

# MICHIGAN LETTER CARRIER

Voice of the Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT CARL E BLASSINGAME, JR.

**A**fter four years, the 96<sup>th</sup> Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers Bi-Annual state convention was held at MotorCity Casino in Detroit, MI on May 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup>. It was truly a time to remember. In attendance were 236 delegates strong, with so much energy and willingness to learn. The classes held were very well attended. Leading the convention floor was the legislation class presented by MISALC Director of Education, John Serwach, and MISALC Vice President, Walt McGregory. It appeared that everyone was focused and engaged with the information. Matt Tanner, our Legislative Political Organizer (LPO), also gave a presentation on the importance of giving to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF).

The afternoon classes that were offered were also very well attended. Retirement (105 delegates), TIAREAP (177 delegates), and Discipline (163 delegates). I believe the totals speak for themselves and the need for training is vital. I believe there should be a variety of classes offered at the state convention for our members who are unable to attend other training sessions. It is an opportunity for the State Association to do our part in educating our members, a mission we are committed to.

On Monday, the first day of the convention, we welcomed a very special guest, our friend Senator Gary Peters. Senator Peters spoke to the delegation assuring us that his work is not done and that he will continue to fight for letter carriers across the nation. We presented the Senator with a plaque making him an honorary member of the Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers and a signed photo book of letter carriers supporting him through the years, a personal touch from all of us thanking him for his support. Senator Peters stayed for about an hour, speaking with the members at the convention as they approached and thanked him for his support.

I would like to thank our national resident officer, Manny Peralta, Director of Health and Safety, for his presentation on Tuesday covering the importance of legislation and safety. David Mudd, National Business Agent (Reg 6) addressed the delegates about safety in the streets while delivering mail. Brother Mudd also spoke about the monthly webinar for the KIM region once a month on the (4th) Wednesday of each month.

The 2023 Daniel L. Florkowski Activist of the Year Award **honorable mention** went to:

**Michael Neveau, Branch 4374 Utica**

and the **winner**, 2023 Daniel L. Florkowski Activist of the Year Award went to

**Bill Nelson, Branch 3126 Royal Oak.**

The 2023 Fred Herman Awards **honorable mentions** went to:

**Jacqueline McGregory, Branch 2184 Western Wayne Co,**

**Tomiko Deleon Branch 74 Saginaw,**

**Daryl Tindale, Branch 256 Mid-Michigan.**

**Brenda Waun, Branch 320 N. Oakland Co;**

*Please see PRESIDENT'S REPORT on page 2*

The winner of the 2023 Fred Herman Award was given to

Sue Langolf, Branch 654 Mt. Clemens.

Congratulations to the honorable mentioned and winners for both Awards, keep up the good work!!

Our State election resulted in a total change in our Executive Board. I want to thank the former State Officers, V/P Walter McGregory Branch 2184, Executive Board Cornell Fears Branch 1, Annette Kulek Branch 654, Paul Roznowski Branch 3126, Ronald Slone Branch 74, Deb Marriott Branch 232. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the State Association and membership.

I want to give a special thanks to Jane Grant Branch 434, States former Secretary, who gave her time day in and day out to ensure the States records were kept updated and correct. Jane will truly be missed. To the States new Officers, V/P Erik Venzke Branch 2184; Jayme Romine Branch 246 Secretary; Executive Board Trustees: Chairperson John Dick Branch 3126, Elaine Jones Branch 1, Tonya Casey Branch 56, Ron Zalewski Branch 4374, Darryl Clay Branch 2184. Congratulations to all of you.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Michigan Delegation for allowing me to represent you for two more years. I am honored and humbled for this opportunity to serve as your President once again. We have many challenges ahead of us with the 2024 election slowly approaching, it's time to begin educating our members in the upcoming days and weeks.

*Carl Blassingame,*

President



**MISALC 2025 STATE CONVENTION  
GREAT WOLF LODGE  
TRAVERSE CITY, MI  
APRIL 28TH, 2025-APRIL 29TH, 2025**

Visit the Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers at our website

**MISALC.org**

# VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## ERIK VENZKE

I would like to thank the outgoing MISALC officers for their hard work and the time they put in over the years. The 2023 MISALC state convention was an immense success and would not have been without all the current and former officers' efforts.

I would also like to thank the Michigan delegates who elected me as your Vice President of the MISALC for the 2023-2025 term. I look forward to working with all the MISALC officers to continue the progress that has been made in educating our members on the legislative initiatives affecting us as letter carriers.

MDA: Congratulations to the branches in Michigan that made the 2022 MDA Honor Roll for their branches' category size which was published in the April 2023 Postal Record.

