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May 2020

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Ted Thompson President

#### From the President's Desk

For the second straight month of News & Views I will be addressing the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and how it continues to dominate our daily and future work life. As of

my last numbers update, the Postal Service has reported 1,420 employees have tested positive for COVID-19, another 945 were presumed positive, over 10,000 were quarantined by a health care provider or by self and there have been 51 deaths of USPS employees, 11 of which, were letter carriers. This past Tuesday (April 28<sup>th</sup>) was Workers Memorial Day. Labor leader Mother Jones had a saying, "Prey for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." The COVID-19 pandemic has created two major threats to letter carriers: safety and political. While there are numerous issues within the Postal Service there are no higher direct threats to us than on the safety and political front and therefore my article will focus on these threats.

With regard to safety, there is now a vast amount of information available through scientists and health care professionals on coronavirus. Most recently, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) tripled the number of possible coronavirus symptoms. In addition to the already known cough, fever and shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, the CDC now includes chills, repeated shaking, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell and COVID toes. A new study has found the novel coronavirus has mutated into at least 30 different variations and the CDC director has just warned a second wave of coronavirus this winter will likely be far more deadly because it is likely to coincide with the start of flu season and warned that having two simultaneous respiratory outbreaks would put unimaginable strain on the health-care system. Other studies are finding that coronavirus may cause lasting damage throughout the body including permanent damage to the lungs, heart and liver. While short term effects and long-term effects contine to change the more we learn about this virus one thing is certain; coronavirus has created a public health crisis and everyone should do whatever possible to help contain it.

To help contain the spread of coronavirus the Postal Service now has a COVID-19 Supplies Command Center in Topeka, Kansas. Lately, I have heard zero reports of the Postal Service failing to supply carriers with any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requested. These include masks, gloves, air and hand sanitizers along with disinfecting and sanitizing cleaners. The Postal Service has spent millions of dollars to provide PPEs to its employees for a reason; they help protect and prevent the spread of coronavirus. Many coronavirus carriers are either asymptomatic - meaning they are infected with the virus but show no symptoms or they are presymptomatic meaning they can spread the virus to others without first showing signs of it themselves. For this reason, the coronavirus is difficult to maintain. According to the CDC, simply being near an infected person who coughs, sneezes or talks can expose you to their infected respiratory droplets. It's these virus containing particles that land in your eyes, nose or mouth, or if they get on your hands and you rub any of those places on your face, you could possibly acquire the infection. The use of PPE is as much, if not more, about possibly spreading the disease than acquiring it.

Recently, the Postal Service has modified its policy to now require employees to wear face coverings or masks

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#### **NEWS & VIEWS**

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## EDITOR'S NOTES Branch 43 members are encouraged to send articles to the News & Views. Items of interest about your station, current

of interest about your station, current events, etc. are welcome. The following guidelines apply:

(1) We may edit your article for grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.

- (2) If it should prove necessary to edit an article for space or coherence, every effort will be made to preserve the substance and intent of the article.
- (3) Unsigned articles will not be printed. Letters, criticism and suggestions for improving the News & Views are also welcome. If your letter is not intended for publication, please state so. Letters held to 150 words are less likely to be edited.
- (4) Articles must arrive at the Branch office by the 15th in order to make the next month's issue. Digital format is preferred. Send items to: thompson@branch43.org

Printed in House

President cont.

