



The Union Advisor

**National Association
of Letter Carriers
Branch 324**

2023

Colorado State Convention

The convention was held in Black Hawk, CO in April and Branch 324 was well represented. The convention was sponsored by NALC Branch 47 out of Denver. Region 4 RWCA David Miller conducted a class on the new escalation process when working through your OWCP claim. RAA John Robles taught a class on safety and knowing your surroundings on the job as a city letter carrier. This was an election year and two local branch officers were elected to state positions.



Richard Byrne was elected as president and Isaiah Nothem was elected Treasurer of the Colorado State Association of Letter Carriers. All of the delegates participated in committee assignments during the convention and also helped keep things organized throughout the convention. Thank you to all the delegates and their dedication to the members of our branch. The 2024 COSALC Convention will be held in the Aurora area and is being hosted by NALC Branch 5996.

The NALC Region 4 Rap Session was just held in Cheyenne, Wyoming and your branch was well represented. There were great training classes on OWCP, upcoming LMOU ideas, branch officer training and we also heard from NALC President Brian Renfroe on the opening morning. President Renfroe gave updates on contract negotiations and upcoming legislative bills changing laws that will help protect city letter carriers across the country. We also heard from Special Executive Assistant to the President Tim McKay. He gave updates on the new S&DC's that are being established across the country. We aren't currently on the list to be included in one, but that could change in the future.



Another Successful Food Drive

Thank you to all of the those that helped make this another great year helping our community. We collected **39,304 pounds** of food. We had to deal with the weather this year. The rained for many days prior to the food drive and thankfully was dry for the day of the food drive.

The Weld Food Bank and all of their partners were very thankful for all the work letter carriers put into this years drive. We are already working on some new ideas for next year along with getting some additional promotional materials.

The **Union Advisor** is published several times each year and article submissions must be submitted in electronic format to be included in an issue. The Editor reserves the right to not print articles due to space limitations. **NALC Branch 324**



Do you have a seat at the table?

As you know, the NALC and USPS have been in negotiations since the end of May trying to come to a resolution on our national agreement. We have had many updates from NALC President Brian Renfro over the past several months and things are progressing. We are hoping for a tentative agreement that can be sent out to the members for ratification. If we can't get a good resolution, the NALC is ready to go to arbitration and present our case.

Our leaders at NALC headquarters along very well trained NALC staff members have been working tirelessly since the first of the year preparing for this very moment. We will share any updates so be sure to follow us on Facebook (**NALC Branch 324**) and check out the website at **www.nalcbranch324.com**. We have been sharing updates at the monthly meetings in person. If you'd like to know more in detail, please attend the meetings.

Richard Byrne, President

NALC Dwight Palser
Branch 324



Our national president, Brian Renfro, has been on monthly Zoom meetings with the branch presidents across our region giving updates on negotiations and many other important topics.

When the national agreement is either sent out for ratification or decided through arbitration, the local parties will be given a period of 30 days to sit down and negotiate the LMOU. Each of the installations our branch represents has a LMOU (Local Memorandum of Understanding). There are usually changes that need to be updated or changed due to issues and/or concerns that have come up since the last time the LMOU was opened and negotiated. Over the years, I've heard the phrase *"If you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu."* Do you have a seat at the table? How involved are you in your own union? When is the last time you attended a meeting? As you can probably understand, non-members of the union don't get a voice in changes in the LMOU. But what is more surprising is that many members don't even understand the power they have to voice their concerns on what's happening and what they'd like to see changed or updated. Where do you fall into this category?

I know all of us have busy lives but please help educate me on how one night a month is too much to give back to your union on getting educated while learning more about your rights and benefits. Many times, carriers only are concerned about what effects them personally and they don't care about everyone around them. It's sad that they don't see the big picture. It also plays hand in hand with management. You may not be the target today, but you will be the target in the future at one point. Making deals with management and hoping they keep their word isn't the way to go. We have a contract for a reason. Follow the contract and don't trust management to keep their word. Because they won't! You might get your way now, but they will throw you under the bus when they need to. Everyone should follow the contract including union leaders. Under the table deals should never be made that aren't following the contract. We know it happens day in and day out. Stop it! It will come back to bite you in the ass. When it does, your steward more than likely won't be able to help you. Do you even know your rights? Many think they do know the answers but fail to do thorough research and jump straight to Facebook stewards for answers.