Category 4 (700-999 members) 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Royal Oak, MI Br. 3126 \$16,801.68

Category 5 (500-699 members) 2<sup>nd</sup> Mid-Michigan, Br. 256 \$9,864.00 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Grand Rapids, MI Br. 56 \$7,000.00

Category 7 (200-349 members) 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Saginaw Br. 74 \$8,749.00

Category 9 (50-99 members) 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Midland, MI Br. 2317 \$4,590.00

With your continued participation and dedication in raising money for MDA, hopefully, one day, a cure will be found.

### OWCP and ECOMP updates:

For anyone who has ever had an OWCP claim, they know the frustrations that can come with claims approval and being able to communicate with a claims representative. Recently there have been updates to both 20 CFR 10.121 and ECOMP that make it a little more claimant friendly with an extended timeframe for submission of additional evidence to OWCP and a new process to submit inquiries in ECOMP.

Under Public Law 117-263, Congress directed OWCP to update 20 CFR 10.121, which addresses situations when evidence submitted by the claimant is deemed insufficient to meet their burden of proof and OWCP needs additional information. Previously, it required OWCP to give the claimant at least 30 days to submit the evidence needed. At Congress' direction, OWCP changed this 30-day period to 60 days.

Also, on April 19, 2023, FECA Circular No. 23-06, ECOMP Inquiry Escalation Process was issued. This new ECOMP change allows claimants to submit queries on certain specific issues through their ECOMP account by using the following new process:

- In the claimants' case dashboard under the case escalation tab claimants are currently able to select and inquire about the following issues:
  - Payment for wage loss compensation
  - Payment of a medical bill
  - Authorization of medical treatment/process
  - Authorization of medication
  - Health benefits of life insurance issues
  - Overpayment issues
- Once an inquiry is initiated, the request is directed to an appropriate staff member depending on the issue chosen and is then made part of the case file.

*please See VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT on page 4*

- A standard response time of two business days is allowed for a response.
- If no response is received within the allotted timeframe or the claimant is not satisfied with the response, the claimant may then escalate that issue to a manager for review.

The new public law and the ECOMP enhancement would not have been enacted if we did not currently have a labor and letter carrier friendly administration and Congress directing the Department of Labor (DOL). Having friends in the administration and Congress was able to be achieved in due part with your contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF). To continue to see the results of letter carrier initiatives being proposed and enacted in Congress we must continue to grow our PAC. Currently, 90% of our members do not contribute to LCPF, not because they do not want to but rather because they have never been asked. With such a small percentage of letter carriers contributing to LCPF this gives an enormous opportunity to grow our PAC; however, we must seek out and engage these members with the benefits of contributing to LCPF and ask them to contribute.

If any branch would like help through training or an event to get the word out to our fellow members about the benefits of contributing to LCPF please contact our MISALC officers or our Regional LPO, for assistance.

*Erik Venzke,*

Vice President

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## Dallas Carrier Eugene Gates, Jr. Dies on Job

The Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers is deeply saddened by the death of Eugene Gates Jr. Brother Gates, a member of Lone Star Branch 132 in Dallas, TX, collapsed and died in a customer's yard on June 20.

Gates carried the mail for 36 years and was beloved by his colleagues and customers. He was an Army veteran. Gates is survived by his wife Carla and many other family members. He was 66.

According to Branch 132 President Kimetra Lewis, Gates had received discipline on May 2nd for a "stationary event" and alleged "unacceptable performance — expanding street time". Lewis added that she received a message from concerned employees at Oak Lawn station on the scanner which read "BEAT THE HEAT!!! NO STATIONARY EVENTS; KEEP IT MOVING!"

Brothers and sisters do not risk your lives in the Michigan heat. The contract is clear that reasonable comfort stops will not be denied. Do not be intimidated from taking a comfort stop to cool down during the extreme summer heat and humidity in Michigan.

There is no such thing in our contract or our handbooks and manuals as a "stationary event". If you are questioned regarding a so called "stationary event" immediately request a union steward. You are under no obligation to respond until which time as you have the opportunity to confer with your steward. If questioned what you were doing the answer is always simple, unless you can recall you were on break or lunch —you were working. The Joint Statement is clear—  
***"...there is no excuse for and will be no tolerance of harassment, intimidation, threats, or bullying by anyone."***

The treatment endured by Brother Gates is unacceptable and will not be tolerated here in Michigan. If you are being harassed or bullied by management contact your shop steward to initiate a grievance.

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

## JAYME ROMINE

**This will serve as the official annual report of the Michigan State Association.**

Based on December 2022 information received from the National NALC Secretary-Treasurer Membership Department.

The MISALC had a total of 7,407 active members, 2,893 retired members, 1,034 lifetime members, 4 military, for a total of 11,338 members.

Michigan had one merger in November 2022, Branch 1056, Mt. Pleasant merged with Branch 2317, Midland.

Michigan had two mergers in 2023, Branch 794, Cadillac merged with Branch 56, Grand Rapids.

Branch 49, Manistee merged with Branch 618, Traverse City.

