

*The Official Newsletter of  
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC*



# THE SENTINEL

December 2020

## ***Tentative National Agreement***

***Statement from President Rolando:*** membership ratification vote.

“Today I am pleased to announce that NALC and the U.S. Postal Service have reached a tentative agreement on a new national contract, a goal we have been working toward continuously for the last 17 months. As I have repeatedly reported many times, NALC followed a dual-track approach to achieve a new National Agreement with ongoing negotiations and the presentation of the best-possible case for our proposals in interest arbitration. I am proud of the case and the evidence we amassed in the interest arbitration proceeding, but I am even more pleased that letter carriers will now get to decide whether or not to accept this tentative agreement in a ratification vote, following the procedure outlined in the NALC Constitution.

I’d like to thank all of the officers and staff who worked so hard to reach this proposed National Agreement. We will proceed to a ratification election. However, in view of the ongoing pandemic, we will have to handle the election a little differently than in the past. In the days and weeks ahead, we will organize a virtual national rap session (via video link) and develop mechanisms for a ballot committee to conduct the ratification vote in the safest manner possible. We will use all of our communication channels in the days and weeks ahead to inform the membership as we work out the details. In the meantime, the interest arbitration proceeding has been suspended pending the results of the

**The 2019 National Agreement will last 44 months,** covering the period from September 20, 2019, to May 20, 2023. The agreement provides four annual general wage increases and seven cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). In addition, effective Nov. 19, 2022, a new top step (Step P) will be added to the career letter carrier pay scales, which will be \$444 annually greater than Step O. The agreement also provides for the automatic conversion of city carrier assistants (CCAs) to career status no later than after 24 months of relative standing, providing full fringe benefits and peace of mind to non-career carriers. It also maintains existing protections against subcontracting and layoffs.

**We have summarized the major features of the contract** in the NALC Bulletin which will be sent to stations and offices throughout the country. Full details about the tentative agreement, along with projected pay charts, other contractual changes, and information about new and amended memorandums of understanding (MOUs), will be presented in the December issue of The Postal Record. They will also be distributed through the union’s electronic platforms in the days to come.

**The NALC Executive Council unanimously recommends approval of the tentative agreement.”**

# **NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38**

**National Association of Letter Carriers**

**374 Morris Avenue  
Springfield, NJ 07081**

**Phone  
973-564-7244**

**e-mail  
NALC38@VERIZON.NET**

**FAX  
973-564-7673**

## **Branch Officers**

Michael J.O'Neill	President
Dan Szucs	Executive Vice President
Joseph S. Rutkoski III	Treasurer
Mark McGrady	Director of City Delivery
Christine A. Strasser	Financial Secretary
Pete Bednarz	FT Area Rep/HBR
Roy Jancio	Sergeant-At-Arms
Ron Villegas	Director of Retirees

### **BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES**

Keith Hemmings	Richard O'Connell Jr.
Joseph Otero	Armando Pedreira
	Dominic Walton

### **PART TIME AREA REPRESENTATIVES**

Clint Colie	Mike Hedglin
Roy Jancio	Joe Otero
Armando Pedreira	Ernesto Rivera
Dominic Walton	Joseph Zammito

### **NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT**

Larry Cirelli 212-868-0284

### **BRANCH 38 ATTORNEY**

Donald Millman, Esq. 973-669-9776

### **MUTUAL BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE**

Tamara Humphrey 973-444-5128

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

### **BRANCH MEETINGS**

January 6, 2021

February 3, 2021

March 3, 2021

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Steward Training  
via Zoom  
January 12, 2021

Retirement Seminar  
via Zoom  
January 17, 2021

Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
January 18, 2021

**NJ Merged Branch 38  
Web Site**

<http://www.branch38nalc.com/>

# *We Have a Contract!*



## **President's Report**

**by Mike O'Neill**

I would like to wish every member of NJ Merged Branch 38 and your families a safe and joyful Christmas, holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year. This year has presented many unprecedented challenges, and I thank each of you for taking those challenges head on, serving the American public beyond anyone's expectations, and for supporting each other. As the COVID-19 vaccine is being rolled out, we can finally see light at the end of the tunnel. I look forward to the day when we can all celebrate together the end of this terrible chapter in our history, just as we worked together to get through it. I also want to remind everyone that the pandemic is not yet over, and that we must remain vigilant in our efforts to stem the tide. Please continue to maintain six feet of social distancing when ever possible, wash your hands as often as possible, try not to touch your face, and wear a mask.

**Congratulations to President Rolando and the entire NALC Executive Council** on the recently negotiated tentative national agreement with the Postal Service. These negotiations were certainly difficult, given the political and financial status of both the country and the Postal Service. I look forward to learning more of the details of the agreement, but it appears that most of the concerns of the membership were addressed. Here are some of the highlights as reported in the NALC Bulletin:

**The contract will cover the period of time from September 20, 2019 through May 20, 2023, a total of 44 months.** There are four general wage increases, the first two of which will be retroactive. There are seven cost of living increases, the first two of which will be retroactive.

