



The Pavement Pounder

Branch 111 NALC

“The Wasatch Branch”

Publication
2025.5
May
edition

The President's Report

“The Midnight Sun”

I’m going to start out this article with a true story that happened to me nearly 30 years ago. You may not believe it, but every word that follows is true. When I was in my 20’s (back in the 1990’s), carrying in the Sugarhouse Post Office, I once found myself without water on a day that was easily over 100 degrees. I had heard about heat-stroke, but in my short life I had found that my body could withstand more strain than the average person’s, so I felt no sense of urgency to get more water. I thought that since I was mentally and physically tough, my body could take a little dehydration. And so the hours passed, and I felt fine... until I didn’t. I remember feeling thirsty, weak, and somewhat sick to my stomach, all at the same time. I realized that I should stop and go get a drink, so I drove to a 7-11 and purchased a Big Gulp full of Mountain Dew (what I lived on during my 20’s), which turned out to be a big mistake, as caffeine is not good for dehydration or heat illness. I drank the whole thing as fast as I could guzzle it down. Then I went back to start delivering again, but I felt even worse. I realized that I was too sick to continue. So for the first time in my career (and the last time) I drove back to the Post Office to let my supervisor know that I could not continue.

I somehow made it into the Post Office and found my supervisor. I said something to the effect that I could not continue, to which he replied that I had to go back out because he had no help. It was at this point that I ungracefully vomited that entire Mountain Dew into his trash can and slumped down onto the ground. He helped me into a rolling office chair, and I watched him instruct another carrier to go out in my vehicle and finish my route (no help, yeah right!). Then, he put his arm under my arm and side-carried me into the conference room of the Sugarhouse Post Office and laid me out on the middle of the conference table. He told me to rest, and he would check on me in a bit. I immediately passed out. When I woke up, the lights were out and I was freezing cold (there was an air-conditioning vent right above me). I couldn’t see anything, so I felt my way to the door and opened it to a darkened post office. I looked at my watch and was shocked to discover that it was 2:00AM and realized that everyone had gone home. My supervisor had forgotten all about me. I had lain on that conference table for over 8 hours. I eventually found a way out and then had to find a way to get past the locked gate to get to my vehicle. I ended up calling in sick for the next two days because I didn’t have the strength to get out of bed. This would be the only time I would ever experience full blown heat-illness, but I learned a valuable lesson about staying hydrated on hot days (and another lesson about how supervisors can occasionally make horrible decisions when it comes to safety).

Whether you believe in global warming or not, hot weather seems to come earlier every year now, and to stay longer. This rest of this article is not new, but the information contained within is vital for our members to have, so once again we will be talking about heat safety, and once again I will be starting off with a quote from “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

*Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.*

In this famous poem, the crew of an ill-fated ship find themselves stuck in the “doldrums” (stuck on a still sea with no wind with which to move their vessel). They run out of water and are stuck baking in the hot sun for weeks until they finally succumb to dehydration and all drop dead (except for the narrator/protagonist who lives to tell the tell). If you haven’t read it, it is not a “happy ending” poem, but rather a poem that seeks to teach a life lesson, or to (continued on next page)

(Midnight Sun continued)

warn of possible life-consequences, by the telling of a tragedy.

During the first 30+ years of my career, I heard stand-up after stand-up where we were cautioned to avoid all symptoms of heat related illness. We were told that if we did feel any symptoms coming on, we were to immediately hydrate with water, seek shade or air-conditioning, and take an extra break (if necessary) for our safety and health. We were told to always make sure we had an adequate supply of water with us, and to drink copiously from it, and to dump some of it on our heads if we needed to. We were told that if we ran out of water, or found ourselves without sufficient water, to immediately take the steps necessary to obtain water.