*Jayne Romine,*

Secretary, MISALC

**B**rothers and Sisters;  
I would like to show my gratitude to the delegates who attended the 96th MISALC state convention at Motor City for this opportunity to represent as the recording secretary for the State Association. It is an honor to have been selected to step into this role and to have been mentored by the most selfless brothers and sisters active in our union today. With that, I would also like to thank the officers and executive board who served for the Michigan State Association next to me during the previous term. Throughout the immense pressure to successfully fill these large shoes left by my predecessor, Jane Grant, I also feel immense inspiration and faith with her guidance through our transition.

At the state convention, I joined Kyle Inosencio for the instruction of a TIAREAP class. As a Michigan district 2 REAT, I enjoyed listening to the concerns and curiosities of the delegates surrounding the route adjustment process and answering all their questions. Route preservation seems to be of the most common concerns. And with the obvious decline in mail volumes, one of the hardest to attain. Still, after 2-4 city routes are absorbed within a zone, territory assignments and job titles may be negatively affected, but our full-time letter carriers do not drop in pay step nor in guaranteed hours. Even if you're living under a rock, you have heard the results of the rural craft route adjustments. We need to keep this in our perspective. We need to acknowledge the flaws within the rural craft's joint process and celebrate the success the leaders of our union have had in ours.

Change in our future is inevitable. The United States Postal Service needs to change to stay relevant and competitive in the consumer market. Our contract, and negotiations of, are our security throughout the change. The laws which govern the aspects of our contract are our security throughout the change. No better way to protect these securities than to vote and to donate to our letter carrier political fund.

With Solidarity,

*Jayne Romine*

## TREASURER'S REPORT

### CATHERINE TONDREAU

I would like to thank all the delegates that were at the 2023 state convention at Motor City Casino and Resort for their support in re-electing me to another term as your Treasurer of the State Association.

Speaking of voting, while I know the presidential election is not until next year, campaigning has already started on both sides. We know we want to elect letter carrier friendly candidates, but we also need to thoroughly research these candidates to make sure they will vote for other issues that are also important to us, women rights, education, environmental issues, health care, etc.

While everyone has their own view on a woman's right to choose, think if they take this away what else can they take away? The right to vote, the right to bear arms? Make sure your candidate is well informed and they are not someone who has been in office for several terms, being a career politician, out of touch with what real life is like for their constituents. They have their retirement plan and health care coverage in place, but do they really care about yours?

Let's do what is right for this country and vote in someone who will look out for the American public and not their own self interests. We have many to choose from. Again, as it gets closer to election day make sure you check out the candidate's website to see their views on the issues that are important to you, as a parent, a sibling, a letter carrier and simply a concerned citizen.

On another note, think seriously about giving to the letter carrier political fund, or increasing your current contribution. In Solidarity,

*Catherine Tondreau,*

Treasurer



#### Need assistance signing up branch members for the Letter Carrier Political Fund?

Let us help

MISALC Officer's are eagerly awaiting an invitation to your General Membership Meeting to help.

Contact President Blassingame at 734-999-8080 or MISALC.org **See you soon!**

#### 3 Ways to give to the LCPF

As a member of the NALC, there are several easy ways to give to the Letter Carrier Political Fund:

- 1) Payroll deduction: Contribute automatically, using PostalEASE (either online or by phone) to set up an allotment deduction from your USPS paycheck.
- 2) Direct bank withdrawal: You can authorize the fund to withdraw a monthly electronic contribution directly from your personal checking account.
- 3) Annuity deduction: Retired letter carriers can elect to give monthly via an automatic deduction from your monthly annuity.

NALC.org or see your local union leadership!

# REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF RETIREES

## MIKE SHERIDAN

HR 82 / S 597

**T**his important piece of legislation needs our attention in this Congress. HR 82 would eliminate the WEP (Windfall Elimination Provision) and the GPO (Government Pension Offset) that punishes any of our CSRS retirees who also qualify for Social Security. It denies a Social Security benefit to survivors who happen to have a CSRS retirement. These people have paid their “dues” into Social Security and are only “punished” because we are considered double dippers taking a civil service benefit as well as a Social Security benefit. It is time to stop this egregious error foisted on us dating back to 1983. The number of retirees affected by this error are dwindling simply due to the fact that post 1984 there have been no civil service carriers since all carriers since then have been enrolled in the FERS (Federal Employees Retirement System) system which qualifies them for their full Social Security benefit.

We currently have six Michigan representatives on board as cosponsors. They are Stevens (D-11<sup>th</sup>), Slotkin (D-7<sup>th</sup>), Taib (D-12<sup>th</sup>), Dingell (D-6<sup>th</sup>), Scholten (D-3<sup>rd</sup>), and Shri (D-13<sup>th</sup>). We need to reach out to all other congressional reps to seek their cosponsorship. You can easily affect this by going to the legislative action center at [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) and send an email or phone call to your rep. There are currently (Jun 1<sup>st</sup>) 277 cosponsors in the House and 44 cosponsors in the Senate. If you are in my district (10<sup>th</sup>) you should call our new representative John James at 202-225-4961 and ask for his support for this important legislation. We need all the help and encouragement we can muster to get this bill to the floor for action.