when there is a local or state facecovering order or directive in place. In initially, Governor DeWine's protocol called for, "No mask, no work, no service, no exceptions." Governor DeWine then retracted this requirement for customers and patrons of businesses. Lt. Governor Jon Husted emphasized that employers and employees will be required to wear a face covering while on the job. The Director of the Ohio Department of Health, Dr. Amy Acton, and her most recent Director's Stay Safe Ohio Order dated April 30th discusses requirements for wearing facial coverings. In such order, businesses must require all employees to wear facial coverings except for limited circumstances. As of my morning telecom today (May 4<sup>th</sup>) the Postal Service is not mandating employees to wear face coverings or masks. However, national is reviewing Ohio's current policy. Currently as I write this there are discussions on how to implement the Ohio order. This could become a mandate. If or until then, with that said, because employees may be asymptomatic carriers, I highly encourage all carriers wear facial coverings or masks to help prevent the spread of coronavirus in the workplace. Ohio Lt. Governor Husted stated, "Wearing a mask is something we do out of mutual respect for one another. At work, you wear a mask because you want to protect your fellow employees and because you want to protect your customers." I agree with Lt. Governor Husted. If you cannot wear a face covering for health reasons or wearing a face covering is not advisable for health purposes, you should make your supervisor and steward aware. The Postal Service also has on hand and has agreed to provide the use of N -95 masks instead of disposable or cloth masks if the employee's physician indicates that use of the N-95 mask, as opposed to the others, will reduce and employees risk of transmission due to some diagnosed condition. I have personally taken many calls and talked to many members on the whole mask issue. While many of the carriers that have objected the idea to me as unconstitutional, I respectfully disagree. I do not know of any law or court that supports such view. Furthermore, its somewhat distressing to me that we would not do what we could to protect our Postal family. While I understand that wearing a mask or facial covering is burdensome and I understand that we do have some members who believe they have minimal risk or care of becoming infected by coronavirus, I also understand that we have high risk members or they have a family member that is high risk. All I ask in this is that, if or until, wearing a mask becomes mandatory, as long as it is voluntary, please consider and show a little love for yourself and those around you and consider wearing a mask or facial covering while at work. Do not take wearing a mask, however, to become a be-all-end-all solution while at work. Routine maintenance and social distancing are equally important.

Nationally, the Postal Service and the NALC committed to make social distancing a high priority through Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) M-01915. Nationally, the Postal Service is stating that they cannot always guarantee social distancing. This MOU did call for certain nationwide criteria and required the local parties to discuss local issues. While initially there was back and forth talks between both myself and Postal Service representatives, acting Cincinnati Postmaster Lisa Rogers and I agreed to terms with how to implement M-01915 on a local level. All branch stewards have been invited to two different teleconferences with me on this subject. All stewards have received this local MOU, which was signed on April 20<sup>th</sup>. This MOU will be printed in this edition and I ask all carriers to review and let your steward or the branch office know if anything is not being followed.

President cont.

The intent and purpose of this was to allow a minim six-foot distance between employees to the greatest extent possible and to alter or change any office practices where employees are routinely within six feet of one another. Please continue to social distance whenever possible and follow these guidelines. Social distancing continues to be a major contribution to preventing the spread of coronavirus. After this MOU was signed, the Postal Service additionally agreed with how to implement the terms of M-01915 nationally. The original MOU committed both the NALC and USPS to limiting the number of employees working outside their employing office. While this limitation was to the extent possible, when its not possible, the Postal Service has now agreed to three additional stipulations. First, the supervisor and steward in the losing office will jointly determine which carrier will go to the gaining office. Second, if there is concern from either the loaned carrier or those in the gaining office about the loaned carrier entering the building/facility, the mail will be placed on the dock or somewhere outside where the loaned carrier can load it without entering the building. Third, if a loaned carrier does not bring a vehicle from the losing office, the gaining office will have appropriate cleaning supplies for the carrier to sanitize the vehicle he/she will be using. On that note, the Postal Service has committed to providing all carriers with disinfectant spray and wipes to properly sanitize their vehicles. Carriers also have the right to cleaning supplies for office equipment if they choose. Again, please let your steward or the branch office know if these are not being followed. In any event a carrier feels there is a threat to their safety, you need to complete a PS Form 1767, which should be readily available in all units, keep your copy, and provide a copy to your immediate supervisor. Your supervisor must respond within a day in writing on how they will abate the hazard if one exists. If your supervisor does not agree a hazard exists, they must forward that on to the manager to address. If your manager does not address the hazard or fails to recognize a hazard you believe as viable, ask to speak with your union steward. The union, in circumstances, can immediately file a grievance at Formal A under Article 14 for safety and health related issues.

Continuing on safety, all of which I have addressed so far are just precautionary measures to attempt to prevent the employee from contacting coronavirus while at work. As I started my article with, thousands of employees have tested positive already. Therefore, the possibility of becoming infected is al-

ways there at work. Employees have the right to file a claim through the Department of Labor and Office of Workers Compensation if they believe they became exposed to coronavirus while at work and on the job. Not surprisingly, RWCA Doug Lawrence informed all the Regions Presidents that the Postal Service is challenging all claims submitted by carriers for coronavirus. On one hand the Postal Service states social distancing is not attainable, while on the other hand they are challenging claims. If you contract and believe you became exposed on the job, you need to fill out a CA-1. This office will help any carrier who requests it in processing these claims. There will be a series of questions asked of you specifically from how many people are with/by you at the time clock, social distancing in the office, community exposure and if there was anyone you were around whether on the street or in the office, amongst other questioning. The NALC will help you create a detailed storyline for both the claims examiner and your medical physician writing the narrative.