In 2017, for the first time in my experience, we began to have some trouble between Craft and Management regarding the instructions about “water”. There were many disputes, but the most serious concern was whether a Letter Carrier, who found themselves without water “for any reason”, could obtain additional water. I do not need to go into the many reasons for which someone could find themselves without water, it has happened to me on several occasions, and I am sure it happens to all of us from time to time. The problem arose because management was giving bad (and potentially dangerous) instructions about water. Some members of management stated that Letter Carriers should never find themselves without water (presumably because they should always be prepared for any contingency), so getting water should never be an issue. I find that kind of logic to be disingenuous, naïve, and flawed, because running out of water does happen, and it will happen to everyone eventually. So, after several failed attempts to explain this to Management, and to get a definitive answer regarding whether a Carrier could deviate to obtain water when necessary, I was forced to write an open letter to the District Manager at that time (Darrell Stoke) which stated in part:

“I have asked you and the numerous other EAS employees that I have encountered in the Downtown office to give the following instruction: “If you [Letter Carriers] find yourselves without water FOR ANY REASON, immediately procure water sufficient for your needs.”...

...“Since management has declined to give this instruction, I find that I must get the word out, so this open letter will be published in our branch newsletter, and I am saying to all Letter Carriers, “If you [Letter Carriers] find yourselves without water FOR ANY REASON, immediately procure water sufficient for your needs.” The Union will be happy to defend any Letter Carrier who is disciplined for procuring water when it is necessary for their safety.”

After that letter, the Union resolved a grievance with the following language [in part]: “Any management employees that have told employees that they cannot have water will be instructed to cease and desist. Management will be told employees in the heat cannot be denied water.”

I have had numerous conversations with management about heat-safety, and potable water issues. Since the grievances and OSHA complaints of 2017, management and the Union have been in complete agreement regarding water. In the past, management has stated that bottled water is being provided in all Salt Lake City Installation offices (and I believe all the Associate Offices are providing bottled water as well, please let me know if that stops being the case or isn't the case). Management has stated that Carriers are being instructed to obtain water sufficient for their needs anytime they find themselves without water. Management has also stated that if anyone finds that they are having heat-related illness (for example, being unable to continue delivering due to heat-related symptoms), they should call 911, or call their Manager/Supervisor for assistance, whichever they deem expedient and appropriate. In the past, management has agreed (regarding heat-related illness, heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke), that while every case is subjective, the Postal Service will make every effort to err on the side of caution, by calling 911, providing rides to the Hospital, or making sure Letter Carriers are checked out by medical professionals after having on-the-job heat-related illness (all of the aforementioned to be done when appropriate... every situation is unique).

The bottom line is that both the Postal Service, and Letter Carriers should take Heat Safety seriously. It is my fervent hope that Management and Letter Carriers will use their best judgement in dealing with both heat and hydration. The hierarchy of importance is: Health, Family, and then Job. Remember, you won't have a job if you don't protect your health, and you won't want a job if you have to sacrifice your family to keep it.

It is expected that this will be a long, hot Summer. Water is good. Gatorade is good. Wet towels on the neck, wet hats, sweating, fans, shade, air-conditioning, and an extra break if necessary are all good. Please take care of your health this summer by taking the steps necessary to keep yourselves hydrated and not overheated.

Thank you for protecting yourself during the summer to come, and please have a safe Summer!

Michael Wahlquist – President
Branch 111, NALC

Are You Being Paid at the Proper Step?

Recently right here in Branch 111 we became aware of a recently converted PTF that has been being paid at the wrong step. It got me thinking if there are others or is this something that we need to pay attention to? Certainly PTF's need to know what step they belong on when they convert and stewards need to remind them to check their form 50's when they do convert, at least until step AA and A are gone.

Did you work as a part-time flexible (PTF) at Step AA? In the 2019-2023 National Agreement, a new step (AA) was created for PTF carriers only. The waiting period in Step AA to reach Step A is 46 weeks if you remain a PTF. When you convert to full time, you should be credited for the number of weeks that you spent as a PTF and slotted into the correct step of the full time pay scale. The full time pay scale does not include Step AA; it begins at Step A. Article 9, Section 8 of the National Agreement states in relevant part:

Upon conversion to Full-Time, Part-Time Flexible employees in RSC Q7 (Table Two) will be slotted into the Full-Time Step commensurate with their number of weeks as a PTF, and retain their time credit toward the next step.

