



**Branch Officers**

**President - Doug Blevens**

**Vice President - Shane Davis**

**Secretary - Abigail Gray**

**Treasurer - William Craft**

**Proudly Serving**

**Corning - Jonesboro - Marked Tree - Mountain Home - Piggot - Pocahontas -  
Rector - Trumann**

# PRESIDENTS REPORT

## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

It's no secret that letter carriers are creatures of habit and fight change like it's the devil. Moving from the annex to the S&DC has been no exception. The change affects us all in different ways, and we all struggle to adjust. But, adjust we do. Because while we despise change, we are also very resilient and are accustomed to adaptation. I hope we are all beginning to adjust to the new location and will soon figure out this system for sorting markups! Just remember one thing. You're not in this alone. Should you notice any issues, please let us know. Speaking of change, Branch 1131 By-Laws provide for Branch Officer Elections every odd year. So come October, we will be nominating officers. The elections will be in November. My name will not be on the ballot this time. I accepted this position in 2019 and have MOSTLY enjoyed serving as your Branch President. One piece of advice I was given was to "immediately start looking for your replacement", and I look around and see that there are people in our branch more than qualified to lead us. I have lots of personal things going on, and I feel like the branch business might be getting neglected. Barry Bode was a great mentor to me and told me once that he had created a monster. I see exactly what he was talking about. I see great potential in several of our members and can't wait to see how they blossom. I promise to continue to serve the branch in whatever capacity I can, but I feel like we have members who are going places, and I am in the way. I ask that you take a moment and put some thought into what you want out of our branch, and I ask that you show up in October-November and vote for those people who will make us stronger and prouder. Thank you for allowing me to lead as long as you have, and know this, I will be shoulder to shoulder with you all, fighting like hell.

Doug Blevens  
Branch 1131 President

# VP's Corner

## Carrier Practices Matter

One of the most important protections letter carriers have during route adjustments is our daily work practices. The way we carry our routes all year affects how routes are inspected, evaluated, and adjusted. Management uses the data from our normal performance. If we are not consistent, the numbers may not show the true workload of our routes. Working safely and steadily each day, not faster during inspection weeks and not slower at other times, is the best way to keep routes fair. Documentation is also key to protecting your route. Forms like the 3996 for overtime or auxiliary assistance and the 1571 for curtailed mail are not just extra paperwork. They are proof of what really happened. If mail is delayed, if overtime is needed, or if something prevents a normal day, writing it down creates a record that can be used later to challenge unfair adjustments or discipline. Without that paper trail, management's version of events may go unchallenged.

It is also important to take your contractual breaks and lunch. Skipping them may look like you are helping in the moment, but in the long run, it hurts. Breaks and lunches are part of our evaluated time. Not taking them makes routes appear shorter on paper. Over time, this leads to routes being overburdened and carriers working more than eight hours. Working safely, steadily, and within your rights each day is the best way to protect both yourself and your route.

Finally, consistency and credibility go together. When routes are under review, your input matters. If you have worked consistently, documented issues, and kept a normal pace all year, your voice carries weight. Management may run the numbers, but those numbers must reflect reality, and our practices make sure they do. Carrier practices matter every single day.

Shane Davis  
Branch 1131 Vice President

# Region 4 LPO



Hello Sisters and Brothers of Branch 1131.

My name is Matt Tanner. I am the Legislative Political Organizer (LPO) for Region 4 (along with a few other states/regions) of the NALC. I am a letter carrier and a proud NALC member just like you!

I am writing this article in September. Meaning kids are back in school....hopefully your favorite football team is doing well....and unfortunately, Congress is back in session. Basically, as an LPO, my job is to educate our members on the different legislative issues we are collectively facing. With us being federal employees, we not only have to stand up collectively to those managers/postmasters at work, but also have to have a seat at the table for legislative issues that can and do affect us. The problem with legislation, if you are anything like me, the entire process seems to be a joke or even criminal at times. It is so much easier to deal with problems we all see with our own two eyes on a daily basis. Legislation or laws can and usually affect us in a much more serious and long-term way, and unless you are paying attention, they tend to sneak up on us. Many times, they are even passed before we know it. Forcing us to just deal with whatever that outcome may be...and like it or not, we have had negative legislation when either party, Republicans or Democrats, has had control.