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2) It should be our duty to watch out for each other, have each other's back and step up when needed. There will be a time in the future where we need people to step up and lead our local union. Who will do it? Now is the time to step up and get trained. Are you willing to step up and get educated on how to protect your fellow sisters and brothers? There are many branches throughout Colorado that don't have "active" stewards who are educated and ready to represent members on the workroom floor. We have been truly blessed over the many years by having local leadership that stepped and made our branch one of the strongest in Colorado. While we are still one of the strongest and well trained branches in Colorado, we need to determine where our future will take us. Do we have members that are willing to step up and lead our branch into the future defending our members on the workroom floor? I'd say yes overall. We have great leaders in this branch but not so many stepping up to be stewards. That is where we need them day in and day out to protect carriers on the job from the mis-management that happens in offices we represent where managers aren't allowed to run their own workroom floors. Here is my question to you. Where do you stand at the end of the day?

News from Washington



NALC Fact Sheet

Department of Legislative and Political Affairs — National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO
100 Indiana Ave. NW — Washington, DC 20001-2144 — 202-393-4695 — www.nalc.org © NALC

Federal Retirement Fairness Act

Many federal employees, including Postal Service employees, begin their federal/postal service in non-career positions before transitioning to career status. These employees, including letter carriers who were employed as casuals, transitional employees (TEs) or city carrier assistants (CCAs), do not receive retirement credit for their time spent in these positions. Because years employed as a non-career employee are not creditable under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), employees who started in non-career positions and transition to career status must work longer to reach the required years of employment to receive full retirement benefits.

The Federal Retirement Fairness Act would modify what is considered creditable federal civilian service under FERS. It would allow these employees to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as non-career employees after Dec. 31, 1988, making such time creditable service under the FERS, and for other purposes.

This legislation would allow letter carriers and other affected employees the opportunity to purchase retirement credit for the time they spent in these non-career positions, providing greater retirement security.

NALC supports the Federal Retirement Fairness Act, which would allow certain federal employees to make catch-up retirement contributions for time spent as non-career employees after Dec. 31, 1988, thus making such time creditable service under FERS.

Articles published in the Branch 324 Union Advisor are the views & opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Branch 324, the NALC, its officers or the Postal Service. You may reprint the contents of this newsletter provided that you give appropriate credit.



CCA TO PTF BENEFITS CHECKLIST

(Note: You can only sign up for benefits within 60 days of your conversion date, during open season, or if you have a Qualifying Life Event)

☐ Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB)

- Sign up via PostalEASE at liteblue.usps.gov under Benefits tab
- A Health Plan comparison tool can be found at:
<https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/compare-plans/>

☐ Vision and Dental Coverage (BENEFEDS)

- Sign up via <https://www.benefeds.com/>

☐ Health Care/Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

- Health FSA: pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible medical, vision and dental expenses
- Dependent FSA: pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible dependent care services (preschool, summer day camp, daycare etc.)
- Sign up via <https://fsafeds.com/>

☐ Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) (Your Retirement!)

- Sign up via PostalEASE at liteblue.usps.gov under Benefits tab

(USPS will automatically contribute 1%. They will match your contributions dollar for dollar on the first 3% that you contribute. They will then match ½% for your 4th% contributed and another ½% for your 5th% contributed. That's 5% USPS is contributing towards your retirement!! If you are not contributing at least 5%, you're leaving free money on the table.)

- Access your TSP account at <https://www.tsp.gov/>

☐ Federal Employee's Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)

- Basic coverage is completely covered by USPS
- Option A covers an additional \$10,000
- Option B covers multiples of your annual salary, up to 5x
- Option C covers Spouse (\$5,000) and Children (\$2,500), up to 5x

(Note: FEGLI does not have enrollments during Open Season. They have their own "Open Season" and they are very infrequent. Last FEGLI Open Season was 9/1/2016. You only have 60 days from date of conversion OR need to have a Qualifying Life Event to sign up.)

- FEGLI Sign up information can be found at
<https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/life-insurance/enrollment/>



Posting Vacant Assignments

The NALC Postal Record Contract Talk outlined the process used to fill temporarily vacant letter carrier assignments. This article will discuss the procedures used to fill vacated and recently created letter carrier assignments, including letter routes, carrier technician assignments, parcel post and collection routes, and reserve letter carrier assignments.

Unless an assignment is under consideration for reversion, the National Agreement requires that it be posted for bid within 14 days of the date it is vacated, or that it be established, in the case of a newly created assignment. The local parties may agree to extend the 14-day time limit.

