

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



THE SENTINEL

Volume XXXVI, Issue 2, October 2010

Challenging Times



President Pete Maglio presides over an FSS Station Meeting held for carriers in the Wayne, NJ area.

The President's Report **Pete Maglio**

The election in 2008 resulted in a labor friendly White House and Congress. Your hard work enabled many friends of letter carriers to gain and retain seats in Congress. These supporters of Postal Service issues have allowed us to have our voices heard on Capital Hill. Now, many of those representatives are under attack and being blamed for the economic problems confronting Americans today. There are many members of the national media, as well as politicians in Washington, who are anti-labor and anti-union. They will continue to attack postal and federal employees. They will continue to make outrageous claims about our wages and benefits. Their agenda is to take away the benefits that so many have worked so hard to attain. We cannot stand by and allow these injustices to be perpetrated upon letter carriers, or the American.

The general election this November 2, 2010 is critical to the futures of Postal Workers and their families. Please do not take these elections lightly. We must not become complacent. The future of the Postal Service, and our jobs, is at stake. Do not stand on the sidelines. The continued existence of the Postal Service depends on us. If you are not a registered voter, go to Branch 38's web site and register. Encourage all of your family members to do the same. It only takes a few minutes. **PLEASE VOTE!**

When I assumed the presidency of the Branch in 2009, I stated that there would be difficult times ahead. Sadly, I was not wrong. This past year we have been confronted with further decreases in mail volume which has led to more route adjustments and the loss of many routes. The United States Postal Service has either closed or consolidated many Post Offices and Mail Processing Centers. We are now confronted with the implementation of the Flat Sequencing System (FSS). This machine is somewhat comparable to DPS in that it sorts flat mail and places it in delivery sequence prior to arriving at the delivery unit. This mail will go directly to the street. Ultimately, this will result in more route adjustments and the abolishment of even more assignments.

We have been informed by management that route adjustments will be done by COR (Carrier Optimal Routing). COR, if done properly, takes information about the routes in a zone or office (times, volumes, etc.) and finds ways to adjust the routes. It realigns the zone and creates new travel patterns to build routes that are supposedly more compact and efficient. Remember, any adjustment must be in compliance with the M-39.

Branch 38 will conduct special meetings for all offices scheduled for FSS implementation. If your office is on the list for FSS implementation, it is imperative you make every effort to attend these meetings. Brothers and sisters, we are in challenging times! We must be prepared and continue to work together in a professional manner.

NEW JERSEY MERGED BRANCH 38

National Association of Letter Carriers

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Branch Officers

Pete Maglio	President
James Stasse	Executive Vice President
Paul Biggs	First Vice President/Treasurer
Michael O'Neill	Second Vice President
Tony Massa	Third Vice President
Ralph Silvestri	Director of City Delivery
John Sheridan	Corresponding Secretary
Pat Flannery	Recording Secretary
Charlie Connell	Director of Retirees/HBR
Peter Bednarz	Sergeant-At-Arms

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Mark McGrady	Dan Szucs
Joe Rutkoski	John Dock

BRANCH 38 TRUSTEES

Keith Hemmings	Richard Mitchell
Richard O'Connell Jr.	William Trudell
Dominic Walton	

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MUTUAL BENEFIT REPRESENTATIVE

Martin Spielman Jr. 732-261-7191

DATES TO REMEMBER

BRANCH MEETINGS

November 3, 2010
December 1, 2010
January 5, 2011

SPECIAL EVENTS

Columbus Day Golf Outing
October 11, 2010

Retiree Breakfast
October 17, 2010

Election Day
November 2, 2010

Veterans Day
November 11, 2010

Holiday Party
December 18, 2010

**NJ Merged Branch 38
Web Site**

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

Now Is The Time!!!



Mike O'Neill, Second Vice President

We are very fortunate to live in a nation in which a democratic form of government insures that the will of the people counts. We decide who will fill the seats of power, and on what course they set for this great country. The NALC is also a democratic organization. The membership decides who holds office, and in what direction we want our union to be taken. As citizens, and as union members, we have the right and opportunity to communicate with our representatives and to let them know what we feel is important to us and best for our country and our jobs. The final word in those conversations takes place when we visit the polling place in our neighborhoods, or complete the ballot we receive in the mail.

