



National Association
of Letter Carriers
William H. Young, President
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100 Indiana Ave. NW Washington, DC 20001-2144 202.393.4695 www.nalc.org

NALC, Other Unions Briefed By Postmaster General Potter On USPS Financial Condition

NALC President William H. Young and the leaders of several postal unions and management associations met with Postmaster General John Potter on September 22 to discuss how the deterioration of the U.S. economy is adversely affecting the United States Postal Service.

PMG Potter reported a significant erosion in the financial health of the USPS as mail volume fell sharply and rising fuel prices increased both transportation costs and labor expenses (COLAs). He indicated that a severe recession in several mail-intensive industries — housing, real estate, finance — would likely cause the USPS to lose \$2.5 billion in fiscal year 2008.

“There is no doubt that the crisis in the American economy is having a severe impact on the Postal Service,” Young noted after the meeting. “NALC is committed to working with the Postal Service to find ways to deal with the difficult circumstances facing us.”

However, he cautioned the Postal Service from launching unilateral initiatives to slash delivery costs outside the parameters set by the National Agreement.

“Our union is deeply engaged in efforts to find win-win solutions for the parties; we will act responsibly, but we will not accept management dictates that violate our rights,” Young said.

“Our goal is to help the Postal Service survive and prosper; if we work together, we will overcome the challenges posed by the poor economy,” he added.

Eligible ‘Early Out’ Letter Carriers Should Get Annuity Estimate Soon

Letter carriers who are eligible for the Postal Service’s Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) offer should first receive an annuity estimate letter in early October, then a week later, a letter formally issuing the offer and providing information on how to proceed.

NALC Director of Retired Members Ernie Kirkland advised city carriers who believe they are eligible but do not receive an offer letter by October 20 to contact the office of their National Business Agent.

The Postal Service has set February 28, 2009, as the retirement date for city carriers offered an “early out” under the authorization approved by the Office of Personnel Management.

Information about the (VERA) offer is available on the USPS employee website, www.liteblue.usps.gov. Active letter carriers may access the site by using their employee identification number and password.

No Accumulation Yet for Fourth COLA

There was no accumulation toward the fourth cost-of-living adjustment under the 2006-2011 National Agreement based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for August released September 16 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The August CPI-W was actually **below** its level of 644.303 for the base month of July, 2008.

The fourth COLA will be based on the difference in the CPI-W between July 2008 and January 2009.

The accumulation towards the 2009 retiree COLA declined from 6.2 percent to 6.0 percent based on the August CPI-W. The 2009 COLA is to be based on the increase in the CPI-W between the third quarter of 2007 and the third quarter of 2008.

The COLA for Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (FECA) beneficiaries in the year 2009, determined on the CPI-W from December 2007 to December 2008, stands at 4.6 percent based on the August data, down from 5.1 percent in July. FECA COLAs are applicable only in cases where death or disability occurred more than one year prior to the adjustment’s effective date.

Third COLA: \$1,497

The third cost-of-living adjustment under the 2006-2011 National Agreement will actually be \$1,497 annually, instead of \$1,498 as previously reported, following a recalculation of data from the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) as it applies to the contract. The correct COLA is equivalent to 72 cents per hour or \$57.57 per pay period.

Dixon Named Compensation Assistant; Fredenburg Appointed Region 7 RAA

President Young has appointed **Travis G. (Greg) Dixon**, president of Branch 1119 in Marietta, Georgia to NALC headquarters staff as the new Special Assistant to the President for Compensation, replacing Linda Temple who resigned recently to accept a position with the Labor Department’s Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP).

Young also announced the appointment of **Troy D. Fredenburg**, 45, a member of Minneapolis Branch 9, as Regional Administrative Assistant for Region 7, which covers Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota and South Dakota. He succeeds Rich Anderson, who resigned to return to carrying mail and to spend more time with his family.

Both Dixon and Fredenburg will assume their new positions on October 13.

Dixon, 44, has been president of the 370-member Marietta branch for the past 15 years and a member of the Step B Team for eight years, as well as DPS coordinator for the Atlanta District. He has also served as chairman of the Executive Board of the Georgia State Association of Letter Carriers.

He has completed courses at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies in suburban Washington, and the Cornell University School of Labor Studies. Dixon and his wife, Kathy, have two children: Malorie and Miranda.

Fredenburg has been a Step B representative for the Northland District for the past two years. He also serves as a trustee of Branch 9, and is a graduate of the NALC Leadership Academy. He and his wife, Leah, have three children: Kendra, Kyrah and Trent.

