



## Wounded Warriors Leave rights

**A**s Veterans make up almost a quarter of NALC membership, the subject of Wounded Warriors Leave needs to be front and center and NALC leaders should be well versed in the topic. NALC has received many questions about it recently, so this article is to provide newer veteran members with education about it and should serve as a refresher for other members.

The creation of Wounded Warriors Leave (WWL) came about in response to the passage of the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015, which allows employees who meet the eligibility requirements to use this category of leave to undergo up to 104 hours of medical treatment for a service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more.

This category of leave is an important benefit to letter carriers who are also veterans with a disability rating of 30 percent or greater. Disabled veterans generally are required to attend regular medical appointments to maintain their health and to continue their eligibility to receive their veterans' benefits. Frequently, such appointments must be scheduled during normal work hours, and before the creation of WWL, letter carriers often were required to use their annual leave, sick leave or leave without pay (LWOP) to attend those appointments. WWL provides some relief to those who are eligible and must receive necessary treatment.

Eligibility to receive WWL can be verified on the carrier's PS Form 50. In Box 11 on their PS Form 50, it should indicate "6-10pt-Comp over 30%." If they are eligible and Box 11 does not denote "6-10pt-Comp over 30%," the employee will need to submit the necessary documentation to certify that they meet the eligibility requirements. Employees who need

to provide their documentation to the USPS Human Resource Shared Service Center.

For career employees, items can be sent by mail to USPS/HRSSC, Attn: RTR Team, P.O. Box 970100, Greensboro, NC 27497-0100, or by fax to 650-577-4324.

For non-career employees, items can be sent by mail to USPS/HRSSC, Attn: Form 50 Team, P.O. Box 970400, Greensboro, NC 27497-0400, or by fax to 336-662-4070 or 336-662-4073.

It is an employee's responsibility to notify the Postal Service of their eligibility before requesting WWL. Employees must provide documentation from the Department of Veterans Affairs, or on any Office of Personnel Management certification form developed for administration of WWL, certifying that they have a qualifying service-connected disability. Eligible employees who have not yet submitted the necessary paperwork should do so now to the above addresses.

Eligible employees are required to request this leave in advance, when possible, by completing and submitting to their supervisor a PS Form 3971, Request for or Notification of Absence. The employee should designate the reason for the absence as "Other" on PS Form 3971 and write "Wounded Warriors Leave" in the space provided. The supervisor is responsible for approving or disapproving requests by signing PS Form 3971 and returning a copy to the employee. In addition, to verify that WWL requested by an employee is appropriately used for the treatment of a service-connected disability, the requesting employee must provide proof from a health care provider that they used the leave to receive treatment for a covered disability. This

can be done by submitting a completed PS Form 5980, Treatment Verification for Wounded Warriors Leave.

Should the need to use this leave be unforeseeable, the employee must notify their supervisor of the expected duration of the absence and the applicability of WWL. Employees also may use the Interactive Voice Response system to report absences if this process is used in their employing office. A PS Form 3971 is required upon returning to work and a PS Form 5980 no later than 15 calendar days after returning.

Employees eligible for WWL also may be eligible for protection under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—see Section 515 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual for more information and eligibility requirements. Supervisors will initiate FMLA leave if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the leave might qualify. It is the employee's responsibility to provide complete and sufficient documentation to establish eligibility for FMLA. FMLA protection will run concurrently with WWL.

The eligibility requirements for WWL, as outlined in USPS Management Instruction EL-510-2019-2 (M-01901 in NALC's Materials Reference System), are as follows:

### Eligibility

#### Eligible Employees

All employees who have a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more are eligible for Wounded Warriors Leave.

#### Employees with Pending Disability Determinations

Otherwise eligible employees with pending disability determinations who at any time during any Leave Year receive a 30 percent or more disability rating, will be eligible for leave retroactively to the first day

of that current Leave Year. Any leave without pay (LWOP) or leave used while the determination is pending will be reimbursed and replaced with Wounded Warriors Leave, as appropriate, up to the maximum number of hours allowed. Wounded Warriors Leave may be retroactively applied for only the most current Leave Year and for no more than 104 hours.

**Losing the Disability Rating**

If an employee’s service-connected disability rating is decreased to below 30 percent or discontinued during any Leave Year then the employee no longer has a qualifying service-connected disability. The employee must notify the HR Shared Service Center of the effective date of the change in the disability rating. The employee is no longer eligible for Wounded Warriors Leave as of the effective date of the rating change.

**Accrual and Crediting**

**General**

It is an employee’s responsibility to notify the Postal Service of his or her eligibility before requesting Wounded Warriors Leave. Employees must provide documentation to

the HR Shared Service Center from the Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that the employee has the requisite level of service-connected disability.

**Initial Eligibility**

Newly hired eligible employees or those returning to the Postal Service will be credited with 104 hours of Wounded Warriors Leave following the Postal Service’s receipt of documentation supporting the employee’s eligibility. Wounded Warriors Leave will be available for use retroactively to the first day of their enter-on-duty date, or the current Leave Year, whichever is later, for use through the end of the Leave Year.

**Additional Eligibility**

Eligible employees will be credited with 104 hours of Wounded Warriors Leave on the first day of each Leave Year and the leave is available for use until the last day of the Leave Year.

**Carryover**

Wounded Warriors Leave must be used during the Leave Year in which it is credited and will not be carried over. No employee may accrue more than 104 hours during any Leave Year.

**Separation**

If the employee leaves the Postal Service at any time during any Leave Year, any remaining leave will not be reinstated or paid out, except as permitted by OPM regulations if the employee transfers to another federal agency.

**The need for veterans to obtain medical treatment for service-connected health issues has been acknowledged and guarded for decades. Remember, medical examination and treatment are important to maintaining good health. Veterans should be aware the Postal Service acknowledges that absences for these purposes are legally protected.**

Information regarding the rules and regulations of WWL is available on the NALC website, [nalc.org](http://nalc.org), and can be found on the NALC Veterans, Contract Administration Unit and City Delivery pages. PS Form 5980 can be found on those pages as well. After reviewing those guidelines, if you have any further questions about WWL, make sure to discuss them with your shop steward or a branch officer.

**Join the NALC Veterans Group**

The NALC Veterans Group is designed to provide NALC members—both active and retired letter carriers—who are also military veterans the ability to connect with fellow NALC veterans and stay informed on issues of importance to letter carrier veterans. It is free to join.

Members receive a pin as a symbol of gratitude for your military service and membership in NALC.

If you are interested in joining the group, complete the sign-up card at right and mail it to the address included. A fillable version is also available at [nalc.org/veterans](http://nalc.org/veterans).



You continue to serve your country—  
**THANK YOU!**

**NALC Veterans Group**

Complete this form and mail it to:  
NALC Veterans Group, c/o NALC,  
100 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001-2144

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NALC BRANCH NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ BRANCH OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

**I BELONG TO THE FOLLOWING VETERAN GROUP(S):**

AMERICAN LEGION  DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS  VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
 OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

**Free**  
to join