Unfortunately, an incredibly large percentage of the citizens of the United States, and the members of the NALC, have decided to forfeit this great opportunity, and have neglected their responsibility. Countless numbers of men and women have given their lives in defense of this country, and in defense of our right to have our voices heard. Thousands of men and women struggled against those in power to win the right for NALC members to vote for their elected leaders. To ignore the privilege of casting your vote in either an election for government office, or an election for union office is an affront to those men and women, and disrespectful of their memories.

On November 2, 2010, we will be choosing the Members who will hold office in the House of Representatives for the next two years. Anyone even casually observant of what is taking place in this country must realize that the next two years will be critical for our nation, and most especially for working men and women. The middle class in the United States has taken it on the chin for a long, long time. When the economy heads south, its the workers who take the hit, not the executives or corporate bigwigs. This latest economic crisis is only the latest example. We need people in office who will stand up for the American worker.

I will not use this space to tell you who to vote for. The democratic process is built on the principle that the wisdom of the people is paramount. Review the information you receive from the NALC to see who your union supports. Ultimately, the person who receives your vote is up to you. I only ask that you exercise your right to vote. Let those in office know that the working men and women are still involved, are watching, and will not be ignored. With the losses American labor has endured in recent years, and the crisis letter carriers and the Postal Service are currently facing, we owe it to ourselves and our families to let our voices be heard, loud and clear. If you haven't voted before, or in recent years, now is the time.

You will also be receiving a ballot in the mail from the NALC.

We are holding an election to chose who will hold the office of National Business Agent for Region 15, our region, for the next four years. The person who holds this office sits on the Executive Council of the NALC, and has an impact on the decision making process of our national union. The NBA also impacts our daily lives on the workroom floor. The Region 15 office deals directly with the USPS Area leadership and the managers at the District level on a daily basis. The efforts of all of the local Branches in Region 15, including Branch 38, are coordinated through that office.

Again, I will not presume to advise you in this space as to how you should cast your vote. You may be dissatisfied with the state of the Postal Service and how the NALC has attempted to address our many problems. You may take the view that the NALC has done as good of a job as could be considered reasonably possible, given the difficult times in which we find ourselves. Regardless, it is incumbent upon you, as a member of this democratic union, to participate in the selection of who will hold this most important office for the next four years.

The NALC makes it as easy at possible for you to cast your vote. They mail the ballot to your home. They provide a postage paid envelop in which to return it. The process takes minutes. And yet, the turnout in past elections has been pitiful. Dont' let the opportunity for your voice to be heard pass again. With the changes going on in today's Postal Service, and with contract negotiations looming in 2011, don't let others make the choice you are entitled to make. If you haven't voted in an NALC election in the past, now is the time.

If you have not received your ballot from the NALC for the Region 15, NBA election by October 15, 2010, contact the Branch Office immediately.

NALC & Congress

Joe Rutkoski

Part-Time Area Representative

Today's letter carriers are facing challenges that at times may seem overwhelming. Putting aside the ever present workroom floor issues, the main challenge we face today is a stalled economy that is contributing to an already major decline in mail volume.

The loss of volume is compounded by an act of Congress that requires the USPS to pre-fund 80 percent of retiree health benefits, and to fund this 75 year liability within a 10 year time period. This devastating combination has put the Postal Service in a financial crisis. The Postal Accountability Act of 2006 mandates the USPS to pay \$5.6 billion per year to pre-fund future retiree health benefits. As a result of this pre-funding requirement, the postal service is projecting a \$7 billion loss at the end of 2010. If not for these payments, the USPS would have shown a profit in three out of the last four years, despite the recession and the decline in mail volume. The only fix to this problem is to convince Congress to permanently correct this unfair burden. Keep in mind, no other organization or company, either government or private, is required to pre-fund retiree health benefits. This is the challenge facing the NALC at a time when the country is in a recession, and Washington is looking for money to fund its operations.

The NALC will meet this challenge in the legislative arena only through the hard efforts of letter carriers. The fact is we have faced many challenges in our union's history. To understand where we need to go, and what we have to do, it is helpful to know our history, and the challenges that we have faced in the past. It is important to examine how letter carriers and their union have met those challenges in the past. This article is intended to do just that.

In 1868, Congress passed an eight hour a day law for federal laborers, work-men, and mechanics. The Post Office refused to comply, claiming letter carriers did not fit into the law's definition. It was not until 1888, after a twenty year fight by letter carriers, that the "Sunset Cox Enactment" was passed in Congress, and letter carriers won the right to an eight hour work day. Before this law was passed, letter carriers were working 10 to 12 hour days, seven days a week, at the straight time rate. The Post Office Department, as it was called at that time, was determined to deny the NALC this victory, and openly ignored the new law for several months. The NALC sued the Post Office Department and was victorious. The Supreme Court sided with the union, and awarded the nation's letter carriers over \$3.5 million dollars in overtime claims.