Hurricane Ike Victims Eligible for PERF Grants

Active and retired postal employees in Texas, Louisiana, and elsewhere who suffered damage to their homes and property due to Hurricane Ike are eligible for grants from the Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF) to help rebuild and repair their homes and property.

Application forms are available on the PERF website: www.postalrelief.com or by writing: Postal Employees’ Relief Fund, P.O. Box 34500, Washington, DC 20043-4500, or calling (202) 408-1869.

PERF grants currently range from \$1,000 to \$14,000, depending on the out-of-pocket loss after insurance and payments from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and/or other relief organizations. The Fund assists both active and retired postal employees with the reconstruction of homes and replacement of property damaged by natural disasters and home fires. It does not provide immediate emergency assistance.

News for Workers Available via Cell Phone

Workers Independent News (WIN), a Madison, Wisconsin-based network supported by NALC, is now available via cell phone to provide letter carriers and other working men and women with up-to-date news on workers’ issues and concerns. WIN gathers news by and about working people and creates programs and features for commercial, public, community and college radio stations throughout the United States.



WIN can be accessed by simply calling (425) 527-7001. There is no extra charge.

Additional information regarding Workers Independent News is available at its website: www.laborradio.org.

Workers Independent News (WIN) seeks to bring balance to radio news coverage by providing stations with news and features focusing on: organizing and bargaining for workplace democracy; workplace issues such as safety, privacy, and discrimination; campaigns for a living wage and other goals; union activity in communities and the political arena; and workplace issues such as undocumented workers, contingent and part-time employees and immigration.

NALC Heroes of the Year Honored At Ceremony in Nation’s Capital



In top photo award winners at the annual Heroes of the Year ceremony September 18 in Washington gather around President Young at the end of the ceremony. Pictured (l-r) seated are California Heroes of the Year Gilbert Rangel, Tonya Joseph, Karen Hill, Rick Quinonez and Alan Girard. Standing (l-r) are Shelby Hallmark, judge, Director, Labor Department’s Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs; Rhonda Russell, special carrier alert award; Jordan (Bud) Biscardo, judge, AFL-CIO Community Services Liaison at United Way of America; Raymond Rivera, Jr., Western Region Hero; President Young; Paul Gereffi, Eastern Region Hero; USPS Vice President/Labor Relations Doug Tulino; Dean Dunkel, Central Region Hero, and David Lundy, Humanitarian of the Year. In bottom photos, (l-r) Rep. Charles Gonzalez (D-TX) congratulates Raymond Rivera, Jr. of San Antonio on his award; in center, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Rep. George Miller, both (D-CA), welcome National Heroes Tonya Joseph and Gilbert Rangel to the Capitol Building; and at right Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA) presents flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol to Central Hero Dean Dunkel.

(Photos by Mike Shea)

The union’s heroes and humanitarians were lauded September 18 in Washington at the annual Heroes of the Year ceremony, with NALC President William H. Young reminding the audience that the honorees are only a sample of the many carriers that perform unselfish and often dangerous acts to protect the American public.

“People trust their letter carriers. They know that the blue uniform means that our people represent honest, hard work in service of the public,” Young said. “They know we deliver the finest and most affordable postal service in the world. They know you cannot outsource that job, to China, or anywhere else.”

He said sometimes letter carriers do even more.

“In their daily travels on the route, they sometimes come across an emergency that cries out for their help,” Young added. “And they respond, performing acts of such heroism that the rest of us are struck with awe.”

“These letter carriers are ordinary people who were called to action by some kind of emergency. They became heroes because they are the ones who acted. They took the initiative. They acted with courage, with tenacity, and with love for their fellow human beings. They sacrificed for their neighbors — giving, without asking for anything in return. For all of this, we honor them,” he said.

Honored in the ceremony (see *NALC Bulletin 08-16*) were:

Alan Girard, Rick Quinonez, Gilbert Rangel, Tonya Joseph and Karen Hill of Greater East Bay Branch 1111 in Oakland, California as “Hero of the Year” for helping rescue more than 100 people from a three-alarm fire at a senior citizens’ apartment building; **David Lundy** of High Point, North Carolina Branch 936 with the union’s National Humanitarian of the Year award who, with his wife, spent a year in persistent pursuit of obtaining care for an elderly patron; **Rhonda Russell** of New York City Branch 36 as the recipient of the Special Carrier Alert Award for alerting officials to a major identity theft case when she noticed a volume of credit card mail in the name of an 85-year-old woman who had been in a nursing home for several months.