For example, if you were a PTF for 15 Weeks at Step AA when you are converted to full time, your correct pay step would now be step A with 15 weeks credit toward Step B on the full-time pay scale. This credit also applies if you convert to full time while at any other step. In Branch 111 you most likely converted to full time while on Step AA or A. Another example, if you were a PTF for 90 weeks (46 at Step AA and 44 weeks in Step A) when you convert to full time, your correct pay step would be Step B with 44 weeks credit toward Step C.

In the case that we recently saw in the Salt Lake Installation had about 56 weeks as a PTF and when converted was slotted into Step A. Should have been Step B with 10 weeks credit toward Step C. This will be resolved in the grievance process. Keep in mind this problem will resolve itself when Step AA is gone, which will happen by September. That doesn't mean that you or someone you work with wasn't affected.

The easiest way to check what step you are on is to login to Liteblue and go to your eOPF. Click on your most current Form 50. That form will show your current step. You could also look at your current pay stub and see what you pay rate is and divide it by 2080. This will give you your hourly rate and you can then compare it to the new pay scale on [NALC.org](https://www.nalc.org). If you think you are on the wrong step, talk to your steward. Hopefully this was an isolated incident but it's worth checking.

In Solidarity
Mike Hansen
Executive Vice President
Branch 111, NALC

Upcoming for



NALC BRANCH 111

June

Thursday 5th	E-Board
Thursday 12th	Branch Meeting
Wednesday 18th	Steward Training
Saturday 21st	Summer Party

July

Thursday 3rd	E-Board
Thursday 10th	Branch Meeting
Wednesday 16th	Steward Training

August

Thursday 7th	E-Board
Thursday 14th	Branch Meeting
Wednesday 20th	Steward Training
Saturday 23 rd	Steak Fry



NALC BRANCH 111



2023-2026 National Agreement Summary



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF LETTER CARRIERS
**Stamp
Out
Hunger**
FOOD DRIVE™

Vice President's Message:

A Message of Appreciation and Thanks

Lately, it has felt like we do so much for so little appreciation. So I wanted to say "Thank You" :

Thank you to the Stewards

Thank you to all of our stewards for representing and defending the NALC National Agreement. The grievances and the fight to keep management in compliance with the contract is never ending. Keep up the hard work, I see your hard work and so do the members.

Appreciation for Our Members

Thank you to all of the members for your hard work on your routes and providing customer service. We are the face of the postal service. Thank you for showing our customers and the Nation that we are essential throughout the country.

Thank you to all of the retirees

You may be retired, but you still take time to represent the carriers and spread the word of how essential we are to the country.

Special Thanks for Participating in the Food Drive

Thank you to Josh Jessop for coordinating the Food Drive as well as to all the members for collecting food for those in need.

Appreciation for Route Count and Inspection Training in Bountiful

Thank you to Conner Lawrence and Nathan Chester for the invitation and training they provided to their office preparing for route counts and inspections in Bountiful.

In Solidarity,
Destiney Carrillo
Vice President Branch 111

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or discharged, I request that my Union representative be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions."

"Action Is The Antidote To Anxiety"

Ways to Act!

- 1-Give to LCPF (letter carrier's political fund) call Josh Thibodeau (801)953-6343
- 2-Convince ALL letter carriers to join NALC
- 3-Call or write your Senators, ask them to **Protect the USPS** by supporting HR 70

Mike Lee

363 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Phone: (202) 224-5444

John Curtis

B11 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC
20510-4402

Phone: (202) 224-5251

Call or write your **Representative**

Blake Moore (District 1)

1131 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-0453

Celeste Maloy (District 2)

249 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-9730

Mike Kennedy (District 3)

1626 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-7751

Burgess Owens (District 4)

309 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-3011

- 4-Invite others to join our efforts

Oppose cuts to letter carrier retirement benefits

On April 30, in a 22-21 vote, the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability (COR) advanced its budget reconciliation measure that would slash benefits for federal workers, including letter carriers.