Hopefully, you were at least aware of the federal budget that was passed this Summer. Basically, just like your branch does every year...your executive board gets together and discusses foreseeable expenses for the upcoming year....Congress, the House of Representatives, and the Senate set a budget every year. The current administration set its goals for decreasing government spending. Like I stated earlier, we have had negative legislative hits from both parties. The point being, I am not here to tell you how to vote. I hope you do vote, and thanks to all the Veterans out there, we get to vote for what we each think is important to us. Back to the budget for this year...when the budget first went to the House for approval, we as letter carriers faced three (3) major hits to our benefits. The first hit would have changed all active employees to pay 4.4% of their income toward our retirement pension. A little history on this...Prior to 2013, all USPS FERS employees paid .8% (less than 1%) of our income toward our pension. You know..that chart in the Postal Record that shows how much we get every month when we retire based on years of service, etc We pay some money toward that pension, as I stated, if hired prior to 2013, you pay .8%. In 2013, it went up to over 3% and immediately in 2014 it went to 4.4%. Meaning if you were hired in 2014 or after, you are paying over 5 times the amount to get the same benefit when you hit the finish line at the end of your career. So, in the current budget, it was proposed to move us all to 4.4%. Maybe you are in the group already paying 4.4% and you are of the opinion...hey, welcome to the club. Keep in mind, they also talked about raising it higher than the 4.4 for all of us. More to come on this later! The 2nd hit was changing everyone from a high 3 to a high 5 when figuring out our pension (see a pattern yet). What does that mean? When we retire, our pension is currently based on our high 3 years of straight-time salary, usually our last 3 years of service. They (Congress) wanted to base it on the high 5 years. So, let's use some simple numbers (these aren't anything official..just an example). Let's say between contractual and COLA raises, we make about \$3000 more each year. So, if I made 83,000 this year, 80,000 last, 77,000 2 years ago, 74,000 3 years ago, and 71,000 4 years ago...Based on those numbers,



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under current laws my pension would be based on 80,000. Take the high 3 amounts and divide it by 3...If we changed to high 5, it would be based on 77,000. Basically, reducing our monthly pension amount. This would have happened to ALL of us active carriers. Last but certainly not least (the one I am most afraid of/upset about), they proposed eliminating the supplement we were all promised when we started our careers. Let me explain...as federal employees, we (if you qualify) get a monthly check prior to being Social Security eligible (62). We have to hit our Minimum Retirement Age (MRA), which for most of us is 57 years old, and have to have at least 30 years of service or be 60 years old with 20 years of service. They attempted to eliminate this starting in 2028. Meaning anyone retiring after 2028, even if you had the MRA and years of service, you would no longer receive this benefit. This benefit came into play back in 1983/1984 when the Postal Service changed from civil service (CSRS) to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retirement system. The best way for me to put a dollar amount on this is to use myself as an example. I started in 1998, and I am currently 51 years old (I know I look 60), meaning December 1st, 2030, I am eligible to retire at 57 years old with 32 years of service (need to pass HR 1522 Retirement Fairness Act). I have a couple of years as an RCA, but that's another story. As a FERS employee, our retirement is often described as a 3-legged stool. Basically, we would receive income from 3 sources. The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Hopefully, you are taking advantage of this benefit and putting some \$\$ in. I promise you, time flies. I remember starting my career seems like a year or 2 ago, and now I am getting toward the end of my career. PLEASE put some money in your TSP. The 2nd leg or source would be our pension, and the 3rd is Social Security (which you can't claim until 62 in most cases). So, back in 83/84, we were sold on changing retirement options when we changed from CSRS to FERS. One of the biggest benefits we gained from making this change was the bridge or supplement we receive if we hit 30years or 20years of service, based on our age. I believe the current amount of the supplement is around \$1400 per month. Congress wanted to eliminate that bridge/supplement after 2028. So, for me, if that passed after putting in 30 years, I would lose access to that benefit I have been promised since day 1. For me, \$1400 per month reduction in my benefits would force me to work until I am 62 years old...another 5 years. I would think most of us retiring between 57-62, after 2028, would have been in the same boat. Thankfully, from our friendships in the House, we were able to eliminate both the change to 4.4% and the high 5 proposals. The budget then went over to the Senate for them to discuss and make changes. Again, thankfully, from our friends in the Senate, we were able to eliminate the last proposal dealing with the supplement. Then both the House and Senate have to come together and pass the budget together...Get this!! In a last-minute attempt, they tried to make future federal employees (EXCEPT THEM OR THEIR STAFF) pay over 15% for their pension....[Keep in mind, from all retirement accounts, these funds are overfunded.] How thoughtful of them to make everyone else pay except themselves or their staff. Thankfully, our friends eliminated this attack as well. So, when I say "friends" in Congress, what do I mean...we give them \$\$\$ and lots of it! It's a dirty game, no doubt about it. But we HAVE to play it. Where does this money come from? We, the NALC, have a PAC. Our PAC is called the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF). 12% of our members contribute an amount from their paycheck to protect attacks like this and to promote/educate on other issues we collectively face. Most private unions are able to contribute money to politicians from their dues' money. We are unfortunately unable to do this due to the Hatch Act. We have to collect our monies from a voluntary donation process. Thanks to all that contribute...clearly that money was used to protect ALL of us. Keep in mind we have at least 1 more budget we have to under this current administration and depending on mid-term elections maybe a couple more. There are plenty of other issues we face together in the legislative process.

