



Good health with a healthy plan

With the recent release by OPM of the Health Benefit premiums for next year, NALC retirees who have the NALC Health Insurance Plan will be getting a little something special in their annuity check. That something special is *more of it*. As a result of the decrease in the NALC 2008 premium cost (\$10.77 for Self and Family coverage and \$12.18 for Self Only), retirees will get a little relief from the yearly onslaught on their annuity. And while this decrease is welcome, we all know that the continued inflationary trend of health care costs must be addressed. While we can thank Director of Health Insurance Timothy “Mr. Wizard” O’Malley for the current premium decrease, we must recognize that business as usual (ever-increasing premiums) will return if we are not proactive in our approach to this matter.

With the exception of the “wars” this country is currently engaged in, the biggest issue facing the United States is health care, or lack of it. Many pundits are quick to advance arguments for or against any solution, but the bottom line is that we must consider that our citizens are losing health care at an astounding and unacceptable rate. More and more workers and their families are unable to acquire or continue to afford basic health insurance. The recent agreement between the United Auto Workers and General Motors shows that current and future health insurance costs can no longer be ignored. The UAW and the automobile industry were at the forefront in providing health care for their workers. The auto industry is now at a point that no longer allows them to continue postponing the cost for this benefit. While we as postal employees and federal retirees are somewhat insulated on this issue, a look at our own recent contract negotiations shows that we are not immune from it.

As the director of retired members, I urge each active and retired member of our union to look at *your* NALC Health Plan during this Open Season and see why it is best to be union strong, even with your health insurance needs. Our union is stronger because of its membership; that strength will carry over to the Health Plan if given a chance. The way to make our plan even more affordable is through its selection by more members. Check the NALC premiums against the other plans, compare coverage, and I am confident that you will see the NALC is best for all letter carriers.

Another way of keeping rates down and benefits up is to have the Health Plan spend less. This is why the younger membership becoming participants in the plan is so important. Since younger, normally healthier members have fewer incidents of usage during the year, the plan saves money and returns it with reduced cost or increased benefits. The best way to thank Director O’Malley for his efforts on our behalf is to join your union plan, since he has already started doing his part. Now it is up to us to complete the job with him.

Retirement Annuity Projections

This month’s *Postal Record* introduces a three-months-ahead forecast for retirement annuity estimates. Historically, we have provided one-month or current-month projections toward these estimates. This forecast for three months from now will provide members a better idea of their retirement income prior to starting the 90-day retirement application process with the USPS Human Resources Shared Service Center. Since this forecast is projected 90 days forward, some issues may affect the actual amount received when the retirement annuity is finalized. The current back-pay event is an example of how it would be affected, since that money would not have been forecast three months earlier. Additionally, while we can accurately forecast future wage increases, cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) due to the fluctuation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) are not certain, so we will not include future COLAs in the projections. This omission will guarantee that the finalized annuity will normally result in a carrier receiving more than the forecasted amount in his/her annuity. ☒

NALC Retirement Department

Toll-free number: 800-424-5186

Available Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only
from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 4 p.m. (Eastern time)
*This toll-free number is answered ONLY during these hours
on the days indicated.*

If your question concerns hospitalization and you are a member of the NALC Health Benefit Plan, call 888-636-6252.