While safety is an important and immediate threat, we face a serious threat on the political front with the viability and sustainability of our employer. With the volume of calls our office has received, I have little doubt many have heard plenty about the financial situation the Postal Service is currently facing because the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of volumes and revenues are at unprecedented amounts. The Postmaster General testified before Congress that the agency could run out of money by September. Every carrier must understand now the importance of getting the Postal Service included in any future stimulus package. Our immediate priority is to make sure this happens and for this to happen, I need your help, all of yours help. I need you, your family and your friends to take action. The NALC has drafted a white paper and it is posted on both our branch website and nationals. The white paper addressed the five main points that including making a direct appropriation of at least \$25 billion to the Postal Service, continue appropriation for the duration of the crisis, reimburse the USPS for the cost of COVID-19 related leave, ensure equal treatment for USPS employees with other front-line workers exposed to health risks in regard to hazard pay and remove the Federal Finance Bank's discretion to impose operational changes and policy conditions of the Postal Service's borrowing authorities. I need your help in getting this message to your members of congress. You can call your congressional representatives; you can write them letters or the simplest way that will only take a few minutes of your time would be to go

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President cont.

to the NALC action network. This can be found online or through the NALC app. Please, please take a moment of time to do this to help secure our future. Make this threat to our future a priority to you and our message will be heard!

On other news the 2020 NALC Food Drive has been postponed to a later date not yet determined. However, the State Association and local AFL-CIO are looking at ways members can contribute and the public can contribute locally. Once details are finalized, I will get this information out to the stewards. The NALC national convention has not been cancelled yet, but I strongly advise not to make any travel arrangements as I don't see the possibility of being able to hold one. National is looking into numerous alternative options. Route inspections, 3999's and 1838's have been cancelled through the summer. Locally, officer meetings and membership meetings are cancelled as the most recent Ohio order still prohibited gatherings of ten or more people. Once these restrictions are lifted, I hope to return to having these events. Also, just recently, Groesbeck carrier Kyle West was honored at the White House by President Trump for his actions offering and helping customers on his route receive essential items during the lockdown. This no doubt was historic for Kyle, the branch and the Postal Service and he represented himself and the agency greatly. Kyle: congratulations and thank you!

Fraternally, Ted Thompson



Marc Ashmon LPO

#### Putting Our Best Foot Forward

As letter carriers when we exit our postal vehicles each day, we hit the ground Putting Our Best Foot Forward. Literally since most of us walk our routes for a living. Symbolically we show ourselves in the most positive way possible to make a favorable impression. This is why the USPS is

rated as America's favorite federal agency according to the Gallup poll. Consistently we show the public how reliable we are by delivering under all circumstances from natural disasters to the covid-19 pandemic we are currently facing. We are also neighborhood watchdogs saving patrons' property and/or lives

every day. We may not wear capes, but we are truly American heroes.

As letter carriers we deliver our legislative message Putting Our Best Foot Forward by educating and informing members of congress on issues that can affect letter carriers and their families. We remind them that we are the nation's lifeline, providing the only truly universal delivery and communications network, connecting to every home and business in the country. We are critical to rural areas, small towns, the elderly, military veterans and most American companies. The USPS, with 640,000 employees is among the largest employers in all 50 states – and the single largest civilian employer of veterans.

As letter carriers many of us work long hours delivering mail, then go home and once again exhibit Putting Our Best Foot Forward for our families. With our busy lives we don't always realize how important the legislative side of our job is. However, in this current climate it is the single most important thing concerning letter carriers and our livelihood. The NALC's legislative army does a great job Putting Our Best Foot Forward by cultivating and building strong relationships with our members of congress, but make no mistake about it, without our political action fund called the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) we would not have the strength and power we carry with congress.