Article 41 Section 1.A.1 states in part:

1. A vacant or newly established duty assignment not under consideration for reversion shall be posted within fourteen calendar days from the day it becomes vacant or is established, unless a longer period of time is negotiated locally. This section goes on to explain the time limits that management must follow if an assignment is under consideration for reversion:

When a position is under consideration for reversion, the decision to revert or not to revert the position shall be made not later than 30 days after it becomes vacant. If the decision is made not to revert, the assignment must be posted within 30 days of the date it becomes vacant. The Employer shall provide written notice to the Union, at the local level, of the assignments that are being considered for reversion and of the results of such consideration. This provision delays the amount of time between the date that an assignment under consideration for reversion is vacated and the date it must be posted. However, this language does not allow management to adopt a "blanket" policy to consider all vacant routes for reversion. In a national-level settlement, M-01389, the parties agreed to the following:

The issue in the instant grievances involves a local district policy to consider all vacant routes for reversion pursuant to the provisions of Article 41.1.A.1. The parties agreed that a "blanket" policy to consider all vacant routes for reversion prior to posting is inconsistent with the provisions of Article 41.1.A.1. Routes considered for reversion are to be considered on a route by route basis. A complete copy of M-01389, as well as many other key contractual "M" documents, can be found in the Materials Reference System (MRS) at nalc.org/mrs.

Vacant assignments posted for bid are open to all eligible letter carriers employed in the installation, unless the local parties have negotiated local agreements, or a past practice establishes a different method. In accordance with Article 30, Sections B.21 and B.22, the parties may agree to post assignments within a specific section, as opposed to installation-wide.

Once an assignment has been posted for bid, the notice must be posted in all offices where letter carriers who are eligible to bid are assigned. In the case of installations with more than one delivery unit, the notice must be posted on the bulletin board in each office. A copy of the bid notice also must be provided to the local union. Employees absent during the time an assignment is posted may receive a copy of the notice; however, the employee must submit a written request for the notice.

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The bid notice must be posted for 10 days, unless the local parties have negotiated a different time period in accordance with Article 30, Sections B.21 and B.22. The bid notice must include the information listed in Article 41, Section 1.B.4:

- (a) The duty assignment by position title and number (e.g., Key or Standard).
- (b) Grade.
- (c) Hours of duty (beginning and ending), including, in the case of a Carrier Technician assignment, the hours of duty for each of the component routes.
- (d) The fixed or rotating schedule of days of work, as appropriate.
- (e) The principal assignment area (e.g., section and/or location of activity).
- (f) Invitation to employees to submit bids.
- (g) Physical requirement unusual to the assignment.
- (h) If a city carrier route is involved, the carrier route number shall be designated. If a Carrier Technician assignment is involved, the route number of the Carrier Technician assignment and the route numbers of the component routes shall be designated.
- (i) Date of last inspection and date of last adjustment. Within 10 days of the date the bid notice closes, management must announce the name of the letter carrier with the most seniority, known as the “successful bidder,” who bid on the route. In the case of a letter carrier who is temporarily disabled and is the successful bidder on an assignment, certain rules apply if the employee cannot assume the job duties. For an in-depth explanation of these rules, see pages 41-7 and 41-8 of the 2014 USPS-NALC Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM).

Once the successful bidder has been announced, the employee must be placed on the assignment within 15 days, except during the month of December. Application of this exception does not begin a new 15-day period; the days would stop being counted at the end of November and begin again at the start of January. The total number of days between the close of the bid and the date the employee starts on the assignment is still limited to 15 days. The following additional contractual provisions pertaining to the posting of assignments may occur from time to time.

- Article 41, Section 1.A.2: Letter carriers who are temporarily detailed to a supervisory position (204-b) may not bid on vacant assignments during the detail. However, the 204-b may voluntarily terminate the detail and then exercise their right to bid when they return to the craft.
- Article 41, Section 1.A.4: Changes in start times or non-scheduled days do not require an assignment to be posted (except as provided in Article 41, Section 1.A.5 explained below).
- Article 41, Section 1.A.5: Article 30, Sections B.21 and B.22 allow the local parties to determine whether a change in start time of more than one hour requires the assignment to be posted.
- Article 41, Section 1.A.6: When the fixed non-scheduled day of an assignment is changed, the new non-work day will be posted. This allows employees to select their non-scheduled day by use of their seniority. This provision does not apply when an assignment with rotating days off has a change in the rotation.