Welcome New Board members

Our state board has an entire new group of trustees as well as a new secretary and new Vice President. We welcome all of you to our board and look forward to busying our group with political involvement and a more robust foray into our goal of advocating for legislation that will improve the lives and retirement of letter carriers. We need to “activate” our members to join the fight!!

*Mike Sheridan,*

Director of Retired Members

If you have questions about having a MDA Fundraiser or would like to list your event on the MISALC website contact the MISALC at [MISALC15@gmail.com](mailto:MISALC15@gmail.com)

Check out MDA Camp pictured on our website [MISALC.ORG](http://MISALC.ORG)



Visit the Michigan State Association of Letter Carriers at our website

**[MISALC.org](http://MISALC.org)**

*Editor's Note: The following article has been reprinted from the June 2023 Postal Record & came about as a direct result of our state convention—we hope you'll read it. Special Thanks to Morgan Harrington of Branch 246 Southwest Michigan for showing the courage to stand up.*

## Director of Safety and Health

# Customers can be our greatest safety risk



**Manuel L.  
Peralta Jr.**

**E**very once in a while, during conversations held with letter carriers while traveling throughout the country on assignments for the NALC, I find myself inviting those around me to share their concern or idea in written form, so that I may incorporate it in my column.

During my recent attendance at the Michigan state convention, such a conversation resulted in

the following contribution from Morgan Harrington of Branch 246, Kalamazoo, MI. She explained her thought on writing the following column this way:

I have typed up an article about the dangers women face while at work. I tried to stay away from words that may be upsetting to some readers while still making the point how some coworkers, management and customers put women at a greater risk while delivering and how we can stand together to protect each other from this. I hope you like it, and I hope it empowers other offices to stand up against harassment in the workplace and out on the street. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this matter.

*The following column was written by her.*

**E**ach day, when we show up to work, we are required to do the same job. We are required to lift 70 pounds, we must be able to carry a satchel of 35

pounds, we are required to be able to case at 18 and eight, but when it comes to our safety, are we being treated as equals? In the *EL-801 Handbook: Supervisor's Guide to Safety*, it states that "Supervisors or managers having primary responsibility for the wellbeing of employees must fully accept this principle."

When a letter carrier is bit by a dog, mail delivery is often suspended. The entire area may even become mounted to keep the carriers safe in the future. There are safety talks and guidelines and protective equipment we are all given, all the time, to ensure we are safe from dogs on our routes. All levels of management study how to keep employees safe from dangerous chemicals, animals, slip trips and falls, but what are they doing when a letter carrier reports a customer who is infatuated with them?

As men and women, we face different dangers when we are doing our jobs. As a City Carrier Assistant Academy instructor and an on-the-job instructor, I train all the new hires about the different dangers they may face while delivering the mail. Our men may face hostility from a husband who feels they're being too nice to their wife, and they believe they're flirting, but women often become the best part of some men's day. They watch for them to arrive, follow them, make unwanted advances, and just in general, overstep the boundaries of the carrier. Through my years with the Postal Service, I have spoken to many women on the dangerous situations they have been in while at work. Through these discussions I have found that an alarmingly high rate of our female co-workers are being harassed, threatened, stalked,

or even assaulted while just trying to make a living. I, myself, am no exception to this problem.

**"I have found that an alarmingly high rate of our female co-workers are being harassed, threatened, stalked, or even assaulted while just trying to make a living."**

In my nine-year career, I have been sexually harassed by a postmaster; threatened to be assaulted by a drunk man just so he could get arrested to be with his son; and a man, who first asked for directions, attempted to reach down my shirt and assault me and was arrested less than four hours later for sexually assaulting a woman, just two blocks away from my encounter, in broad daylight. I do not tell you this to invoke some kind of sympathy, but to bring awareness to a problem rarely spoken of and even more rarely prevented or handled within the post office.

When I first reported a postmaster sexually harassing me at work to my own female postmaster, she asked me for a statement and sent it to our manager of post office operations, who was also a female. I later received a call stating that, "It is just words, I don't know what the hell you're afraid of. Get back in there and do your job."

Later, after a discussion with the Office of the Inspector General, I found out there were more than 40 complaints of sexual harassment against that postmaster. I testified in federal court on behalf of the Postal Service to have this man removed from his position and from USPS. Only six

*(continued on next page)*

## Customers can be our greatest safety risk (continued)

*(continued from previous page)*

other women felt comfortable enough to testify. He did lose his job, but why did it take 40 complaints?