As letter carriers let's use our strength in numbers and our solidarity as a union to protect our future by Putting Our Best Foot Forward and contributing to the LCPF. Remember this is not about a carrier's political affiliation or whether you lean left or right. It's about protecting our job and ensuring our word is heard echoing through the chambers on capitol hill. The 535 members of congress have a lot of control over letter carriers' wages, benefits and our future. Joining the LCPF provides letter carriers with the opportunity to build electoral and legislative power required to ensure decisions that impact their lives are made with their best interests in mind. Let's take advantage of the protection that the LCPF affords us. Contributing a few dollars today to save our tomorrow.

The Letter Carrier Political Fund is a non-partisan entity whose primary concern is to elect qualified candidates regardless of party affiliation. The LCPF identifies and contributes to candidates who support issues important to all letter carriers and raises money for the purpose of defeating or electing candidates to office. Union dues are not used, *and cannot be used*, for political contributions. LCPF contributions are voluntary and can stop at any time. There is no open season. The easiest way to become a mem-

LPO cont.

ber of the Letter Carrier Political Fund is to contribute through automatic payroll deduction. Contact your branch leaders with questions about how you can contribute.

In Unionism and Solidarity, Marc T. Ashmon, LPO



Legislative Political Organizer (LPO) is a new full time position created by the NALC to serve the membership in a variety of ways, including educating members on the current state of legislation, training & assist-

ing state associations & branches to help carry out our plan, meeting with members of congress & educating members on the importance of the LCPF.

Marc T. Ashmon has been a letter carrier for 25 years & is a Leadership Academy graduate of class 16. Prior to his appointment as LPO he held various positions in the NALC- branch president for 9 yrs., route inspection team, NALC observer & NJ State Food Drive Coordinator. Marc's territory as LPO includes 10 states, 4 Regions (11,12,14,15) and the Caribbean (Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands). Marc can be reached and is available through email or cell phone.

Email: ashmon@nalc.org - cell #: 202-288-7440.



Chris Rhea Formal A Rep

#### **Incidental Leave**

My last article was in the January News and Views. I wrote about being safe in the wintry weather. I do not think I saw another snowflake after I wrote it. So, this article I was considering writing about the Coronavirus/Covid-19, social distancing and quarantin-

ing hoping that would make it all go away, but I figured the odds of that are slim. I am sure Ted and Pat have that covered this month anyway.

What I did want to cover is requesting annual

leave, specifically incidental annual leave. I apologize to my fellow associate office carriers, but this will pertain primarily to the City offices.

As most carriers in the city of Cincinnati are aware, the 2016-2019 LMOU changed the way annual leave is approved/disapproved in the city. Item 12 of the Cincinnati LMOU reads as follows:

## Procedures for Submission of Applications for Annual Leave During Other Than the Choice Vacation Periods

Incidental annual leave will be approved by management for up to 13 percent (13%) of the current career employee workforce at each station or branch except during the month of December as noted in Item 5 – up to seven percent (7%) will be approved.

Requests for incidental annual leave shall be made as far in advance as possible by submission of forms 3971 in duplicate. The 3971 will be hand delivered to the employee's immediate supervisor who in turn will initial receipt of the form. The supervisor will approve such leave request by return of validated copy of form 3971 within 24 hours.

Should an employee apply for leave with less than 72 hours' notice, the leave approval will be at management's discretion. Should an employee request leave which would result in more than 13 percent (13%) of the current career workforce off, or more than 7 percent (7%) off during the month of December for the weeks available during the choice vacation period in accordance with item 5, the leave approval will be at management's discretion. Leave under this provision will be approved on a first come/ first served basis. Any employee(s) requesting leave on the same date for the same time, the senior employee shall be approved. If management determines annual leave is available on any given day in a station or branch, an "Opportunity Roster" will be used to determine who will be allowed annual leave. This will be done by seniority on a rotating basis."