The Republican-supported House budget resolution passed earlier this year tasked the COR committee with cutting \$50 billion. This measure aims to meet this threshold by cutting federal employee benefits at a cost to the employees.

Many parts of the measure would affect letter carriers, including:

- Increasing the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) contribution rate for existing employees to 4.4 percent
- Cutting FERS retirement benefits by eliminating the FERS special annuity supplement
- Reducing FERS annuity payments by calculating a retiree's annuity based on their high-five salary average (instead of three)

Chairman James Comer (R-KY) said these cuts would save federal funds while Acting Ranking Member Stephen Lynch (D-MA) referred to it as an attack on the federal government and its workers.

Many Democratic members praised federal employees for their dedicated service and spoke against benefit cuts.

One Republican, Mike Turner (R-OH), opposed the measure. "I believe that making changes to pension retirement benefits in the middle of someone's employment is wrong. Employee benefits are not a gift. They are earned," he said.

Several amendments were introduced at the markup, but all were rejected. Notably, Rep. Emily Randall (D-WA) introduced an amendment to add the text of the Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 1522). H.R. 1522 would allow federal employees, including letter carriers, to make catch-up retirement contributions for time served as non-career employees, making it credible under FERS. Although the amendment failed, H.R. 1522 remains a top priority for NALC.

"NALC completely opposes this measure," NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said. "We see this for what it is – a pay cut for letter carriers and all federal employees.

“Our retirement benefits aren't free handouts. We earn them through our years of service and contributions.

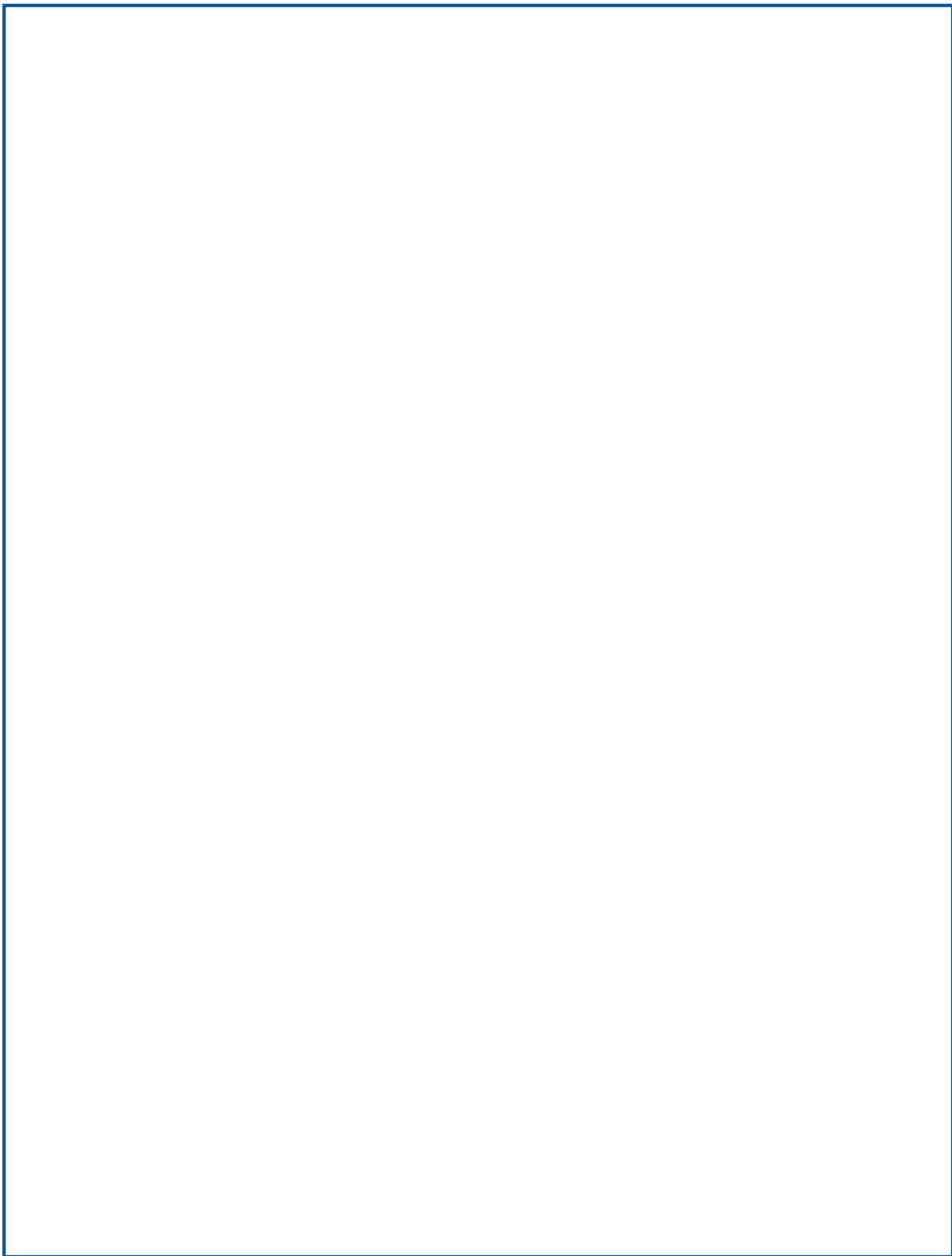
“Taxpayers don't fund the Postal Service or letter carriers' retirement benefits. Cutting our benefits will do nothing to improve the federal deficit. If Congress wants to balance the budget, changes to our independently funded retirement benefits will not do it and should be off limits.