By the early 1900's, letter carriers had received no significant wage increase since 1887. With that in mind, the NALC had two major priorities. The first priority was to achieve an annual salary of \$1,200, regardless of the size of the city in which the carrier worked. The second priority was to alleviate the intolerable conditions that substitute carriers were forced to endure. At that time, subs were required to either report to the Post Office several times a day, or to wait in the office without pay, in hopes of being called upon to work. The NALC, along with other government workers, fought and lobbied vigorously in Congress to improve working conditions for subs, and for improved pay for all working men and women, especially letter carriers.

On January 31, 1902, Congress and President Theodore Roosevelt fought back. The president issued the first of the famous "gag orders." This executive order forbade all postal and federal employees from directly or indirectly soliciting Congress for wage increases, or to try to influence the passage of any other legislation. This Executive order effectively deprived government workers of their constitutional right to speak freely and petition the government. The second "gag order" came in 1906. This executive order allowed government department heads to dismiss employees without notice, and, contrary to previous practice, without providing a written explanation. This order also prohibited letter carriers and postal clerks from discussing their working conditions in public. To circumvent the gag order, the NALC continued to talk to their Congressional friends on an informal and private basis. The government responded with a third "gag order" in 1909 when President Taft issued an executive order that forbade all postal and federal employees from answering Congressional requests for information regarding Post Office pay or working conditions, unless authorized to do so by their department heads.

The gag orders resulted in a deterioration of working conditions and low morale for all postal employees. Unrest, defiance of orders, work stoppages, and threats of strike erupted throughout the county. The NALC continued to argue its case to anyone who would listen. Finally, in 1911, NALC was able to convince a progressive Republican Senator from Wisconsin by the name of Robert LaFollette to lead an anti -gag campaign. On August 24, 1912 the Lloyd-LaFollette Act was enacted. That law rescinded the gag orders, and ended ten years of severe repression of letter carriers and other government employees.

1912 was a good year for letter carriers. Two other important bills were passed. The first mandated the closing of Post Offices on Sundays, giving letter carriers Sundays off for the first time. The second bill was the Reilly, Eight in Ten Hour Act, which specified that postal employees could not be required to spread their eight hour shift over more than a ten hour period. In 1916, the NALC obtained passage of one of the most important laws ever to affect letter carriers, the first Federal Employees Compensation Act. This act provided compensation for federal employees who suffered work related injuries.

In 1913, the NALC devoted much of its resources to aid retired letter carriers and older letter carriers who were still carrying the mail. Igniting this cause was the Post Office Department's adamant opposition to any retirement benefits, and the firing of carriers who could no longer keep up with the job's ever demanding pace. The NALC lobbied relentlessly in Congress, and engaged in demonstrations and protests throughout the county for retirement benefits for letter carriers. Finally, the NALC's persistent efforts paid off in 1920. The Civil Service Retirement Act became law. That same year another bill was passed that gave letter carriers sick leave benefits of 10 days per year.

During the period between 1920 and 1950, the NALC would become an even more effective and well organized political force. Our union became well respected for their efforts in Congress on behalf of all letter carriers, and for achieving numerous pay raises and increased benefits.

Yesterday & Today

The period between 1950 and 1960 was a time when the department was determined to run the Post Office at a profit. Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield zealously pursued a strategy of keeping postal salaries as low as possible. During these years, the NALC was able to push through Congress salary increases in 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1957, only to have the increases vetoed by President Eisenhower. Letter carriers were so frustrated at the president's vetoes that, on August 1, 1957, letter carriers organized a group prayer. Tens of thousands of letter carriers paused from their daily tasks and prayed for a salary increase. In hundreds of cities, clergymen appeared at local Post Offices in the morning to conduct a short service.

By 1960, letter carrier families were experiencing serious financial difficulties. Many relied on food stamps to get to the next pay check. In response, the NALC led one of the most dynamic salary campaigns in its history. The campaign, called "Crusade for Economic Equality," was aggressively fought, and Congress responded by passing a salary increase bill. That bill was again vetoed by Eisenhower. The crusade continued, and the NALC lobbied fiercely for an override of the veto. On July 1, 1960, Congress overwhelmingly overrode the veto; one of only two of the 169 Eisenhower vetoes to be overridden in the eight years of his administration.