The worst part was that the complaints were only found while he was being investigated about something else. Our complaints weren't their focus, they were just a smaller part of the "bigger" case. With all that USPS preaches to us about being safe and that "safety depends on me," why are they not protecting us from this very real danger?

**"When this occurs to you or a co-worker, please use a PS Form 1767, Report of Unsafe Working Conditions or Practice, to report the customer and/or co-worker (management included). Let your steward know and provide them with statements about what occurred. If you feel you're in immediate danger, call 911 and remove yourself from the location or situation and then report to your supervisor and union steward."**

Each year in the United States, more than 450,000 women are sexually assaulted and 81 percent of women report to have been sexually harassed or assaulted while at work. Those are incredibly high rates. The USPS reports 13,000 injuries (38 percent) due to mail delivery. The chances that a female co-worker is or has been harassed or assaulted while at work is astronomically higher than our injury claims, yet injuries are what we are constantly trained to prevent. We must be vigilant, proactive and advocate for our safety in all aspects of our job: against the customer who is making us uncomfortable, the person who won't take "no" for an answer, the person who is making unwanted advances, and management that doesn't take it seriously.

When this happens to you or a co-worker, please use a PS Form 1767, Report of Unsafe Working Conditions or Practice, to report the customer and/or co-worker (management included). Let your steward know and

provide them with statements about what occurred. If you feel you're in immediate danger, call 911 and remove yourself from the location or situation and then report to your supervisor and union steward.

These dangers are very real. If you doubt it has happened in your office, just ask any of your female co-workers if they have ever experienced a potentially dangerous customer. I have yet to find one who can tell me they haven't in some way been followed, had to ward off unwanted advances, had to skip delivery to a location or pass off loops due to a customer who makes them uncomfortable or afraid for their safety. Male or female, this could happen to you. We must stand together to stop the harassment of our co-workers, by management or our customers.

The United States Postal Service has very strict policies on harassment, and we need to report all possible harassment, whether by a co-worker, management or customer. In my case, it was often my male co-workers and my wonderful customers who protected me from the harassment I encountered, not my management team. I wish I had known back then what I do now. Management has an obligation to protect us from all the dangers we encounter each day. Those aren't just words. The customer isn't "just weird." And you do *not* have to put yourself at risk when you feel their comments, advances or actions are putting you at potential risk of physical or emotional harm.

**Brothers and sisters, as your director of safety and health, I ask you to look out for one another, step up to protect each other, report misconduct, harassment and potentially dangerous individuals and situations. We must take this seriously. We must stand together and advocate for safer working conditions, both in the office and out on the street. Take care of each other.**

If you or someone in your office has been a victim of harassment and needs someone to talk to, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you. Don't suffer and try to get through this on your own. Call 1-800-EAP-4-U or visit [EAP4you.com](http://EAP4you.com) for more information.

In January of 1984, while at the beginning of my USPS and NALC career, my branch suffered the loss of letter carrier Ida Jean Haxton. Haxton, a 30-year-old mother of two, lost her life at the hands of a customer. The station at which she worked was renamed in her memory.

The concerns expressed by Morgan are real and I thank her for sharing them with us.

Keep an eye on each other.

# REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

## JOHN SERWACH

**T**here was disappointment as the deadline for contract negotiations between the NALC and the Postal Service passed without resolution. There is now a 60 day mediation period after which if no resolution is reached we will head to arbitration. Arbitration would most likely lead to a contract award in early 2024.

I'd like to take a minute and thank everyone who traveled to our state convention and the delegates who supported the good work of this organization. Thank you for the faith you have shown in me and our newly elected and returning officers. Our 2025 convention will be in **Traverse City** and will mark the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first MISALC convention.

At our convention this year we discussed NALC's numerous successes such as finally passing Postal Reform and the end to the dreaded "pre-funding mandate" that held back our last several contracts. We also discussed the problems that potentially lay ahead.

Most of you have no doubt noticed rising interest rates and a decline in parcel volumes. While the economy is still strong consumers have been on a bit of a spending binge that has cooled significantly. It's safe to say that there are some storm clouds on the horizon. At Convention we discussed how certain members of Congress and various think-tanks might start to criticize Postal Reform if the Postal Service faltered. While there is no doubt that there is trouble ahead, the best time to prepare is while times are still good. The Letter Carrier Political Fund is really "job insurance" and your best way to prepare. Your small donation can help keep us off the congressional radar. Remember, almost anything we negotiate could be taken away by Congress.

As predicted the right wing pundits and "think tanks" have already began to refer to last year's Postal Reform bill as a "bailout". *The Hill* ran a piece on May 9<sup>th</sup> from Paul Steidler of the Lexington Institute entitled ***The Imploding US Postal Service bailout !*** Steidler suggests that the Postal Service will "run out of cash" in about "three years or so".

