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BRANCH 111 N.A.L.C.  
"THE WASATCH BRANCH"

# Pavement Pounder

Midvale - Millcreek - Murray - Northwest - Orem - Sandy - South Salt Lake - Sugarhouse - Tooele - West Jordan - West Valley

July 2022

Publication 2022.7

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

## Nominations for State Convention



Joe Rivera, Branch 111 Retiree and Viet Nam Veteran, is in need of an affordable repair to the main electrical line coming in to his house. The line coming into his house is not to code, and the city won't replace his meter without some upgrades. Please contact Michael Wahlquist at the Union Hall if you know someone who would be able to help Joe with this. Thank you!

## **The President's Report**

# **Throwing Away Mail**

**Right now we have the worst staffing situation I have ever seen at the United States Postal Service. Much of this has to do with the labor shortage in general, but it also has to do with inflation and starting wages, the former being too high, and the latter being too low. The Union is not giving the USPS a pass on staffing... they currently have the ability to hire new Carriers as PTFs anywhere they want, which is higher wages and better benefits, but as of now they have declined to do so in Utah. It should be noted that the decision to do so would be at a national level, not a local level, so blaming your Supervisor, Station Manager, or Postmaster won't accomplish anything.**

**As a result of the absolute dismal staffing, we have routes that are not being delivered on a regular basis, and long hours at work including mandatory overtime for Letter Carriers who are not medically restricted. It is an ugly situation, and while there are glimmers of hope on the horizon, peak season will be difficult to say the least.**

**All of this leads me to a topic that will not affect the vast majority of Letter Carriers, but it is a topic that has come up repeatedly and more frequently as of late: Throwing away deliverable mail. And as I go through this, you might notice a few practices that you have seen fellow Letter Carriers engage in that should be immediately stopped, especially since any incident of throwing away deliverable mail is potentially a removable offense.**

**In my twenty plus years of Union representation, I have seen way too many incidents of throwing away mail, improper disposition of mail, and improper delay of mail. For this article, I will just deal with mostly with throwing away mail, but the other two infractions may be treated with equal severity. I have seen removals for Letter Carriers who threw mail away into dumpsters, threw mail into trash receptacles, placed mail into trash bags and left it outside, stashed mail at vacant properties, or deposited mail into UBBM containers or recycling bins at their duty station. All of the aforementioned may be considered throwing away mail if the mail is deliverable or is supposed to be dealt with in a different manner by regulation.**

**Recently our Branch dealt with yet another situation in which a Letter Carrier threw bulk mail into a dumpster. The reason given for this action was that it was a heavy day and the Carrier felt it was too difficult to deliver the advertisements and felt pressured to be done faster. This is a common theme when it comes to throwing away mail. However, less obvious situations can also lead to similar outcomes. We also recently had a scenario where deliverable mail was found in a route's UBBM tub. While mistakes happen, and occasionally a piece of**

deliverable (or forwardable) mail will end up in the UBBM, when a large amount winds up in there it may be considered throwing away mail. The same can be said for a large amount of “extra” Advos or circulars that end up in the UBBM or recycle bin.

In the past I have heard Carriers attempt to excuse this kind of behavior with explanations of being under “too much pressure”, or that “other Carriers told me to do it”. I once had a Carrier tell me that he put mail in a trash bag and left it in a parking garage because he was late for a religious function. There have even been times when Carriers have thrown away “bulk” mail because they have “always done so”, or they were “taught to do it that way”, or because their “patrons want them to” (Throwing advertisements into the trash can of a mail room is never acceptable). None of these excuses will work, in fact it is the mailers that have paid to have the mail delivered, not the recipients, and while recipients may refuse delivery, they need to do so in writing (on each piece of mail) to comply with regulations. I once had a patron who was refusing the vast majority of his mail. One day he told me how happy he was that all his bulk mail was being sent back to the mailers after he had refused it. I informed him that when he refused bulk mail, it simply went into the UBBM and was destroyed, that it could not be returned to the mailer because it did not have the requisite return postage attached. So he started paying the postage to have it all returned to the mailers. After a couple of weeks, when he realized how much he was paying to have all his bulk mail returned to the senders, he stopped the practice and just went back to refusing it.