I have worked on two grievances from the city where management improperly denied a carrier's annual leave request when the office was below the 13% threshold notated in Item 12 of the LMOU. I would bet a lot of money those are not the only two times this has happened. There are a few things I

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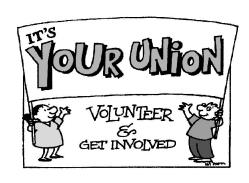
Gregory Bach Linda Baker Charles Bryant Jr. Robert Curtis William Dryden Furnish Ronald Kathleen Griesinger Connie Griffieth Ralph Jordan II Craig King Bill Bill Lipp Deborah Marksberry Jaimee McNulty **Terrill** Nolan David Perine Billie Powel1 Reis Joseph **Russell** Judy Michael Scott George Smed Jr. William Steward Alan Wileman

May Retiree Birthdays

## **April YOPC Attendees**

Deborah Bryant
JR Ford
Jerry Giesting
Art Holt
Burt Hughes
Dick Keller
Gerry Mees
Jim Metz
Bob Shepherd
Robert Wilkinson

Join fellow retirees next month for sharing old times, playing cards and lunch



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Dewey Kelley
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## June 1st permitting

Price Hill Chili

Call Gerry Mees (859) 491-2008 Or Greg Stulz (859) 380-9512 Page 8 May News & Views

Formal A cont.

want to point out about Item 12. Firstly, make sure you fill out a PS Form 3971 in duplicate, this assures you get a copy back for your records. If you don't want to fill out two forms or make a copy, at the very least get your supervisor to fill out the space that says "Signature of Supervisor and Date Notified" and take a picture for your records. Secondly, notice that your supervisor has 24 hours to get back to you to let you know it is approved. If they do not give you a copy back within 24 hours, ask your steward to file a grievance. Lastly, if management denies the request when your office is below the 13% threshold, and you've turned in the request 72 hours or more in advance of the requested day, let your steward know immediately so he/she can file a grievance. These provisions were placed in the LMOU for the carriers' benefit. It is imperative to make certain management follows these rules. Even though management may believe they have a legitimate reason to deny the leave, the rule is the rule. If your office is below the 13% (7% in December) threshold and you give more than 72 hours' notice, management must approve your incidental leave request.

I hope everyone and their families are healthy and safe through this trying time. Thank you all for your service and for sticking through this. Letter carriers are some of the toughest people I know. There is a light at the end of the tunnel, we just must keep working towards it.

In solidarity, Chris Rhea



Matt Bauer Leg. & Pol.

If the Postal Service were a private sector, it would be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest employer in the U.S. Over 600,000 are employed by the post office. Walmart (2.3 million) and Amazon 798,000 are the only private sectors with more employees. If the Postal Service were listed on the Fortune 500, it would be listed at 43<sup>rd</sup> largest company as of 2019.

When it comes to mail, the Covid-19 crisis is catching America

in a vise. On one hand, it has revealed how much we depend on the Postal Service. USPS is the lone gov-

ernment agency that visits our homes and businesses 6 days a week. With stores largely shut down, the USPS is keeping everyone supplied with food, clothes, distance-schooling materials for kids, prescription drugs, and other necessities that we order online. Private companies (such as UPS and FedEx) move a lot of packages, but do not go to every household in the country; often USPS delivers the last mile.

In this crisis, USPS matters even more: Tens of millions of Americans received a postcard from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently that reminded them to socially distance and take other precautions. Many will be receiving a check (or already have) in the mail from the government to stimulate the economy. There are discussions regarding sending Covid-19 tests via mail. In many states, the primary election (OH included) have been dependent on USPS to send ballots via mail. It is also possible that the November general election will also be dependent on the Postal Service.

These are just a few reasons that the Postal Service is so important especially during the time of a crisis. However, due to this crisis, USPS has lost approximately 30-40 percent mail volume. This is causing projection of the Postal Service running out of funds by winter or as early as this fall.

I would like to urge all members of Branch 43 to do 2 things immediately. First and foremost, contact Congress and Senate representatives to request that USPS is included in the next stimulus package. This is easily done by visiting www.branch43.org and follow the link on the home page. Second, please contact me to sign up for the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF). This fund is especially important to help get support from Congress on issues that matter to us. Congress can always pass a law that will take away from us and change the way we operate. This could even include privatizing the Postal Service. Contact me via email at matt.bauer@branch43.org or via phone/text at 513-550-6436. The expectation is that you give \$5 per paycheck to help secure your future.

> Matt Bauer Dir. of Legislation and Political Affairs



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\*\*IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM YOUR REP\*\*

Please read the following message surrounding the recent developments of Coronavirus (COVID-19):

As a precaution for the safety of our customers and families, we will currently only be taking orders via phone until further notice. You will still receive the same quality customer service as before. We appreciate your patience during this uncertain time.

