



National Association
of Letter Carriers

William H. Young, President
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NALC Bulletin

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'Open Season' Begins November 12 To Join NALC Health Benefit Plan Lower Rates, Greater Benefits in 2008 Plan

The annual "Open Season" period set by the government's Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for enrolling in or changing your status in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program begins November 12 and runs through December 10.



This is an opportunity for every active and retired letter carrier to join your own union's health plan – the NALC Health Benefit Plan – one that is administered by your elected officers and operated by unionized employees with the care and well-being of letter carriers uppermost in mind.

At the same time, this year you have a chance to lower your cost for health coverage and receive improved benefits.

Employee contribution rates effective in January 2008 for active letter carriers and annuitants in the NALC Health Benefit Plan (with the reduction from the current 2007 rate in parenthesis) are:

	2008 Self-Only	2008 Self & Family
Active Carriers-Category 2 (biweekly)	\$ 32.61 (- \$6.19)	\$ 54.54 (- \$6.31)
Annuitants (monthly)	\$127.40 (-\$12.18)	\$247.00 (-\$10.77)

Some of the enhancements in the 2008 Plan include lower out-of-pocket costs for surgical and anesthesia procedures; no cost for inpatient room and board charges at a PPO facility; lower cost for emergency care at a non-PPO hospital due to an auto accident, concussion or heart attack, and improved catastrophic protection. In addition, for letter carriers, the new plan includes coverage for custom functional foot orthotics.

Every NALC member will be receiving a packet from the NALC Health Plan outlining the Plan for next year, along with a copy of the official OPM-approved brochure (RI 71-009).

In addition, the November issue of the *Postal Record* magazine has loads of information to help you out. Included is a special six-page insert devoted to the Plan.

Please take time to read through this material with your family before making your once-a-year decision about health coverage for yourself and your family for 2008.

Remember, the Open Season period runs from November 12 to December 10 and your decision will take effect with the beginning of your first full pay period of the new year.

If you are a current enrollee in the NALC Plan, you need do nothing further. You will automatically have your membership extended for another year and you will begin seeing the savings in your premium cost in January 2008.

If you are not currently an enrollee in the NALC Health Benefit Plan, you can join during this period and alter your health benefits package and out-of-pocket costs dramatically. Contact your branch Health Benefit Representative or go to your USPS Human Resources office to sign up before December 10.

NALC President William H. Young and Director of Health Benefits Timothy C. O'Malley have worked to establish a Plan for 2008 that is competitive with any plan in the Federal Employees Health Benefit system. Check it out yourself!

Effective January 1, 2008, the NALC Health Benefit Plan is expanding its nationwide Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) network and improving the provider discount by engaging the CIGNA HealthCare Shared Administration PPO Network for its enrollees. The new PPO has more than 1 million participating provider locations nationwide with increased benefits for hospitalization, surgery, maternity and chiropractic care.

This is a summary of some of the features of the NALC Health Benefit Plan. Detailed information on the 2008 NALC Health Benefit Plan can be found in the official brochure. Before making a final decision, please read the Plan's officially approved Brochure (RI 71-009). All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the official brochure.

Correction to OPM Material

The NALC Health Benefit Plan has been advised by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that its publication, *Open Season Health Benefits Guide*, contains incorrect information regarding the NALC Health Benefit Plan prescription mail order benefit.

The current NALC Plan, as well as the Plan for 2008, do contain mail order prescription benefits where members gain greater quantity or can pay less through mail order.

Please see the separate posting included with this *NALC Bulletin* explaining the correction.

Deadline November 14 For Local Negotiations

A reminder to NALC branches that Wednesday, November 14 is the deadline for completion of local negotiations under the new 2006-2011 National Agreement as indicated in the mailing to all branch presidents with the NALC 2007 Guide to Local Negotiations.

A Memorandum of Understanding (M-01630) extending the negotiation period, signed by NALC President William H. Young and USPS Vice President for Labor Relations Doug A. Tulino, states that the 45-day local implementation period would be from October 1 through November 14, with the additional time to be used within the framework of Article 30 of the National Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding regarding local implementation.