The rules that are usually cited in removals for throwing away mail are:

*ELM 665.21 Incomplete Mail Disposition. It is a criminal act for anyone who has taken charge of any mail to quit voluntarily or desert the mail before making proper disposition of the mail according to 18 U.S.C. 1700.*

*M-41 112.31 Protect all mail, money, and equipment entrusted to your care.*

*M-41 112.32 Return all mail, money, and equipment to the Post Office at the end of the workday.*

There are many more contractual cites that say pretty much the same thing, so I will leave it there. The bottom line is that Letter Carriers need to make sure that the mail they are entrusted with is delivered or processed appropriately and not discarded or thrown away improperly.

The most important thing to remember is that we get paid by the hour to do the job properly. You cannot be successfully disciplined for not making management’s “times”, nor can you be held to some arbitrary speed for casing or delivering mail. Make sure you are taking the time necessary to do the job right. If you have a question about discarding mail (or curtailing mail), ask your supervisor for instructions. If those instruction seem improper, then talk about

**them with your Shop Steward. I encourage all Letter Carriers to protect yourselves at all times by communicating with your supervisors and Shop Stewards as to what you are supposed to be doing with the mail.**

**It is hot, please continue to be safe!**

**Michael Wahlquist – President  
Branch 111, NALC**

## NALC HEALTH BENEFIT

Jim Kerekes

If you have received the July 2022 National Letter Carriers Postal Record, our union National Magazine, don't throw it away. You should keep it.

The passed Postal Service Reform Act (H.R. 3076 ) which was signed into law will take affect Jan. 1, 2025. Though that is just under three years, there is important content, dates and time lines. You need to review those things frequently. I suggest check all future Postal Records for further information. You can also check NALC app., and /or website plus the Health Plan Website.

I will be trying to share this information as time goes on, by way of union meetings and the Pavement Pounder. The health coverage year of 2023 will not be affected by this legislation. 2023 health coverage information will be available in mid or end of October 2022. Open season will be usual. Nov – Dec. 2022. ( 4 week time period- dates not known yet ).

So in the current July 2022 Postal Record page 42, Dan Toth (Director of Retired Members ) ,wrote an article about Postal Reform ( H.R. 3076 ), and Medicare Integration. You should keep it and read it and review it “ from time to time” over the next few years.

Many questions have been asked about it in the past. Now that it is a law, there have been many more questions.

To start you out to learn about this change to take place Jan.1,2025, I am going to print here his words from page 42 from his article. It is the second paragraph starting with the second sentence. Quote, “ The PSRA will restructure the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) program to create postal-only versions to account for the integration of Medicare. All the major plans now available to participants – Blue Cross Blue Shield, NALCHBP, Kaiser, etc.- would continue to be offered to postal employees and retirees as a postal-only version of their FEHB plans within FEHB. This will allow these postal-only plans to account for the coordination of benefits provided through Medicare and increase the efficiency of such a system.”

After reading his words, I want you to ponder this part of his words and call me and share with me your thoughts as to what you think a postal-only version might contain. May want to share your input with the health plan directors and other national officers. More to come as I learn more. Thanks for all that all of you do. No matter who you are.

# There Are Still Options

Just when it seemed COVID-19 was starting to lighten up, it came back with a flurry of cases in Branch 111. The majority of the MOUs that we had signed during the pandemic expired several weeks ago, leaving carriers confused about their options when they contract COVID-19. Know there are still options to protect you if you test positive.

If you test positive for COVID-19, PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR STEWARD OR CALL THE UNION HALL.

OWCP is still an option to get you paid for the time you are out with COVID-19

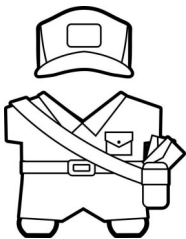
There is a process to get this done and, if done correctly, nearly all of the cases are being approved.