Letter carriers with questions regarding the rules and regulations pertaining to the posting, bidding and awarding of vacant letter carrier assignments should contact their shop steward or local branch officer.



NALC Fact Sheet

Department of Legislative and Political Affairs — National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO
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Repeal Social Security's WEP and GPO provisions (H.R. 82/S. 597)

Many retired letter carriers worked both for the Postal Service and for private sector employers over their working years, paying into both the federal pension programs (CSRS or FERS for their federal service) and into Social Security (for their private sector employment).

FERS retirees receive full benefits from both their federal pension plan and Social Security for their federal service since they paid into both systems while employed by the Postal Service. Although retired CSRS letter carriers naturally don't expect to receive Social Security benefits for their service for the Postal Service (for which they paid no FICA tax), most are shocked to find out that their Social Security benefits for their private sector work—or for the private sector work of their spouses—are usually reduced by provisions in the Social Security law enacted several decades ago.

These provisions—the Windfall Benefit Reduction (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO)—were adopted by Congress in the late 1970s and early 1980s to address the false perception that federal retirees were somehow “double dipping.” In fact, these provisions are grossly unfair. The Social Security benefits of retired private sector workers are not reduced if such retirees receive benefits from private pension plans. CSRS retirees earned their full Social Security benefits and should receive them.

NALC has been working for decades to reform or repeal the WEP and GPO provisions. We are trying to do so once again in the current Congress, though budget rules that require tax increases or other spending cuts to pay for such legislation continue to be obstacles.

This fact sheet outlines how the two provisions work and the legislation before Congress to fix their unfairness.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)

The WEP (enacted in 1982) reduces the Social Security benefits of retired public employees (federal, state and local) who also worked in Social Security-covered private sector employment—if they receive a government annuity for their non-Social Security-covered government employment. This provision hits CSRS retirees directly (but not FERS retirees). In all, nearly two million Americans have been adversely affected by the WEP provision—a number that will grow as more CSRS employees retire.

Unfortunately, the GPO (adopted in 1977) typically eliminates most, if not all, of the otherwise payable spousal and survivor benefits for retirees who receive a government annuity for non-Social Security work. That's because the GPO reduces Social Security spousal and survivor benefits by two dollars for every three dollars paid in CSRS annuity benefits to affected retirees.

For example, if a CSRS retiree's spouse receives \$2,000 in Social Security retirement benefits, the 50% spousal benefit would normally be \$1,000 per month. But if the annuitant receives \$3,000 in CSRS benefits, his spousal benefit would be totally eliminated.

The WEP affects the determination of a new retiree's monthly Social Security benefit (the *Primary Insurance Amount*)—which involves a three-part calculation applied to a worker's *Average Indexed Monthly Earnings* (AIME) from Social Security covered employment. A worker's top 35 years of earnings are indexed to wage inflation to express earnings from years ago in today's dollars and then converted into a monthly average—or AIME. In 2023, the first \$1,115 of a worker's AIME is multiplied by 90%, an AIME between \$1,115 and \$6,721 is multiplied by 32% and then any AIME more than \$6,721 is multiplied by 15%. This formula insures that lower-income workers get a higher relative benefit.

That's how the calculation works for private sector workers and/or FERS workers (whose federal service is covered by Social Security). But for CSRS retirees, the first bracket of the calculation is different. The Social Security Administration multiplies the first \$1,115 of their AIME (from private sector jobs) by 40% instead of 90%—reducing the benefit by \$558 per month (\$6,696 annually). This is grossly unfair—private workers with private pensions face no similar reduction in Social Security benefits.

The impact of the WEP can be reduced if CSRS workers have at least 21 years of substantial earnings from Social Security-covered employment (in private sector jobs before and after their CSRS employment—or through second jobs during their federal service). The 40% multiplier is increased to 45% for a worker with 21 years of substantial Social Security earnings—and by 5% for each additional year of such earnings—until it reaches the normal 90% multiplier for those with 30 years of such earnings. (See www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10045.pdf for a full explanation of the WEP from the Social Security Administration.)

Government Pension Offset

Normally, survivors and spouses of Social Security benefits qualify for spousal and survivor benefits based on the earnings and benefits of their spouses—unless they qualify for greater benefits based on their own Social Security earnings history. For CSRS letter carriers with little or no private sector work experience, such spousal and survivor benefits from Social Security could be significant—since their own Social Security would benefits would be minimal.