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Unfortunately, I was only asked to write an article..not a book. So, I am going to leave you with this. This great union isn't just a branch, a region, or a national-level party. It is all of us. If we collectively want to achieve these things through legislation, I need you to get involved. Educate the carrier casing the route next to you. Talk to your fellow co-workers and explain to them that we all have to Take Action on the NALC website. We all have to write/call our Representatives and let them know that it is important to the American People to have a Postal Service. Protect our jobs and benefits. Also, educate yourself on the LCPF. Please sign up. If we all contribute a small amount, like \$5 a check, we collectively raise millions to keep the men and women in Congress who have our best interests. If anyone has any questions, please give me a call or send me an email. I work for you and am very thankful to have this opportunity.

Thanks, stay safe!

Matt Tanner  
tanner@nalc.org  
810-444-5286

**Join us for every Thursday @ 8 am  
for  
Coffee with Letter Carriers  
hosted by Richard Byrne**





# State Association

Greetings Brothers and Sisters

Well, it has been a very busy year. With all the route inspections, the implementation of a new contract, and, of course, the political issues we have faced and overcome! It's not over by far; we all know that all that we have can be taken away if we get caught sleeping. During these times, we need to be more unified than ever. I believe the age-old saying of divide and conquer has been proven time and time again, and that's what our enemies would like to see. There is and has never been anything wrong with standing up for what you believe and disagreeing with those who don't believe the way you do. But at the end of the day, we all need to be pushing for a common goal, and that's to sustain what we have. One way we all can play a very important role in this is through our very own LCPF, "Letter carrier political fund". This is a voluntary donation to help support those who support us. We at the State Organization introduced a challenge at our state convention. We are hosting a Fishing Tournament. This tournament is a friendly competition among each branch. The rules are that for every new contributor to the LCPF, your branch will get 1 lb. For every increase someone makes in your branch that will be 1/4lb. We will be having 3 weigh in's October, February, and June. The last weigh in will be at our next state convention and this is where we will announce the winner. The State E-Board will be providing a fish fry to the winning Branch. We hope everyone will play a part in helping Arkansas increase their numbers and play a bigger role in our own future. Walter Reuther quoted "There is no power in the world that can stop the forward march of free men and women when they are joined in the solidarity of human brotherhood." So, what do you say let's keep marching and keep fighting for our future and let no man take it!

Chad Dollar  
State President



# Treasurer

My goal as a treasurer for my term at branch 1131 was to try and stop the amount of money we spent as a branch and save more money so we could use it for sending our members to trainings. One way we found to save a good amount of money was to stop going to Fat City Grill for our monthly meeting. Over the past several months, we have started hosting our meetings in our office's conference room, while still providing food and drinks during the meetings. This change we've made has greatly benefited our branch. We save a minimum of \$ 100 a month by catering food in our conference room versus going to a restaurant each meeting. We have also had our average attendance at the meeting almost double. Another thing we have done is change our yearly Christmas location. At our previous location, we spent between \$1600 and \$2600 for our Christmas party meal while having a dwindling attendance. Last year, we chose a new location for our Christmas party and spent just over \$1100 for our meal. At our last Christmas party, we also saw an increase in attendance that was over double our previous year, while also getting more active carriers to attend. We have also tried to carpool to rap sessions and state conventions. In doing so, we save a large amount of money in mileage payments. In just implementing these spending habits, we have increased our bank account balance by almost \$10,000 in just a year, going from \$25,141.39 to \$34,560.09. I feel that it is a great thing for our branch, so we can, in turn, send more of our members to training, so we can learn more as a whole.

William Craft  
Branch 1131 Treasurer



## Region 4

### Greetings:

Fall is usually a very busy time in Region 4 when we are preparing for our yearly rap session, and this year is no different. As a matter of fact, it is even a little more hectic with LMOU negotiations wrapping up at the Area/Region level. Also, as of this update, I am currently in Linthicum Heights, MD, facilitating the Advanced Formal A & Beyond class. After that, it's off to Eureka Springs, AR, for the Region 4 Rap.

We are extremely excited about the classes we will be presenting this year at the rap session. Among the topics will be subjects that are a hot topic in the region, as well as suggestions from members in the region who requested certain topics.

Some of the classes being covered are:

- New Employee Experience, Retention & Mentoring Program (NEERMP)
- New Article 8 Provisions
- Dealing with Attendance Related Discipline
- Route Inspections
- Retirement
- TSP
- OWCP
- Leadership Academy Projects
- Dealing with Harassment
- And many more...