Friends, this is not the kind of language that will help us at the bargaining table or in the halls of Congress. Once again, I'm asking you, if you haven't signed up for our Political Fund please do so today. If you're reading this odds are you already have and I thank you. If you know someone who's interested or who wants to do more to ensure their future please give us their name and contact information. It's really as simple as that- give us the info and leave the calling and talking to us. The time to prepare is now. Hope to hear from you soon.

*John Serwach,*

Director of Education

### Apply for the 2024 NALC Leadership Academy

NALC is now accepting applications for the 2024 Leadership Academy, which is open to all active NALC members. The Leadership Academy consists of three week-long sessions held over a five-month period at the Maritime Institute near Baltimore, MD. Go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) for more information.

Applications will be accepted until Friday, September 15, 2023.

## REPORTS FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE BOARD

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### JOHN DICK

**T**he imposing figure sits in a chair, on a corner, in the heart of Downtown Detroit. Tens of thousands walk past him every year. He never moves and the passing throngs seldom notice the still giant. The inscription at the bottom of his chair says it all: Hazen Pingree “Idol of the People.”

At the corner of Woodward Avenue and Adams Street, Grand Circus Park, the monument looms at least twenty feet into the Detroit sky. The mayor of Detroit from 1889 till 1896, his story should be told in every school and every Union Hall in Michigan. All too often, we disregard the stories of those who came before us. Comerica Park is right across the street. Bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues surround this landmark. Yet, every day, us folks don't see the forest through the trees. History lays right beneath your nose. All you have to do is smell it.

Hazen Pingree was the typical capitalist industrialist of his times. He owned the largest shoe store in Detroit, employing upwards of 500 workers. He had a pew at the finest church in Detroit. He was a proud Republican. And one day, he had an awakening, an epiphany. He was the first Detroit politician to warn the people of the great danger threatened by powerful corporations.

In 1891, the Great Streetcar Strike occurred. The streetcar workers formed the “Employees Association” and struck for a 10-hour workday and equal pay for female workers. They also struck for lower fares for customers on the horse-drawn trolleys, looking out for fellow workers’ interests. “Ol’ Ping” sided with the workers and supported the strike, much to the chagrin of his fellow capitalists. He lost his pew at church. His fellow Republicans turned against him. But yet, the workers and citizens of Detroit adored him. He went on to win reelection as Mayor of Detroit three times, and even became Governor of the State of Michigan in 1897.

Hazen Pingree instituted many programs for the betterment of the working class of Detroit, such as advocating for public ownership of the newly developing utilities, improvement of public roads, and the people’s public use for magnificent Belle Isle. “Potato Ping” pushed for any vacant lands to be used for public farming as the city went through a Great Recession in the 1890’s. A Republican who truly cared for the common man and the daily struggles of workin’ folk.

Looking Backward, Moving Forward. That is the message of learning history. I remember the times when Republican governors and politicians would attend and speak at Detroit’s Labor Day Parade. I never will stop believing that we can get to that place again. Through the NALC’s Letter Carrier Political Fund, we give to not only Democrats, but to sensible Republicans and Independents who share the vision of Hazen Pingree. If you are currently donating, thank you from the bottom of my heart. If you are not yet donating, please seriously consider.

Thank you to the delegates of this year’s MISALC Convention for electing me as Chairperson of the Executive Board. I will be diligent and attentive to my duties to serve the membership of this great organization. It is an honor to serve you.

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### TONYA CASEY

**L**et’s talk FMLA, The Family Medical Leave Act, if an employee is eligible, he or she can take up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period for a serious health condition, the expansion of one’s family and up to 26 weeks for various military situations. This leave guarantees the Post Office must not cancel your health care insurance as long as you continue making your normal employee contributions. The Post Office also must hold your current job position, as long as you return to work before you exhaust your FMLA leave. This leave can be used intermittently or as a block of time; determined by your doctor. The Post Office cannot discipline you for using FMLA or use your absence negatively toward any type of promotion.

*...continued on page 12*

With that in mind here are 10 things an employee should NOT do:

1. Do not turn your completed FMLA paperwork into the supervisor; your medical condition is none of their business; fax or mail it in.
2. Do not allow your supervisor to pressure you into working.
3. Don't lie about your condition to get FMLA, that's fraud and you can be disciplined for it.
4. When taking intermittent leave, be mindful of your parameters. If you are allowed to be absent 1-3 days a month don't take 4-5 days. If you need more time update your paperwork.
5. Don't argue with management if they ask you to update your paperwork. Most of the time management is requesting information into your parameters or return date; that's allowed.
6. If you have a lifelong medical condition, do not let your paperwork laps. Keep it updated, this will ensure you are protected from the unexpected.
7. If you have a second job, do not take FMLA to go it. And if your second job is similar to your job at the Post Office be conscientious, so it doesn't compromise the reason(s) you are taking FMLA, at the Post Office.
8. If you get injured on the job, don't call in with your FMLA. File an OWCP (Office of Workers' Compensation Programs) claim, this is another benefit any employee injured on the job qualifies for.
9. Return to work when paperwork states, if your condition exceeds the date on your paperwork; let management know, with the proper paperwork supporting that.
10. **Please, do not post pictures of yourself on social media doing activities that could bring into question the validity of your FMLA claim.**

When using FMLA protection it is your responsibility to make sure you are complying with all the requirements of the leave. FMLA is a tool designed to help you when you need time off from work to heal and recover from a serious medical condition for yourself or a loved one. Please don't make any of these mistakes listed above a reason for management to discipline you. Stay safe and informed.