**The contract provides for the addition of a new top step to Tables One and Two on Nov. 19, 2022.** The new career Step P will be \$444 annually greater than Step O. Carriers with at least 46 weeks in Step O on Nov. 19, 2022, will advance to Step P. Those with fewer than 46 weeks will advance to Step P upon reaching 46 weeks in Step O. Effective June 19, 2021, the CCA Step CC hourly pay rate (currently \$17.29) will be eliminated, and CCA Step BB and its higher pay rate (currently \$17.79) will become

the new entry step for newly hired CCAs. A new PTF Step AA, with a waiting period of 46 weeks to PTF Step A, has been created as the starting wage for CCAs converted to career under the new 24-month automatic conversion. The hourly pay of PTF Step AA will equal the hourly pay of Full-time Regular Step A.

**While the Postal Service will maintain additional CCAs afforded to it under the Sunday package formula mutually agreed to during the previous contract, all CCAs in every size office who would have otherwise continued as non-career employees after 24 months of relative standing will now be automatically converted to career status.** Those CCAs who have reached 24 months of relative standing without being converted to career will be converted to part-time flexibles and placed in a new PTF Step AA in Table Two. The Step AA hourly rate will equal the Full-time Step A hourly rate, and the waiting period in PTF Step AA to PTF Step A will be 46 weeks. Upon conversion to full time, regardless of the PTF step they are currently in, PTFs will be placed in the full-time step commensurate with their number of weeks as a PTF, and retain their time credit toward the next step.

**In 2020 and 2021, there is no reduction in the Postal Service's share of premium costs for career letter carriers' health insurance (73 percent of the weighted average Federal Employees Health Benefits [FEHB] Program plan premium, capped at 76 percent of any given plan's premium).** The Postal Service's share will decline by 1 percentage point to 72 percent in 2022 and 2023, and will be capped at 75 percent of any given plan's premium. The bi-weekly impact of this Article 21 change will depend on which plans carriers enroll in, but will, in any case, represent a small fraction of the biweekly pay increases provided by Article 9 of the tentative agreement.

**On health insurance for CCAs, the tentative contract maintains the Postal Service's biweekly contribution of \$125 toward self-only coverage in the USPS Non-career Health Plan for Plan Years 2020 and 2021.** For CCAs who wish to select self-plus-one or self-and-family coverage under the USPS plan, the first-year contribution by USPS will be 65 percent in Plan Years 2020 and 2021, rising to 75 percent in their second year of service. However, effective in Plan Year 2022, the Postal Service will contribute 75 percent of the premiums for self only, self plus one or self plus family, regardless of the year of employment.

**Increase in uniform allowance on May 21, 2021, to \$487 (5 percent increase from current rate) and on May 21, 2022, to \$499 (another 2.5 percent increase).** Additional allowance credits for newly eligible employees have been increased by the same percentages. Article 11, Sections 3 and 4 have been modified to now allow full-time employees who work their holiday to elect to have their annual leave balance credited with up to eight hours of annual leave in lieu of receiving holiday pay. Please refer to the NALC Bulletin in your office or at [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) for more detailed information.

# January 6, 2021 Branch 38 Meeting

## Via Zoom

In the best interest of the safety and health of our members and their families, and given the Governor's regulations regarding gatherings during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly Branch 38 meeting scheduled for January 6, 2021 will be conducted via Zoom. Attached below is the information regarding how to attend the meeting on your computer or phone.

**Topic:** NJ Merged Branch 38 January Membership Meeting

**Time:** Jan 6, 2021 07:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

**Meeting ID:** 698 807 2647

**One tap mobile**

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+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

**Meeting ID:** 698 807 2647

**Find your local number:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

***Check Out The New***  
***Branch 38***  
***Facebook Page***

***“NJ Merged Branch 38”***

***Stay Connected***

## ***Membership Recognition***

The NALC provides lapel pins in recognition for membership of 25 years or more, for each additional five years. We also award Gold Cards for 50 years of membership, and plaques for 70 & 75 years of membership. The Gold Card comes with the added benefit of no more dues. All of these special awards are available upon request. If you believe that you are entitled to any of these awards, contact Director of Retirees, Ron Villegas at 973-564-7244 (Ext.21) and we will check our records and request the awards from NALC Headquarters. Thanks to all of you for your loyal support.

