

# 908 News

NALC Branch 908

AFL-CIO

PO Box 1223

Blackwood, NJ

08012

# Bill Revak Branch 908 South Jersey Letter Carriers

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## Presidents Report

We still have no word on a new contract, as president Renfroe told the members at Branch 38's training seminar last month in Atlantic City. He stated they were picking the neutral arbitrator, but as of this writing I still haven't heard who they agreed upon. Hopefully, by our next meeting, I will have some news to report. It is really starting to annoy me in that there is nothing coming out on what is the hold up. I have been around long enough to know these things can become delayed, but not telling the membership isn't right. We need to know what is going on because we are being constantly questioned on this matter at our meetings, and not having anything to report becomes very frustrating to everyone.

Next, if you weren't made aware, the **TIAREP** process, which is the route evaluation process we have been under, has been extended until May 31, 2024. It appears this process will become part of the next contract, but until we get one, they are just extending it. I know there are many carriers who have questions about whether this process is good for us and if we should even be a partner in this going forward. I agree there may be some things that aren't good for us in this method of adjusting routes, but the bottom line is management is going to try and implement this type of evaluation with or without us. I think as long as they allow us to watch over them, we can monitor the progress of this system and challenge them if they overstep their bounds. We now have two of our members on this team, which is good for our branch, when our offices become selected for evaluations. The landscape of our job is changing, and we must adapt to it. We don't have offices selected as of yet, but as managers start getting trained, I am sure it is only a matter of time before they come a calling. All I can tell you is to continue to do your job as professionally as you always do, and just know you are being watched every day. As long as you do your job the correct way, you will have no problems.

Another piece of information I have read, but haven't received anything official from our National, deals with the South Jersey P&DC in Bellmawr. It appears the Postal Service is conducting a facility review where they would move some mail processing operations to the Philadelphia P&DC. If this happened, then it would be highly likely that the South Jersey facility would be modernized and repurposed as a local processing center, a Sorting & Delivery Center, or both. If I get anything official, I will let you know. I just wanted everyone to know what I came across, since everyone has been asking.

Next, in this month's postal record, you will see everyone who has done their part in protecting their job by investing in the Letter Carrier Political Fund. This pact is of the utmost importance as we move forward in this election cycle. I know there are many members who can't stand giving to politicians, but this fund is our only way to get our representatives to push forward our many important fights in DC. Please consider doing your part and give to this pact. Our LCPF chairman **Ozzie Lecky**, will be happy to help educate you and sign you up painlessly.

Lastly, I was told that our new CCA's are concerned about their job security while learning routes in their offices. I am not sure what managers are telling these new CCA's, but I would hope they aren't being threatened that if they don't learn a route in 30 days or less, they will be terminated. Our contract in Article 41.3.E. states, "A newly appointed carrier or a carrier permanently assigned to a route with which the carrier is not familiar will be allowed a reasonable period to become

familiar with the route and to become proficient." Some managers, and you know who you are, try and make up their own rules instead of reading the contract. Just try your best, and things will work out for you. This job is hard to learn in the beginning, and those managers who don't have the patience to try and help our new CCA's should be dismissed from managing. Hang in there!

Hope to see everyone at this month's meeting where I will have all the latest information. Stay safe.

Gary DiGiacomo – President

## EVPS FYI

This month I thought would be a good opportunity to discuss how we handle snow conditions, particularly when it comes to walking between houses. Management will have you believe that snow/ice conditions do not affect delivery or your times. Obviously, that is completely wrong. Management does not factor in the safety issues of cutting lawns when you cannot see the surface below the conditions. Here is the proper response to these situations. **M-00273 June 15, 1978 Step 4 MOU:** Postal Service policy does not advocate that management issue blanket orders requiring letter carriers to cross every lawn or take every shortcut. **Lawn crossings are governed by Article 41.3.N which provides the following:** Letter Carriers may cross lawns while making deliveries if customers do not object and there are **no particular hazards** to the carrier. **JCAM** explains this provision as follows Lawn Crossing: good example is Arbitrator Garrett stated in his Cincinnati Lawn Crossing decision (NC-NAT-13212, August 20, 1979, C-03228) National Arbitrator Sylvester Garrett did not set down clear standards for determining when customers have objected to "carriers" crossing their lawns and when hazards exist which would make crossing lawns unsafe. Garrett did set down the following general guidelines: A carrier may be instructed broadly to take all "obvious shortcuts" and to cross all lawns where there is no reason to believe the customer may object. However, the determination of what constitutes an obvious shortcut or whether a hazard exists is made in the first instance by the **carrier. The carrier's judgment** can be exercised only in the light of the specific conditions at the location involved. A supervisor may conclude, after personal observation and discussion with the carrier, that a particular lawn should be crossed and order the carrier to cross the lawn. The carrier may not ignore such an order with impunity. His remedy is to file a grievance. However, discipline should not be imposed upon a carrier who had exercised his discretion and not crossed lawns, merely because a supervisor later decides that some of the lawns could have been crossed. The determination of what constitutes an obvious shortcut or whether a hazard exists is made in the first instance by the carrier. See JCAM Discussion above. So please do not take weather conditions as a blanket reason to not cut lawns, rather determine on a house-to-house basis. Remember this is your determination, just be prepared to explain each instance if questioned. A blanket order to just cross lawns is not in itself a reason for discipline. If you are being forced to do anything different than the points above described, please notify your Shop Steward. We have great Stewards they are prepared to fight this if it occurs. Always remember their bad day is not yours, they also have a responsibility to follow the rules. **Stay Strong, Strength in Numbers. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. Executive Vice President Shawn McBride (856)649-9317**