The same grossly unfair impact is seen with Social Security survivor benefits. Again, Social Security recipients who receive private pensions see no reduction in the Social Security's spousal or survivor benefits.

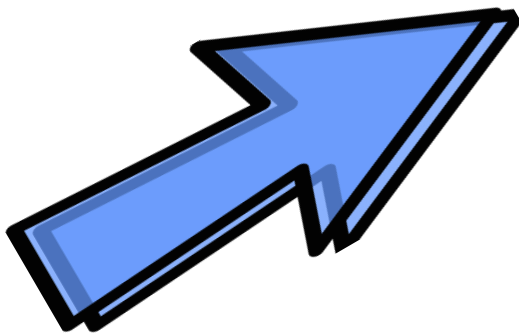
The Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 (H.R. 82) would eliminate the GPO and the WEP titles of the Social Security Act for benefits payable for months after December 2023. By repealing the GPO and the WEP, the bill would change the current law that reduces Social Security benefits for individuals who receive other benefits. NALC fully supports H.R. 82 and urges Congress to pass this legislation.

NALC supports H.R. 82/S. 597, which would eliminate the GPO and the WEP titles of the Social Security Act for benefits payable for months after December 2023.

Sponsored by Reps. Garrett Graves (R-LA), Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Susan Collins (R-ME).

Have you moved in the past few years? We are in need of your new address. Many carriers in the branch haven't updated their mailing addresses with NALC headquarters and you may not be getting the NALC Postal Record magazine in the mail monthly.

Prior to this issue being sent out, addresses were pulled from the headquarters database. If your address isn't correct, please notify Rick so it can be updated. He can be reached by email at richardbyrne@nalcbranch324.com or text his cell phone with your information at 970-576-8507.



HAVE YOU
MOVED?



We're
back!

It was voted at a previous meeting by the membership to move to a digital version of the newsletter to save money. It was brought up again at the August meeting and was voted on to resume the printed newsletter with some changes to keep expenses down.

Thank you for your patience!

A time in history...

by Leon Irvin

Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II



EDITH K. SMITH BEAL

After teaching for three years and learning to fly an airplane, in 1944 Edith applied for and was accepted into a flying training program to teach female pilots to fly military aircraft. She then paid her way to the flying training base at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. She was one of ninety-eight young women pilots who became members of class 44-W-7.

Edith was one of only fifty-nine trainees who successfully completed the seven months of military flight training. On September 8, 1944, Edith graduated and received her silver WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) wings.

BERNICE "BEE" FALK HAYDU

Bernice "Bee" Falk Haydu (born December 15, 1920) was an American aviator and member of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in World War II. Haydu remained active in aviation and as an advocate for women pilots into her 90s. Falk was president of the Order of Fifinella, an alumnae group for WASP, from 1975 to 1978. During her tenure, WASP were officially recognized as veterans by Congress and from 1978 to 1980 she was president of Women Military Aviators. She was one of the three surviving WASP present in the Oval Office in 2009, when Barack Obama awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to the WASP for their service.

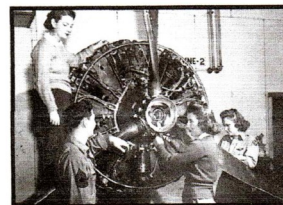


OLA MILDRED REXROAT

"I just did what I was expected to do and tried to do it the best way I could." Ola Mildred Rexroat served in the WASP and, as an Oglala Lakota, is believed to be the only female Native American to have served in the WASP. As World War II ended in 1944, she joined the Air Force and worked as an air traffic controller for 33 years. In 2007 she was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame. Rexroat died in June 2017 at the age of 99. Immediately before her death, she was the last surviving WASP in South Dakota and one of 275 living WASP out of the original 1,074.

ELVIRA GRIGGS CARDIN

Elvira was a spirited and accomplished woman. She was an excellent equestrian, a devoted wife, mother of two sons, and a WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) in World War II with over 2,000 hours of flight time in heavy bombers. As a WASP, she loved flying the responsive AT-6 trainers and twin-engine B-26 bombers but pronounced the four-engine B-17s "slow and ponderous." A number of her total flying hours came on trips between the base at Sweetwater and Corpus Christi on the Gulf. The base commander loved fresh crab, and Elvira was always ready to fly to the coast and return with his delicacy strapped into the front cockpit of her AT-6.