# January 12 Steward Training via Zoom

Branch 38 will be holding Shop Steward Training viz Zoom until the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic are lifted, and the safety of our members can be insured. The first session is scheduled for Tuesday evening on January 12, 2021 at 7:30 PM. In anticipation of the acceptance by the membership of the recently negotiated Tentative Agreement, we will be focusing on Local Negotiations. This will include preparations for negotiations, strategy, and each of the twenty two items contained in the LMOU. All shop stewards are encouraged to attend, and all Branch 38 members are welcome.

**Topic: Branch 38 LMOU Negotiations Training**

**Time: Jan 12, 2021 07:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>

**Meeting ID: 698 807 2647**

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## COVID-19 Information

Information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and how it applies to the Postal Service and letter carriers continues to change almost daily. A comprehensive source for all of the relevant information can be found at the NALC website, [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). Here is a short list of what you will find there:

- Statements from NALC President Fred Rolando
- Podcasts with updates regarding COVID-19
- MOU's in effect during the pandemic
- All mandatory COVID-19 related stand-up talks
- Instructions for conducting 1838c's and 3999's
- An email address for COVID-19 questions

Additional information can be found on the Center for Disease Control website, [cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://cdc.gov/coronavirus).

## COVID-19 Leave Issues

There have been several changes in leave usage during the COVID-19 pandemic as the result of Congressional action and agreements between the Postal Service and NALC. Here is a short list:

- 80 hours of Emergency Sick Leave is available over and above the employee's sick leave balance for COVID related absences and child care issues, available through 12/31/20.
- 12 weeks of Extended Family Medical Leave for child care issues, available through 12/31/20
- 80 hours of sick leave for dependent care may be used for child care issues resulting from the pandemic.
- An additional 80 hours of paid leave for CCA's for COVID related absences

For additional information regarding COVID leave related issues, contact your Area Representative or the Branch office.

# **Retirement Seminar via Zoom - Jan. 17**

NJ Merged Branch 38 will be holding a retirement seminar via zoom for those considering their option to retire during the next few years on Sunday, January 17, 2021 at 10:00 AM. Information relative to CSRS and FERS retirement plans will be addressed.

We will be covering topics such as how to calculate your annuity and carrying health and life insurance into retirement. We will discuss what information you will need to complete the application for retirement, and what you need to do to prepare for retirement.

**Topic: Branch 38 Retirement Seminar**

**Time: Jan 17, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>**

**Meeting ID: 698 807 2647**

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## **NALC Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive**

The NALC has established the Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive to temporarily replace the Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, which was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has resulted in more families being in need of assistance, and the food banks' ability to collect donations and provide that assistance has been hampered by the pandemic.

The Donor Drive is designed to enable our members, their family and friends to make a monetary donation to a food bank in or near your community. Simply go to [nalc.org](http://nalc.org). wait for the Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive banner, click on "More Information," scroll down to "Select Your State Food Bank," select New Jersey, and click the link to the food bank of your choice.

During the holiday season, this would be a wonderful way to express your gratitude for the many blessings in your life, by sharing with those less fortunate. Your generosity will see that a child in your community doesn't have to go to bed hungry. Thank you for your very kind support.

# February 3, 2021 Branch 38 Meeting

## Via Zoom

In the best interest of the safety and health of our members and their families, and given the Governor's regulations regarding gatherings during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly Branch 38 meeting scheduled for February 3, 2021 will be conducted via Zoom. Attached below is the information regarding how to attend the meeting on your computer or phone.

**Topic: February Membership Meeting**

**Time: Feb 3, 2021 07:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>**

**Meeting ID: 698 807 2647**

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**Meeting ID: 698 807 2647**

**Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6988072647>**

## Sign Up for the Letter Carrier

**Political Fund Now!!!**

**Your Job is in  
the Ballance!**

**Go to: <http://nalc.org/>**

### 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. Federal law requires us to use our best efforts to collect and report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer of individuals whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year.

**THE SENTINEL**  
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC  
374 Morris Avenue  
Springfield, NJ 07081

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## **Branch Meeting Information & Directions**

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Wednesday of each month, except July & August.

The Branch Meetings are held at:

**ELKS BPO LODGE #2116**  
**665 RAHWAY AVENUE**  
**WOODBIDGE, NJ 07095**  
**732-634-2116**

**Directions:**

**SOUTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #129 to Route 9 North to Woodbridge Exit (Just after the Forge Restaurant on your right). At the end of the Exit Ramp, turn right onto Main Street (Route 514) and proceed until you reach a monument at City Hall. Bear left onto Rahway Avenue. The Elks is @1/2 mile down the road on your left.

**NORTH** on Garden State Parkway. Take Exit #127 to Route 9 North and follow directions above.

**NJ Turnpike.** Take Exit 12 (Carteret). Bear right after toll booth and turn left at light after overpass. Proceed through industrial park to Rahway Avenue and turn left. The Elks is 1 mile ahead on your right.