Also, **Paul Gereffi** of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida Branch 2550 as Eastern Region Hero for helping subdue a disgruntled man who had assaulted his boss with a steak knife; **Dean Dunkel** of Cedar Rapids, Iowa Branch 373 as Central Region Hero for crawling inside a partially submerged car and rescuing the driver after she skidded off the road into a creek during a torrential rain storm; and **Raymond Rivera, Jr.** of San Antonio, Texas Branch 421 as Western Region Hero for rescuing two little girls who were being attacked by a pair of pit bulls as the girls played near his home.

Two Members of Congress, Reps. Dave Loebsack (D-IA) and Charles Gonzalez (D-TX) were on hand to join in the celebration.

Gonzalez said the acts of Rivera and the others were counter-intuitive, which are usually left only to police, fire and rescue officials. “The truth is many of us would not have done this,” Gonzalez said. “You are an inspiration to all of us.”

Loebsack thanked letter carrier “for all that you do”, not only heroic acts, but the day-to-day delivery of mail. He also presented Dunkel with a special flag flown over the U.S. Capitol Building.

Your NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2009 Improves Benefits, Limits Rate Hike ‘Open Season’ Set for November 10 to December 8

The NALC Health Benefit Plan will boost benefits in 2009 while limiting total premium increases to less than 5 percent — below the average 7 percent increase in premiums for plans in the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program (FEHBP). However, under the terms of the 2006-2011 National Agreement, the Postal Service’s contribution for bi-weekly health benefit premiums for active employees will be cut from 85 percent to 83 percent of average premium costs, which will raise active carrier costs for most FEHBP plans.

Information on the 2009 FEHBP programs and rates was announced September 25 by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In its announcement, OPM noted that enrollees in FEHBP’s most popular plan, the Blue Cross-Blue Shield Standard Option plan, will see their share of the premium increase 12.9 percent for self-only coverage and 13.4 percent for self and family coverage. City carriers enrolled in the Blue Cross-Blue Shield plan will see their rates rise by 22.2 percent (up \$8.42 per pay period) for self only coverage and increase 22.7 percent (up \$20.46 per pay period) for self and family coverage — reflecting the lower USPS contribution provided by the contract.

Active letter carriers with self-only coverage in the NALC Health Benefit Plan will see a bi-weekly increase of only 10 cents per pay period, while those with self and family coverage will pay \$8.30 more.

“We believe the NALC Health Benefit Plan provides the best value in FEHBP,” said NALC President William H. Young.

“Team NALC offers great competitive premiums along with quality benefits and outstanding customer service to letter carriers,” added Director of Health Benefit Plan Timothy O’Malley, reflecting the NALC HBP’s Open Season theme: “We’re Your Gold Medal Team.”

“I think letter carriers across the country will be looking to join their own union-run NALC Health Benefit Plan,” O’Malley said. “It’s time to return home.”

Employee contribution rates effective in January 2009 for most active letter carriers and annuitants in the NALC Health Benefit Plan (with the difference from the current 2008 rate in parenthesis) are:

	Self-Only	Self & Family
Active Carriers (biweekly)	\$ 32.71 (+0.10)	\$ 62.84 (+ 8.30)
Annuitants (monthly)	\$122.42 (-4.98)	\$252.14 (+ 5.14)

Members not currently enrolled in the NALC Health Benefit Plan can do so during the upcoming Open Season – November 10 through December 8.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan for 2009 will also see many improvements to help letter carriers and their families, including a reduction in the co-pay for outpatient and office visits, a reduction in enrollees’ share of costs for covered services by physicians and other health care professionals, and a new \$4,000 out-of-pocket maximum for retail prescription drugs.

Another new benefit will allow Plan enrollees to purchase up to a 90-day supply of covered drugs and supplies at a local CVS/Caremark pharmacy and pay the applicable mail order copayment. Previously, enrollees had to utilize the Mail Order Prescription Drug Program to receive the Plan’s maximum prescription benefit.

Further information about the new benefits included in the 2009 Plan will appear in future editions of the NALC Bulletin and the November issue of the Postal Record.

This is a summary of some of the features of the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Detailed information on the 2009 NALC Health Benefit Plan can be found in the official brochure. Before making a final decision, please read the Plan’s officially approved Brochure (R171-009). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the official brochure.