Do not blindly follow the instructions given to you by your supervisor. In so many cases supervisors are giving bad instructions such as allowing carriers to return too soon, requiring them to use their own leave, and possibly leaving them unprotected if future complications arise from COVID -19. Protect yourself by asking your steward for advice if you test positive. If reaching your steward is not possible, call me.

The process may seem like a pain but it really is simple. If you test positive for COVID-19 with a “at home test” let your supervisor know you are positive and go get a test from a health care provider. Then call your steward, in most cases you will be referred to our OWCP person, Bob Jewell. He will help you register on the Ecomp website (we should ALL be registered anyway). From there a CA-1 is filed, your positive test is attached and continuation of pay (COP) will begin after the initial 3 days (calendar days). The only requirements are that you were at work in the days leading up to your positive test, a positive test from a health care provider or test site, and a little leg work in order to properly file. That is it.

I know it is a lot of information that you may or may not think is worth it. Especially for those with big sick leave balances but it is. You never know what conditions this virus may cause in the future.

## Uniforms Needed!



Please bring any uniforms you may have that you'd be willing to donate.

We accept any uniforms in new or used condition, but please none in bad condition.

**NALC BRANCH 111**  
**Minutes of the Regular Union Meeting**  
**July 14, 2022**

**Convened** at 6:36 pm

The meeting was also broadcast over Zoom for those unable to attend in person.

**Pledge of Allegiance** conducted by Mike Hansen

**Roll Call** by Steve McNees

**Minutes** of the June 2022 meeting were posted. Without objection, they will be filed for future reference.

**Reading of the Communications** – Steve McNees

- President Wahlquist sent a letter to formally endorse Lannie Chapman to be the next Salt Lake County Clerk.

**Application for Membership** by Mike Hansen

- Emmanuel Frimpong, Rosemary Galstyan, San Mateo Feletoa, Thomas Videtich, Aaron Ware, Riley Weishaupt, Camille Hyde, Kyle Gannon, Terrance Parkin, Michelle Lima, Mahanatma Kaur, Christopher Pesce

**Guest Speaker: Nick Vafiades, NBA** – • The new Postmaster General announced they will start consolidating offices and create mega-facilities. They will start in Manhattan, Texas, and two others sites (none in our region yet). All stations and branches will work out of one central mega-facility. All carriers will work out of this giant facility. It will cut down on transportation costs (between stations) and decrease the number of clerks and mail handlers. They are 100% sure it will increase carriers' time by 10%. It will require 26,000 new letter carriers. It will start in August at the four sites. • The Post Office is starting to hire directly to PTF in some areas (Seattle is the only one in our region). All stewards: if you have 12/60 violations during a week, file a grievance. They are being reported to national weekly. Postal management doesn't believe that over-time violations are happening or that routes are not being delivered. If a route doesn't go out, and GPS records a carrier driving through any part of that route area, they considered it was delivered. The USPS claims that the staffing issue is an emergency so they can do whatever they want. It is no longer an emergency because of Covid. It is no longer unforeseen that we have a shortage of employees. • Nick was here this week to put on a Steward College for the branch (others branches were invited).

**LETTER CARRIER POLITICAL FUND** by Josh Thibodeau – not present

**MDA COORDINATOR** by Jeremy Bailey

- There was a good turnout at the bowl-a-thon last Sunday (but not as good as hoped).

**DIRECTOR OF VETERAN AFFAIRS** - Jimmy Fleming – no report

**LEGISLATIVE** by Chad Mortensen

- The letter endorsing Lannie Chapman was sent out. Her campaign manager has offered to help us at the Labor Day Picnic. There will be a car show at the picnic of some sort (we don't know the size yet).

- The Rocky Mountain Labor School was last week at the U of U. It was organized by the Utah State AFL-CIO. Other unions are constantly fighting for their wages/contracts. We don't have to because our national office does it for us.

- When asked who you support, tell them who you work for and why you support union people.

**TRUSTEES** by Chad Mortensen

- No meeting this month. They will meet before convention. Any questions about finances – call Mike Madsen.

