



The Protect Our Letter Carriers Act



Manuel L. Peralta Jr.

Last month I opened a discussion on the subject of assisting our injured letter carriers.

The specifics of my column were directed at the carriers who are assaulted/held up and what type of care is available to assist them with recovery from the traumatic injury they may have suffered.

As I write this month's column, I am attending the New Hampshire state convention and training. The training (violations of the 12/60 work-hour limit) was presented by Regional Administrative Assistant (RAA) Kenneth Janulewicz, and the briefing on Region's 14 activities was given by National Business Agent (NBA) Rick DiCecca.

The *NALC Constitution* identifies the state association's responsibilities as:

...The objects of this Association are to assist the National Association of Letter Carriers in maintaining a more perfect organization and improving the Postal Service; to organize all letter carriers within the State; and to guide and direct all activities relating to legislation within the State...

We covered the newest legislation affecting letter carriers.

The Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629) was introduced in the House of Representatives on March 13. This bill requires or authorizes certain actions related to the U.S. Postal Service. The bill requires the Department of Justice to appoint an assistant U.S. attorney in each judicial district to coordinate and supervise the investigation and prosecution of various crimes related to postal services (for example, assault on a Postal Service employee, breaking into a post office, or obstruction of mails). The bill also requires the U.S. Sentencing Commission to amend sentencing guidelines to provide that the assault or robbery of a postal employee shall be treated the same as the assault of a law enforcement officer. Additionally, the bill authorizes appropriations for the USPS to install high-security collection boxes and replace older versions of the universal mailbox key with electronic versions. There are 89 co-sponsors—74 Democrats and 15 Republicans.

Rep. Chris Pappas (D-NH) joined the delegation after lunch and spoke briefly about the issues involving letter carriers. He was very well informed and able to address our issues without notes, having been educated by the

New Hampshire NALC delegation. Each state's delegation needs to educate their congressional delegation. Rep. Pappas has signed on to this important bill.

That is what we do under the umbrella of the state association. This legislation deserves attention. Your life may depend on it, so get involved.

On a personal note, I want to take a moment to pay tribute to Brian Farris, former NALC director of city delivery from 1986 through 1993. Brian passed away in May.

Brian was the Region 1 NBA in 1979 when I hired into the Post Office. I became active with Branch 1100 toward the end of my probation and was invited to attend steward training before being appointed as a steward.

In August of 1980, I met Brian at the branch meeting following the 1980 national convention. He gave a brief update on that convention and our union responsibilities. In his talk, he came across with passion and anger.

In early 1981, I was asked to meet with him based on what he heard about me. We met for lunch and spent the rest of the afternoon talking about our union. He shared that we need to get the youth involved as early as possible. We need to make room for them at the table and to guide them, coach them and make them successful.

In 1986, Brian was elected to the office of director of city delivery and on to Washington he went.

In December of 2006, I met with Brian again, in preparation for being installed as the Region 1 NBA and we reflected on that meeting 25 years earlier. Many of us would not be where we are if not for what Brian taught us, although we might have selected a different lesson plan.

After returning from DC, I invited Brian to join my RAAs and I for dinner at my home. The photo above shows Bryant Almario, Brian Farris, me and Brian Voigt. Every time I spoke to one of them, they all answered.

Brian, thank you for all you did to contribute to the NALC and for mentoring, which you always did your way.

As an add-on to last month's column, we have been asked what should we do if we cannot find a doctor or licensed clinical psychologist to treat a psychological injury. Step 1 should be to reach out to your branch Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) representative to seek help. If necessary, then contact your NBA's office to speak with the OWCP representative to explore what they can do to assist you. While you are exploring this, check with your family physician to see whom they might recommend to treat you. Remember to read Coby Jones's column, which I referenced last month.

Keep an eye on each other and protect your co-workers.