The 15-day extension will assist the branches that negotiate with numerous USPS installations. The full text of the extension agreement (MRS-M-01630) can be found on the NALC website: www.nalc.org.

Revised Local Negotiations Calendar

(By now, the following aspects of local negotiations should have been accomplished: Preparation for Negotiations; Information Demands; Notice of Intent to Negotiate Sent; Negotiating Ground Rules Set, and Beginning of Negotiations.)

The following future deadlines remain under the revised calendar:

Negotiations End	November 14
Impasse to USPS and NBA by	November 29
Impasse Discussions Begin	November 15
Impasse Discussions End	January 28
Appeal to Arbitration no later than	February 18

NALC Branches Gear Up for Training On National Contract in Las Vegas Set for November 16-18 at Bally's/Paris Hotels

NALC branch leaders from throughout the nation are getting ready for a three-day National Training Conference in Las Vegas November 16-18 to learn the details of the new 2006-2011 National Agreement and how to implement its terms in their local work places.

Hundreds of NALC officials already have reserved rooms at Bally's, the official hotel, adjacent to the conference location at the Paris Las Vegas Hotel.

Activity starts at 4 p.m. on Friday, November 16 when registration will begin for attendance at four separate workshops on Saturday, November 17, where the various intricacies of the contract will be discussed by NALC national officers. Members can register in Concorde A at the Paris hotel.

A welcoming reception will be held Friday night, November 16, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Concorde B and C at the Paris hotel.

On Saturday, four workshops will be conducted, each being given three times at locations in the Paris hotel. The workshops will run from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.; 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The four workshops are:

- **Laying the Groundwork for a Strategic Partnership** — A discussion of how interaction by NALC members with the Postal Service can help both the U.S. Postal Service and letter carriers.
- **Back to the Future: Work Methods and the Next Wave of Automation** — A review of why the Postal Service is investing in new automation, focusing on implementation of Flat Sequencing System (FSS).
- **The New Carrier Workforce and the New World of 'Shared Services'** — A review of staffing issues including elimination of casuals; transitional employees replacing casuals; computerized bidding; and 'Shared Services' and the impact on city letter carriers.
- **NALC's Strategy on Health Benefits** — A discussion on the crisis in employer-provided health care; a history of Article 21 provisions; the case for a city carrier-only health plan; retirees and the city carrier-only plan; NALC's strategy on future health benefits; and the need for universal health insurance.

On Sunday, November 18, a General Session will be held from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Paris hotel at which NALC President William H. Young will discuss "The Road Ahead: Outsourcing, the new Postal Reform law, and the Future of the U.S. Postal Service."

'Misc' Category Deductions Explained

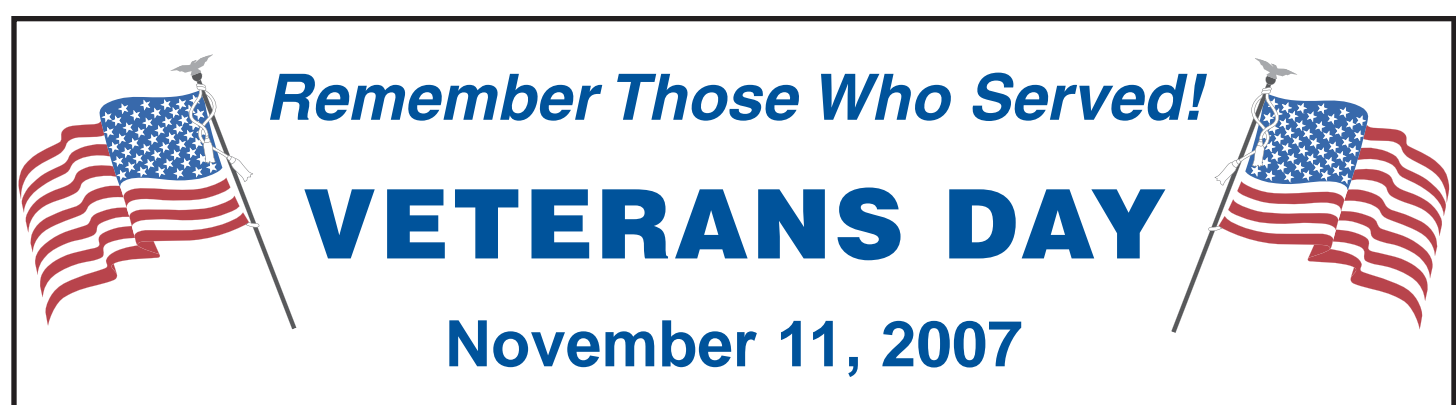
Many members have inquired about a large deduction amount under the "MISC" category on their recent paycheck that included the \$686 COLA cash-out payment. The reason is that the usual tax deductions were taken out separately for regular pay and the COLA payment, with the COLA deductions included in the MISC category.