Tonya Casey

## ELAINE JONES

**G**reetings sisters and brothers. I'd like to start out with a big THANK YOU!!!!, for your confidence in allowing me to represent you in this association.

Well, what most of us have been waiting for is now here. Summer. With summer comes some very serious safety hazards for letter carriers.

### Heat:

We all look forward to the heat after a very cold winter, (where we must wear so many clothes). Letter carriers are in the heat at the time of day of the hottest temperatures. We should all practice safety in the heat. I know we all want to deliver the mail diligently, so some of us fail to drink plenty of fluids, make comfort stop to cool down, and to dress cool. Prolonged periods of excessive heat cause our body temperature to escalate to a level dangerously enough to cause heat stroke, sunburn, and heat exhaustion. Check the weather for the day and prepare accordingly. Please be cautious in the heat. We all want to go home the same way we came to work: Hydrated, rested and cooled off.

...continued on page 13

MANAGEMENT SENDS OUT  
SCANNER MESSAGES TO TAKE  
"AUTHORIZED" BREAKS.

YOU DO NOT NEED  
AUTHORIZATION TO TAKE  
HEATING/COOLING BREAK OR  
COMFORT STOPS.

SAFETY IS YOUR CALL.

### Dogs:

It's summertime and everyone wants to walk their dogs or let them sit on the porch with the family. Sure, the owner will tell you they will not bite. What's so amazing is that I can't remember ever seeing a dog that will not bite. We must be mindful of dogs that see you as a threat to their environment. Brothers and sisters let us look out for each other, by taking precautions to let each other know where dogs are known to be on our routes. Dog lovers please be reminded that your dog loves you and not everyone else. We should always be aware of our surroundings, as stray dogs are plentiful in some neighborhoods. Be cautious. Carry your satchel, dog spray, dog horns, and whatever else you need to protect yourself.

### People:

I don't want to say all people are issues or problems in the summer. I'm trying to say that we encounter contact with more people in the summer than winter. We have children out of school, chasing us down, running in front of our trucks, leaving toys in walkways, and opening doors and letting the dog out (while they trying to meet you for the mail). Let's stay alert and prepare to stay safe.

These are just a few possible safety hazards mentioned. We have a lot of new carriers. This may be their first summer, so let's help educate them so we all can stay safe. Report all safety hazards so we can be safe on our routes.

## RON ZALEWSKI

We have all been asked a question that makes us think far beyond the immediate answer. Recently, I had a union friend ask me how they could get more involved. The genesis of the question was the election at the state convention where six of the eleven officers were new to the board and a seventh moved from board member to secretary. That colleague saw that more than half of the elected board had stepped up to take on a new role and they wondered if that might be in their future someday. My initial response was that of course there would always be a new challenge to accept for anyone looking for one. In the weeks since the convention, I've reflected on my answer and realized that there really was a path to follow – go to the places and do the things. I think it starts with gatherings of NALC members. Beyond the first step (your branch meeting) you should be looking for opportunities to surround yourself with other NALC members. Places like state or national conventions, KIM training, or SOS are the obvious ones. Be sociable. Meet new people. Find someone who has more experience than you and ask them to help you. Offer to help someone who needs it. People in the corporate world would call this networking. I like to think of it as hanging out with my friends.

Look for a place to volunteer that fits your interests and the needs of the union. You'll find opportunities at your branch but you can also help at a larger level. I'll bet that your branch needs a LCPF coordinator or an assistant coordinator. That's a chance to do a thing that'll have a positive impact on all of us. I spent a shift working the LCPF booth at the Chicago convention. I had a ball, supported a cause I believe in, met some fellow LCPF supporters, and got to help an old friend. There's a chance to help at every event. Take advantage of them.

Is your branch affiliated with your local AFL-CIO CLC? Does your branch have all their delegate positions filled? What about alternate delegates? Participating with the AFL-CIO is a great way to learn about local and state politics, a topic that we aren't as focused on but heavily impacts our lives. It is also a way to provide information to your fellow branch members. You'll hear about issues important to other unions in your area and can bring that information to your members at your branch meeting or by writing an article for your branch newsletter.