**MBA, COMPENSATION** by Bob Jewell

- Carriers are still getting hurt. There is a new spike in Covid cases. He has a presentation on how to file a Covid claim that he will send out if you ask. Please stay safe.

**HEALTH BENEFITS** by Jim Kerekes

- Can CCAs get vision and dental insurance? Blue Cross Care First is for CCAs. CCAs need to call Human Resources to get help with insurance options.
- The Postal Record has an article about changes that are coming in 2025. There will be postal only health plans that will cover active and retiree plans.
- There is going to be a one-time only, open period to sign up for Medicare Part B for those who missed the deadline.

**ORGANIZER** by Justin Lindquist – not present

**SAFETY AND HEALTH** by Justin Lindquist – not present

**DIRECTOR OF RETIREES** by Jeff Asay - No report.

**TREASURER** by Mike Madsen

- There is a copy of the receipts and expenses at the back of the room (each meeting).  
\$28,704 income last month. Expenses were \$4,762 less than we brought in.  
Progressive remedies account: \$16,521 total, \$3,894 spent, leaving \$12,627 for future training.

**VICE PRESIDENT** by Amie Gallo – No report

**EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT** by Mike Hansen

- 1099 grievances have been filed so far this year.
- The Bowl-a-thon last Sunday raised a little over \$2,000 for MDA. There was a good turnout.
- Heat: carriers are now working longer in hotter weather (100+). There are more reports of heat related health problems this year. New CCAs are working in 12 hours in the heat and often don't understand the hazards. Please watch out for them.

**The Steak Fry is August 20<sup>th</sup>**. Email Mike Wahlquist/Hansen if you are interested in attending the **Bee's game on August 27<sup>th</sup>**.

**PRESIDENT** by Mike Wahlquist

- Mike was gone for half the month because he got married July 1<sup>st</sup> and went on a cruise.
- Joe Rivera's house need power line help. He is a veteran and carried mail over 30 years. He has an older home. The power is working now but he needs to have his main line to the street replaced. Wahlquist has photos of the problem and is asking for help from someone who might know how or have the skills needed to help get it repaired.
- Get 12/60 grievances filed and reported to region as soon as possible. Also report undelivered routes.

**SPECIAL ORDERS:** none

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** none

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- There was a motion to cancel next month's union meeting due to officers attending National Convention. The motion passed. **The August Union Meeting is cancelled.**

**GOOD OF THE ASSOCIATION:**

- **We will be participating at the Labor Day picnic again this year.** We will be inviting Lannie Chapman to come and participate.

**FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SERVICE:**

**DRAW AND ADJOURN** – 7:35 pm

- \$25 drawing winners were Bob Valdez and Steve Franz
- RETIREES – \$100 (Joe Rivera was not present). Next month it will be \$125
- PROGRESSIVE A - \$275 (Marshal Bills was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$300
- PROGRESSIVE B - \$175 (Jeron Tucker was not present). Next Meeting it will be \$200

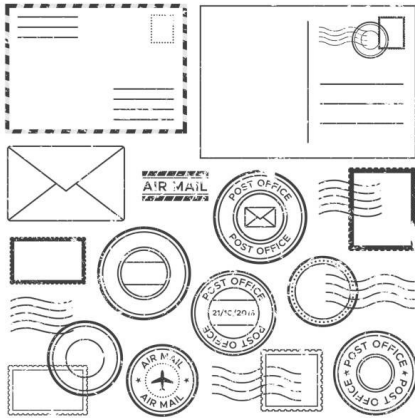
Attendance: 39 members

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## Keep on Delivering.



The financial records of Branch 111 are available to anyone by appointment and a monthly record is always available at Branch 111 monthly meeting.

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**Vice-President**  
Mike Hansen  
**Vice-President**  
Amie B. Gallo  
**Treasurer**  
Mike Madsen  
**Secretary**  
Steve McNees  
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The  
*“Pavement Pounder”*  
is the Official Publication of  
Branch 111 NALC  
the  
*“Wasatch Branch”*

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