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Pat Mulvaney 513-284-1504

## Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

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Greensboro NC 27497-0905 FAX: 651-456-6041

**April and May Membership Meetings are cancelled** 

Scholarship drawings and raffles will continue at earliest opportunity possible

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# Memorandum of Understanding between the United States Postal Service, Cincinnati



#### and the

#### National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 43

April 20, 2020

Subject: M-01915, Cincinnati

Without prejudice to the position of either party in this MOU, and with the understanding that this MOU is not precedent setting and shall not be cited in any other MOU, grievance proceeding, or any other forum, with exception to enforce the terms of such agreement, the following MOU has been reached between the parties to implement the terms of M-01915:

- The intent of this MOU is to implement terms of M-01915 and maximize social distancing in accordance with CDC guidelines to the extent possible. This MOU shall expire on May 27, 2020. The undersigned will revisit this MOU immediately prior to its expiration to determine if extension is appropriate.
- For all Cincinnati carrier units, to the extent safely possible, all carrier route cases will be separated
  by a minimum six (6) foot distance in accordance with CDC recommendations. Carriers in these
  identified units will have staggered start times in fifteen (15) minute intervals beginning at 0700
  and will be scheduled in groups of ten (10) employees. In these units, the station manager and
  station union steward shall meet to implement such terms.
- 3. All Cincinnati carrier units not identified under item 2 shall go to a two-tier start time comprised of two groups (group A & group B). These groups will be made by assigning groups to every other case. Group A shall begin tour at 0700. Group B shall begin tour at 0850. The assignment of groups is to the route, not to the employee assigned such route. To the maximum extent possible carriers in groups A & B shall not be at the case simultaneously.
- 4. The start times of all routes shall be changed every pay period in order to maintain fairness and overtime opportunities to all. For carriers in item 2, the station manager and union steward shall meet to implement start times and rotations for all routes. For carriers in item 3, every pay period start times will be switched between 0700 & 0850.
- Any carrier who has a start time changed, under this MOU, will not be entitled to out-of-schedule
  premium as outlined in Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) section 434.611 and Article
  8.4.B of the Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM).
- There shall be no more than ten (10) carriers entering begin tour at the same time. Likewise, there
  shall be no more than ten (10) carriers entering end tours at the same time. All carriers entering
  begin tour and end tour shall keep a minimum six (6) foot distance at the time clock.

- Any normal practice in which employees are within a six (6) foot distance shall be altered to allow
  a minimum six (6) foot distance between employees. The station manager and station union
  steward shall meet to implement such terms.
- There shall be at least one (1) daily safety service talk per rotation group. These talks shall be conducted via intercom. The union and safety shall continue to be allowed to address the employees.
- No carrier shall be disciplined for violating such rules cited in this MOU, rather constant communication and awareness shall be offered in order to garner the importance of social distancing.
- The terms of this MOU shall not alter or supersede any other terms or conditions of our national agreement, handbooks or manuals except those specified to promote social distancing in this MOU.
- 11. The undersigned agree to continually monitor and adjust the terms of this MOU through mutual agreement. If the undersigned fail to agree to alter or adjust terms, either party may terminate the entirety of this MOU with one (1) week advance notice of intent to terminate.

Lisa C. Rogers- A/Postmaster, Cincinnati, USPS

Ted N. Thompson- President, Branch 43, NALC

Date

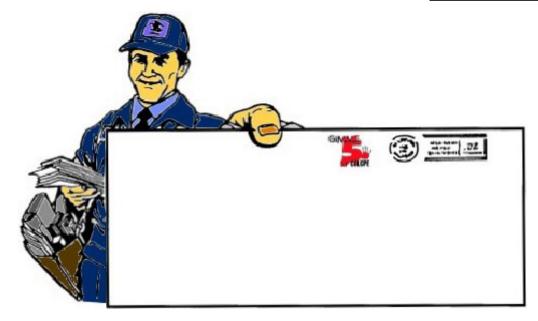
4-20-20

#### Queen City Letter Carriers

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#### **Upcoming Events**

May Officers Meeting - Cancelled May Branch Meeting - Cancelled Memorial Day Holiday - May 25th June YOPC - Wednesday, June 3rd