That's another place that you can get involved – your branch newsletter. I don't know of a single branch that publishes a newsletter that doesn't welcome content from all their membership. Write about something that you think others will be interested in reading or that they may have missed. Become a regular guest contributor. Heck, you might find that your coworkers are looking forward to see what topic you have tackled in the next issue.

The best news in all of this is that regardless of whether you end up in an elected position beyond your branch, by the time you choose to wind down your union career you will have done a bunch of things that were rewarding, fun, and important. You will have met friends who you value every time you see them. You might even find yourself on a path that was beyond your imagination when you started out with the NALC. If you would have asked me at the end of my first state convention, 22 years ago, if I thought I'd be writing for the MISALC newsletter as a member of the executive board, well, I wouldn't have thought it possible. Go to the places and do the things, and follow your path. Maybe you'll find a surprise or two along the way as well.

## DARRELL CLAY

Greetings all,

I'd like to thank you all for electing me to the position of Executive Board Member.

I have been a letter carrier since 1985. I have served as a CCA Academy Instructor, as a member on several joint route adjustment teams, Sargent at arms of my branch and currently I'm Vice President of my Branch, Branch 2184, Western Wayne County. Thanks for the opportunity to serve you, the members of the MISALC.

### VOTING- WE HAVE TO DO IT

There is nothing more sacred and patriotic a citizen of America can do than vote. All of us have the right to vote and should exercise that right. Never think your vote doesn't count.

We can vote at 18 years of age. Let's get our youth registered and active in this privilege.

You can register online by going to [MVIC.SOS.STATE.MI.US/REGISTERVOTER](http://MVIC.SOS.STATE.MI.US/REGISTERVOTER) or searching "register to vote in Michigan".

Absentee ballots are also available for all who choose to utilize this process. Remember, you can register to vote on line up to 15 days before an election. If less than 14 days left before election, you must register to vote in person at your local City Clerk's office.

Here are a few USPS regulations as found in the Employee Labor Relations manual (ELM).

*Sections 519.321 through 519.325*

### **519.32 Voting or Registering to Vote**

#### **519.321 Policy**

Employees are encouraged to exercise their voting rights. So far as is practicable without seriously interfering with service, postal employees, excluding casual and temporary employees, who desire to vote or register in any election or in any referendum on a civic matter in their community are excused for a reasonable time for that purpose on a day they are scheduled to work. Casual and temporary workers are encouraged to vote but are not eligible for administrative leave for this purpose.

#### **519.322 Administrative Determination**

Postal officials in charge of installations obtain necessary information concerning the hours during which the polls are open in the political subdivisions in which their employees reside. They then make an administrative determination regarding the amount of excused absence necessary (and limits in accordance with 519.323). Employees are notified of this determination and of the procedures to be followed in obtaining advance approval for the absence.

#### **519.323 Voting**

The following provisions concern time allowed for voting:

- a. **Three-Hour Rule.** As a general rule, if the polls are not open at least 3 hours either before or after an employee's scheduled hours of work, the employees may be excused for the length of time that permits them to report for work 3 hours after the polls open or to leave work 3 hours before the polls close, whichever requires the lesser amount of time off.
- b. **Exception to Three-Hour Rule.** Under exceptional circumstances, if the general rule in 519.323a does not permit sufficient time, an employee may be excused for the additional time needed to vote. However, time off must not exceed a full day.
- c. **Charge to Annual Leave or LWOP.** If an employee's voting place is beyond normal commuting distance and if voting by absentee ballot is not permitted, employees may be granted sufficient time off to be able to make the trip to the voting place to cast their ballots. When more than 1 day is required to make the trip to the voting place, postal officials observe a liberal policy in granting necessary time off for this purpose. Time off in excess of 1 day is charged to annual leave or, if annual leave is exhausted or the employee so requests, it is charged to LWOP.

#### **519.324 Registration**

If the employee votes in a jurisdiction that requires registration in person, time off to register is granted on substantially the same basis as for voting, except that no time is granted if registration can be accomplished on a non-workday and the place of registration is within a (reasonable) 1 day, round trip travel distance of the employee's place of residence.

#### **519.325 Restrictions**

An employee is not allowed administrative leave for voting or registration during a period of absence on sick leave, annual leave, or LWOP pay.

# WORD SEARCH



Many Americans benefit from being in a labor union. In the puzzle, find and circle the **bold** words below as you learn about unions.



When people who **WORK** together want to improve their **JOBS**, they form a **UNION**.

With a union, they have a **VOICE** on the job so they can talk to their boss and get a **CONTRACT** — maybe one that includes time off for **VACATION**.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | L | M | B | C | V | Q | W |
| E | V | R | J | O | B | S | Y |
| W | O | R | K | N | U | I | O |
| P | I | A | B | T | D | F | U |
| G | C | H | O | R | K | L | N |
| Z | E | X | L | A | V | B | I |
| N | M | P | D | C | T | R | O |
| V | A | C | A | T | I | O | N |

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