WASP HARD AT WORK

WASP examining an engine at Lockbourne Army Air Base in Columbus, Ohio. Women pilots, just like their male counterparts, had to have a comprehensive understanding of the systems on an aircraft — understanding how an engine was designed to work could save their lives in an emergency.

"THE ORIGINALS"

The first females to fly for the U.S. military were the "Originals," better known as the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, a World War II group led by aviatrix Nancy Love. Twenty-seven women strong, between the ages of 21 and 35, this elite corps of experienced pilots ferried planes across America from factories to docks for shipment overseas.



If they aren't willing to be a part of our great union, trust us when we say they don't have your back when the time comes to it. They are only in it for themselves.



Richard Byrne, President, Dwight Palser Branch 324

Steward Contact Information



Greeley Main

Doug Ramirez -

ramirez@nalcbranch324.com
970-396-7406

Melinda Keil (Alternate)

keil@nalcbranch324.com
303-669-6446

Micah Washburn (Alternate)

washburn@nalcbranch324.com
970-631-0911

Greeley Installation

Richard Byrne (Alternate)

richardbyrne@nalcbranch324.com
970-576-8507

Greeley Downtown Station

Gaylan Olander -

olander@nalcbranch324.com
970-381-4823

Fort Morgan

Richard Byrne (Alternate)

richardbyrne@nalcbranch324.com
970-576-8507

Sterling Office

Paula Schmitt -

schmitt@nalcbranch324.com
970-520-4684

Trisha Serrato (Alternate)

serrato@nalcbranch324.com
970-571-3213

OWCP Steward

Worker's Compensation

Quinn Brong

brong@nalcbranch324.com
720-934-4706



[Return to Home Page](#)

Members Login

First Name Last Name Zip Code Last 4 digits of SSN

Password

Problems Logging In?

If you are unable to log in, contact the NALC Membership Department at (202) 393-4695 to help us determine the source of the problem.

* If you have a name suffix (JR, SR, III, etc.), you must include it in the "last name" field separated by a space.

Example: First Name: John Last Name: Smith JR

Have you registered for the NALC 'Members Only' portal? If not, go to **www.nalc.org** and click the 'Members Only' button in the top right corner and create your account.

Reach out to Rick if you need any assistance.

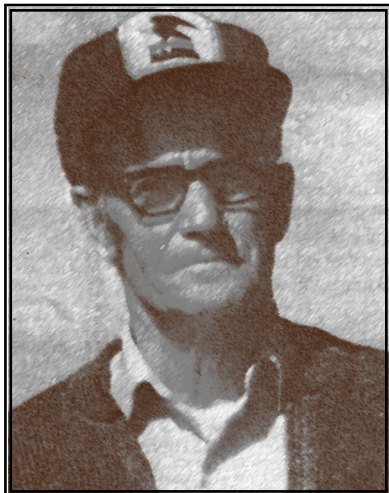


The Union Advisor

NALC Branch 324

P.O. Box 324

Greeley, CO 80632



DWIGHT PALSER
BRANCH 324

TO:



NALC Branch 324 Officers & Stewards

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President - Richard Byrne

Vice President - Gaylan Olander

Treasurer - Isaiah Nothem

Secretary - Micah Washburn

Trustees - John Thompson, Kent Hoffman,
Melinda Keil

Director of Retired Members - Brett Truesdell

Director of Health Benefits - Vacant

Director of Mutual Benefits - Vacant

Sergeant of Arms - Quinn Brong

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Doug Ramirez - Greeley Main

Gaylan Olander - Greeley Downtown Station, Evans,
Eaton

Richard Byrne - Fort Morgan & Brush

Paula Schmitt - Sterling Office

Alternate Stewards

Sterling Office - Trisha Serrato

Greeley Installation - Quinn Brong, Micah Washburn,

Letter Carrier Political Fund

By making a contribution to the Letter Carrier Political Fund, you are doing so voluntarily with the understanding that your contribution is not a condition of membership in the National Association of Letter Carriers or of employment by the Postal Service, nor is it part of union dues. You have a right to refuse to contribute without any reprisal. The Letter Carrier Political Fund will use the money it receives to contribute to candidates for federal office and undertake other political spending as permitted by law. Your selection shall remain in full force and effect until cancelled. Contributions to the Letter Carrier Political Fund are not deductible for federal income tax purposes. Federal law prohibits the Letter Carrier Political Fund from soliciting contributions from individuals who are not NALC members, executive and administrative staff or their families. Any contribution received from such an individual will be refunded to that contributor.