As for the LMOU negotiations, things went very good in Region 4. Out of 101 impasse items, all but 10 were settled. Of those 10 items that are being appealed to arbitration, only six installations have impasse items left to be resolved. We were even able to negotiate an entire LMOU in an installation that never had one. There are always a number of other things going on at the region. National Business Agent Dan Versluis has been back and forth to Washington DC as the NALC Executive Council is preparing for contract negotiations. We are also busy trying to secure dates and contracts for the 2026 Steward's Colleges, conventions, and rap sessions. If anyone needs assistance from our office, you can always call us at the office, or send us an email (I personally prefer the conversation LOL). We work for you!

In unity,

John Robles  
Regional Administrative Assistant  
NALC Region 4



## 1131 Minutes

### Members

NALC branch 1131 has been working hard to keep our current carriers and retirees up to date and informed; to continue our commitment to that goal, here is a brief rundown of our most recent meeting on 09/09/2025:

- Branch president Doug Blevins called the meeting to order at 6:30pm
- President discussed potential issues regarding the ongoing route count throughout the remainder of the month of September, including workload numbers and on-street observations beginning next week (week of 09/15/25)
- We discussed memorandums M2013/M2014 which cover the monetization of Annual Leave (M2013), as well as our yearly max leave carryover (M2014)
- A motion was made by C. Goodwin to send Vice President Shane Davis to the National Rap session in Cleveland, OH. This was seconded by A. Grayson and the motion was passed
- We will have officer elections taking place in November of this year, so be sure to consider who you would like to nominate to fill the following positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

As always, thank you all for your continued commitment to the success of Branch 1131. Our next meeting will be taking place on 10/21/2025 (October 21st, 2025), and we encourage everyone to join in person or online if possible.

Abigail Gray  
Branch 1131 Secretary





## Barry Bode - NALC Dispute Resolution Team

### Member

To achieve the appropriate resolution to any of our issues, we must “team up”. Teamwork begins with you, the rank-and-file member. If you see something, say something. If you feel aggrieved by any member of management, ask to speak to your Steward immediately. Management must allow you time to speak to a steward if one is available. If management cannot provide a steward at that moment, they must do so no later than the begin-tour time of your next shift. Make notes to refresh your memory if you must wait to consult a steward. Additionally, make notes if you witness an incident between another member and management. It is often difficult to remember details or the exact words used after the fact. If you do witness an incident or a contractual violation, report it to the steward even if the aggrieved person does not realize it was a violation and/or feels it was important. Management may later attempt to issue discipline to the carrier after the fact, or the union may hold management accountable for the contractual violation. Simply put, the union works when we all participate and support each other. The key issues I am seeing appealed to the DRT now are Emergency Off-Placement (without pay) or “EP” and Route Inspection Issues. Safety Blitz Teams, and/or any manager, who witness a safety violation are being asked to place the carrier off the clock, often with disciplinary consequences to follow, most often for failure to properly park and/or secure your vehicle. Always properly park your vehicle and NEVER leave it running. You may have done it many times without incident; however, if a manager witnesses an incident or you experience a roll-away/run-away accident, the odds are not in your favor.

As for route inspection, all I can say is, be glad, very glad, that routes in the Jonesboro Installation will be adjusted via a joint process specific to the S&DC model wherein the union has a seat at the table. You may have heard stories on social media regarding the “horror” their office experienced during the joint process; however, I can assure you, in a unilateral process, entirely run by management, there is little, if any, fair or equitable division of work. The M-39/M-41 Handbooks both state that a proper route inspection and adjustment should result in routes that consist of as near 8 hours of daily work as possible. Having seen numerous grievances on this issue this year, I am quite certain management has either never read the M-39 or the M-41 Handbooks, or if they did, they simply “cherry-picked” the sections that supported their opinions.

Although the Jonesboro office will be afforded the benefit of a joint process, our associate offices will not. In either case, it is the job of each individual to protect their own routes and by so doing, protect their jobs as well as the jobs of others. Check out the Letter Carrier Resource guide and the NALC Route Protection Program (under the Route Inspections tab) at [NALC.org](http://NALC.org) to familiarize yourselves with your rights and responsibilities. For the Jonesboro Installation, data gleaned during the month of September will determine the make-up of all city routes going forward. Be sure you are doing route correctly, including carrying the route in the manner in which it is set up, making accurate clock-rings, taking breaks (and lunch if applicable), and following all safety procedures. If you have questions, ASK! Your Branch Officers are there to assist you.

Barry Bode  
Dispute Resolution Team



# Upcoming Events

**Branch Meeting on October 21, 2025 In the  
conference room at the S&DC  
Eat at 6 and the meeting will begin at 6:30  
use the QR code below for WEBEX**



**Branch 1131 Officer Nominations  
October 21st, 2025  
@ the Branch meeting**

**Region 4 Rap Session  
September 22-24  
Eureka Springs, Ar**

**National Rap Session  
November 21-23  
Cleveland, Ohio**