Keith Ellison, Susan Becker **Right Bottom:** Eddie and Crystal Spiel with MPLS Fire Fighters

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

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES MN
PERMIT NO. 91964

OCT 27	**General Membership Meeting** **Every 4th Tuesday 7PM**	Crystal VFW
OCT 31	**Halloween**	
NOV 1	**Daylight Savings Time**	
NOV 3	**Election Day**	
NOV 5	**Branch 28** **Retiree Cribbage Tournament**	Branch 28 Union Hall 1715 Van Dyke St. Maplewood
NOV 10	**Steward Board Meeting** **Every Second Tuesday 7PM**	Crystal VFW
NOV 11	**Veterans Day**	
NOV 24	**General Membership Meeting** **Every 4th Tuesday 7PM**	Crystal VFW
DEC 6	**Puss in Boots Holiday Show** **@ Sidekick Theater**	11411 Masonic Home Dr Bloomington
Northside Retiree Breakfast **First Tuesdays @ 9:30**		Elsie's 729 Marshall St. NE Minneapolis
N Suburban Retiree Breakfast **First Fridays @ 8:30**		Denny's Restaurant 9020 Quaday Ave NE Otsego
Fridley Retiree Lunch **Second Tuesdays @ 11:30AM**		Route 47 Pub and Grub 7820 University Ave Fridley

Visit Branch 9 Online

PTF Ranking

Bid Sheets

nalc.org

Branch 9 Facebook