### Comments from the VP

On Tuesday, the branch held shop steward training. It was great to see the interest this training generated among the old and new stewards. A big shout out to Executive VP **Shawn McBride** for organizing and putting this training together. It was long overdue but well worth the wait. Make plans now to attend our annual Branch Retiree Banquet on Saturday, April 13, 2024, 7 – 11pm. Tickets are \$20 for members and guests, \$10 for Branch retirees. The banquet will be held at Elizabeths Ballroom in Gloucester City. Contact VP **Mike Powell** at **856-906-2026** or [908vp@comcast.net](mailto:908vp@comcast.net) or see your steward for tickets. Retiree's, please remember to fill out and send back to the National your form 1189 if you want to retain your NALC membership. The dues for Branch 908 are only \$12 a year. Also, if any retiree has any uniforms, please feel free to drop them off at the hall, as we have many CCA's who could use them because of the price gauging of the uniform companies!!! In other matters, Paul Fowler who works out of the Camden, a.k.a. shithole, Annex will be leaving to be a Postal Cop. Paul served our branch as a steward in Swedesboro and Riverton. He also served as an instructor at the Carrier Academy. Paul helped me immensely at the Camden, a.k.a. shithole, Annex as my alternate steward. Paul will be sorely missed. Good luck Paul with your new adventure. I want to encourage all our active members, retired members and CCAs to try to attend our monthly meetings. It is not only your chance to get valuable information on things happening in the Branch but more importantly to ask questions or voice your concerns to your elected officers. You can also grab a bite to eat, have a beverage of your choice and meet and mingle with new and old friends. If any active, CCA or retired member needs my assistance on any issue please contact me anytime at **(856)-906-2026** or [908vp@comcast.net](mailto:908vp@comcast.net).

**Proud to be Union- Mike Powell-Vice President**

### Next Meeting

The next regular monthly meeting of the Branch will be held on **Wednesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> @ 8 pm**, at the American Legion Hall, 502 Colonial Ave., Woodbury. The regular monthly meetings of the Branch are held on the Third Wednesday of each month @ **8 p.m.** The Executive Board and Shop Steward meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. The Executive Board meets @ **7:30 pm**, and the Shop Stewards @ **8 pm**. The next meeting of the Executive Board and Shop Stewards will be on **Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup> @ 7:30 and 8pm** respectively.

### Attendance Prize Now at \$25

On **Wednesday January 17<sup>th</sup>** at the regular monthly meeting, **Chad Hubler** a member out of the Gibbstown Office, was the recipient of the **\$25** attendance prize. The prize is now **\$25** and will increase to **\$25** per meeting, up to a maximum of **\$250**, until a member in attendance has their name drawn.