Ordinarily, the pay stub shows the normal deductions—such as federal tax, state tax, Medicare, health plan, dental, vision, TSP, and retirement. This recent stub also should include four deductions for the \$686 COLA payment—federal and state income tax, Medicare, and Social Security. Carriers with a pay amount under FLSA would have these four categories repeated a third time.

Because of limited space, there is not enough room for so many deductions to be listed separately on the pay stub. All the deductions that do not fit in the regular slots on the pay stub are grouped under MISC, resulting in the large deduction total. For instance, it has been common for the Social Security, Medicare, and federal taxes on the \$686 COLA payment to be lumped into the MISC category.

If there is a question about the total, the only way to check each deduction individually is to refer to the pay journal, which shows all deductions and does not group them together. Letter carriers who wish to review their pay journals should request copies from their station manager.

For further information, contact your National Business Agent.



Second COLA Starts with \$21 CSRS Annuitants Get 2.3% Hike in 2008; FERS-covered Retirees Get 2% Increase

The projected accumulation for the second regular cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) under the 2006-2011 National Agreement stood at \$21 following release October 17 of the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for September.

The second COLA will be based on inflation between July 2007 and January 2008 and will be payable in the second full pay period following release of the January 2008 index.

The \$21 annual accumulation equals one cent per hour or \$0.80 per pay period.

Retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) will receive a cost-of-living adjustment of 2.3 percent in 2008 based on the CPI-W for September, the final month of the year-long period reflecting the increase in the CPI-W between the third quarter of 2006 and the third quarter of 2007.

Retirees under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) will receive a COLA of 2.0 percent. Under current law, FERS COLA increases are set at 2.0 percent when the regular CSRS COLA is between 2.0 percent and 3.0 percent.

The accumulation toward the 2008 COLA for Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA) participants stands at 3.4 percent based on the latest figures. The 2008 FECA COLA will be based on the increase in the CPI-W between December 2006 and December 2007.

Postal Victims of California Wildfires Eligible for PERF Disaster Grants

Active and retired postal employees in California who were victims of the wildfires that destroyed more than 1,300 homes are eligible for assistance from the Postal Employees' Relief Fund as they try to restore their homes and lives.

The fund, created and operated by the four postal unions, including NALC, three management associations and the U.S. Postal Service, provides outright grants to postal employees who suffer damage from major natural disasters and home fires.

California fire victims can apply for assistance from PERF by going to its website, www.postalrelief.com, and downloading an application form and information; by calling PERF at (202) 408-1869, or by writing to Postal Employees' Relief Fund, P.O. Box 34500, Washington, DC 20043-4500.

The fund is financed primarily by donations from postal employees through the Combined Federal Campaign, which is currently underway across the nation. The CFC designation number for PERF this year is #10268.

At its last meeting on October 26, the PERF Executive Committee approved another \$287,000 in grants to victims of the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes and \$31,000 in other grants to non-hurricane postal victims in Virginia, New York, Maryland, Florida, New Jersey and Louisiana. The Fund has made grants of more than \$3.3 million to date for victims of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, with about 700 cases still being processed.