



December 2018

Business Agent's Report

NALC Region 5

**Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays** – Mary, Larrissa, Dave, Charlie and I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and joyous Holiday Season. Try to remember on those long days in cold weather and delivering in the dark, that most of those parcels you are dropping off will be bringing a smile to someone's face. Thank you all for being part of our extended family.

**OSHA Hearings** – I've had the privilege of representing the letter carriers of Region 5 for the past week at the OSHA hearings in Des Moines, IA. These hearings have been brought about by the Service's unwillingness to seriously negotiate an abatement program. OSHA is charging that the Service has failed to comply with the requirements of Section 5(a)(1) of the Act by exposing its employees to the recognized hazard of heat stress and failing to implement feasible means of abatement that would materially reduce the hazard. In other words, the Service could have been providing water, ice, air conditioning, etc... Instead, the service has been more concerned about cost, time and making the numbers. The last of these hearings will be held in Washington DC during the month of February 2019 with the record being closed around March 15, 2019. Special kudos to all the carriers who have testified this week, some who suffered from a heat illness incident, and those carriers who observed, aided, assisted, and were willing to testify.

**Privatization** – The NALC and APWU have released a new ad to educate the public on what they can expect if the White House plans to privatize the postal service were to go forward. I urge all members to review the video, visit the <https://usmailnotforsale.org> website and sign up to join our campaign. In fact, make sure your friends and family sign up. Links to the video and to the new campaign site can be found at: <https://www.nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/keep-it-its-yours>

**NALC Health Benefit Plan** – The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program open season dates are November 12 thru December 10, 2018. The NALC Health Benefit Plan is union owned, union operated and a not-for-profit Plan. The Plan was created by letter carriers for letter carriers in 1950 and letter carriers have been in charge ever since. The Plan delivers for you because it is yours. Information regarding Plan options, brochures and rates are available through the NALC [website](#).



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**Route Inspections** – While the postal service conducted a limited amount of route inspections this past fall, we are expecting a much busier schedule this coming spring. Branch presidents should notify this office as soon as management announces that your office will be inspected. This region has trained letter carriers who are available to come to your city to conduct route inspection training for any *member* wishing to attend.

**2018 Midterms** – The NALC had numerous carriers (retirees) around this Region and around the country who worked with the AFL-CIO in support of Labor and NALC endorsed candidates who support our positions. Thanks to each of them, successful or not for their time and efforts on behalf of all letter carriers. Thanks to all members who volunteered their time in support of their candidates and lastly, to all members who voted. Democracy in action.

**Vote by Mail** – The advantages of vote by mail are numerous. It saves the states millions of dollars from establishing polling places, paying polling staff, transferring and buying polling equipment; it's safer since every vote leaves a paper trail; voters don't have to take time off work, stand in line in inclement weather or search for the polling place; voter turnout is higher. It would also benefit the Service. During the upcoming year, NALC State Chairs will be working relentlessly with the NALC legislative department, state auditors and representatives to advance Vote by Mail across the country. Please be prepared to assist them in their efforts.

Michael J. Birkett  
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