“This is a disgusting attack on every letter carrier, postal employee, and federal employee. We will continue fighting like hell against these attacks to preserve the retirement benefits that we've earned, and that we already pay our fair share for every pay period.”

The next step is for the measure to be considered by the full House. Republican House leadership has indicated it plans to vote on all reconciliation measures before the end of May.

Given the controversial and harmful elements of this package, it is unclear whether it will pass in the House. While advancing the committee was almost certain, with extremely tight margins in the House, passing in the full chamber will be more difficult.

NALC encourages all letter carriers to contact their representatives and ask them to oppose these changes to our benefits and what we pay for them.



National Association of Letter Carriers
2261 South Redwood Road, Suite 14
Salt Lake City, Utah 84119

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Salt Lake City,
UT
Permit No. 1981

BRANCH 111 OFFICERS

President

Mike Wahlquist
385-216-0476

Executive Vice-President

Mike Hansen
801-628-1848

Vice-President

Destiney Carrillo
562-370-3590

Treasurer

Mike Madsen

Secretary

Steve McNeese

Sergeant-at-Arms

Mike Simonsen

MBA & OWCP

Bob Jewell
801-244-0929

Editor

Nathan Chester
Natechester8@gmail.com

Director of Retirees

Jeff Asay
801-597-2380

L.C.P.F. Coordinator

Josh Thibodeau
801-953-6343
J.thibodeau77@gmail.com

Legislative

Chad Mortensen

Health Benefits

Jim Kerekes
801-557-6033

Organizer

Justin Lindquist
801-301-9293

Safety & Health

Justin Lindquist
801-301-9293

Food Drive

Josh Jessop

MDA

Nathan Chester
801-450-0617

Director of Veteran Affairs

Jimmy Fleming
veteransaffairs@branch111.com

Trustees

Chad Mortensen
Kirk McLaughlin
Kortnie Chatterton

The Pavement Pounder is the official publication of NALC Branch 111

www.Branch111.com Phone 801-973-6705 Fax 801-973-6723

For up-to-date information on events, meetings and branch news,

Follow Branch 111 on Facebook @NALCbranch111

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

The Pavement Pounder would like to hear from you! If you would like to submit an article, write it and send to **Natechester8@gmail.com**. It will be reviewed and edited for publication if accepted.