### Health Benefits, MBA, FMLA, Optical

Hello brothers and sisters. Hope all is well. There are many changes coming to the USPS, Health benefits, and Medicare options. Most Postal Service annuitants and their eligible family members who are entitled to Medicare Part A will be eligible to enroll in Medicare Part B during a 6-month special enrollment period (SEP). Individuals who qualify for the SEP will receive a separate notification prior to 4/1/24 in accordance with the PSRA (Postal Service Reform Act). A great source for more information can be found at <https://www.nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/body/PSHB-Annuitant.pdf>. Subject to limited exceptions, Postal Service annuitants and their family members who are entitled to Medicare Part A must enroll in Medicare Part B to be eligible to continue PSHB coverage. Medicare Part B Enrollment Requirements and Exceptions: In the future, the new law will require eligible postal annuitants and their eligible family members to enroll in Medicare Part B as a condition of coverage. First, anyone who is a postal annuitant as of 1/1/25, is not required to enroll in Medicare Part B as a condition of receiving health benefits through the PSHB program. Any family members of such a postal annuitant are also exempt from the Part B enrollment requirement. Second, postal employees who are at least age 64 as of 1/1/25, will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B when they retire (as a postal annuitant) as a condition of receiving health benefits through the PSHB program. Any family members of such a postal employee are also exempt from the Part B enrollment requirement. Third, a postal annuitant or family member who can demonstrate that s/he resides outside the U.S. will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B as a condition of receiving health benefits through the PSHB program. a postal service annuitant or family members is not required to enroll in Medicare Part B if they are enrolled in health benefits. Please also note that at that time a

10% per year penalty will be added to your premium should you decide later to take part in Medicare Part B.

Medicare Part B Special Enrollment Period: Eligible postal annuitants and family members not enrolled in Medicare Part B as of 1/1/24 will be eligible for a 6-mo, penalty free SEP to enroll in Medicare Part B, beginning 4/1/24. This is a one-time offer to avoid the 10% per year premium penalty. While the SEP is available to those interested in the option, there is no requirement to enroll in Part B. However, those who do take advantage of this SEP will not have to pay the late enrollment penalty, which increases premiums by 10% for each 12-month period they could have been enrolled in Part B but did not sign up. Instead, the Postal Service will cover the penalty. Annuitants who decide to enroll will still have to pay the Medicare Part B monthly premium. OPM and the Social Security Administration will determine who is eligible for the SEP and inform those who meet the requirements, by US mail.

For \$20 reimbursement of optical expenses send a copy of your expenses with your name, address, and office/retired on it to **George Greenwood, 1083 Chews Landing Rd., Laurel Springs, NJ 08021**. Any questions always feel free to give me a call at **856-304-8665**. Be safe everyone. See you at the meeting. **HBR George Greenwood, HBR**

### Ozzie's Corner

In January's newsletter I started talking about some important key points on why The Postal Service Health Benefit Plan (PSHB) will add value. When the individual is eligible for Medicare, he or she can change to another plan under The PSHB enrollment. The individual can option at any time beginning 30 days before becoming eligible for Medicare. Some benefit plans offer incentives, such as lower prescription-drug copays. Therefore, the individual has created bigger savings for out-of-pocket health costs. Participating in Medicare allows annuitants a reward in this scenario because when the individual was active, he or she was paying Medicare taxes. The integration of The PSHB plan with Medicare may reduce overall costs for health care expenses and provide a better value to Retirees. To learn more about Medicare, visit the web at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Our national percentage to LCPF now stands at 12%. I truly believe that our national officers are realizing that the LPOs (Legislative and Political Organizers) can't do this difficult task alone! The process needs to start in every local branch as a top priority. Once we gather the steam locally, then we branch out to The State Association, then The Region. The potential to get the numbers close to even 15 or 20 percent is in reach, so let's continue The Fight. Finally, I want to thank this month's LCPF contributors: **Ashley Andrews, Michael Breyer, Devin Champagne, Zachary Evans, Chuck Huff III, Matthew Maher, Jack McCormick, and Joe Powell Jr.** My phone number is **(856) 220-8658**

### Ozzie Lecky - Letter Carrier Political Fund Chairman

*\*(By making a contribution to the LCPF, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the NALC or of employment by the USPS, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The LCPF will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the LCPF are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the LCPF from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administration staff, or their families.)*

### Branch Scholarship Drawing

We will be drawing the winner of this year's Branch Scholarship at the regular monthly meeting on May 15th. The winner of the scholarship will receive a fund of \$2,000.00 (\$500 a year for four years). Applications are available at every monthly meeting, on the Branch website, or you can contact Trustee Chairman Jim Boyle. All previous winners that receive scholarship payments must submit any updated information to Jim by the May meeting. This would include where the students will be attending in the fall semester. Remember all winners must be full-time student. If you have any questions, contact **Jim Boyle at 856-952-6107**

### Ham Drawing

There will be a Ham given away to a member in attendance at our March general meeting, donated by **Joe Foreman** retiree out of Marlton, in honor of **Norm Task**.

### Branch Attorneys

**Uliase & Uliase**

**106 White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035**

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