During the period from 1966 to 1968, morale in the Post Office Department totally plummeted. At that time, the law required the Post Office to consult and negotiate with the NALC, but management retained final decision making authority. Unlike today, there was no final and binding arbitration. The Post Office was engaged in cost cutting policies that are similar to today's policies. They included severe curtailment of overtime for full time experienced workers, and a large increase in temporary workers. Fed up with the way the department was treating them, carriers began to voice a growing militancy. A storm was forming that would change the Post Office Department forever.

By 1970, the growing militancy of NALC members was alarming the Nixon administration. Alarming as it was, Nixon, Congress, the Department, and the NALC continued to haggle over postal reform and postal salaries. On March 18, 1970, letter carriers had enough. Members of Branch 36 of New York City, led by Vincent Sombrotto, went out on strike. Brooklyn immediately joined the strike, followed by Branches in Long Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut. The strike spread like wildfire throughout the nation. Carriers were on strike from New York City to San Francisco. Letter Carriers across the entire nation, along with their union leaders, risked not only their jobs, but also criminal prosecution. It would all pay off.

This eight day revolt would lead to the end of the Post Office Department, and to the beginning of the United States Postal Service. Carriers won wage increases and support for the establishment of an independent postal authority. The NALC gained the right to collective bargaining over wages, hours and working conditions, and the right to have unresolved issues settled through final and binding arbitration.

The NALC has achieved more recent legislative victories as well. The Hatch Act Reform Bill expanded political rights for letter carriers, other postal employees, and all federal workers. Another major victory was the passage of HR-22, The Postal Reform Bill, and legislation that



Joe Rutkoski with Congressman Garrett and a contingent of carriers from Branch 38 including Joe's son Ryan.

allowed FERS employees to have their sick leave balance credited toward their retirement. Most of the challenges that we have faced throughout our history have been resolved through the legislative process. Today's challenges will be no different

The benefits and protections that letter carriers receive today, such as workers compensation, Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, Civil Service Retirement System, and Federal Employees Retirement System are federal law, and thus subject to Congressional attacks. In fact, the collective bargaining rights that letter carriers have today are themselves a product of Congressional action. Bear in mind that what Congress gives, Congress can take away. This is why the NALC has always been involved in legislation, and must continue to be actively involved in the legislative arena today.

One way rank and file letter carriers can contribute to our legislative program is to give to the NALC's political action committee, COLCPE. This fund provides money to support candidates, regardless of their political party, that support the issues that are important to letter carriers. In the State of New Jersey, for this election cycle, COLCPE funds have gone to 12 of the 13 Members of Congress; six Democrats and six Republicans. Again, money is provided to the campaigns for candidates that support the issues that affect letter carriers. The distribution of COLCPE funds is not based on party affiliation.

The issues that letter carriers and the USPS face today will almost certainly have to be resolved in the halls of Congress, just like it has always been. Our success will be determined by the amount of effort and participation we put forth as rank and file union members. It will not be an easy fight, but it is one that we can win through the involvement of every letter carrier. Our success depends on the participation in the legislative process by all letter carriers. This is how it has been throughout our history, and this is how it will be today. Contact your representatives in Congress when asked to do so, and contribute to COLCPE. Our predecessors did what had to be done in order to gain the benefits we enjoy today. Now it's our turn.

THE PERFECT STORM

***Mark McGrady &
John Dock***

As all of us are aware, the Postal Service has been losing first class mail volume at a torrid rate. We all have heard the reports of people paying bills on line. Now there are internet companies supplying cyber post office boxes and online bill paying services. Because many companies cannot afford to advertize, we have also lost almost a thousand magazine companies. As if this weren't enough, the USPS is also fighting the green movement; those wanting to save paper for the good of the environment. This should give you an idea of the perfect storm being faced by the Postal Service.

So, how do we fight back? We have in our grasp a program that will generate revenue for the Postal Service, will help us to retain our jobs, and will help to

ensure our benefits well into the future. This program is called Customer Connect.

The success of Customer Connect is based on the relationships that Letter Carriers have with their customers. When letter carriers initiate a sales call with our customers personally, the sales representative has the benefit of a friendlier foundation from which to work. Your reputation with your customers is the foot in the door that can often lead to major dollars coming into the Postal Service's coffers.

We realize many carriers will say that it's not our job to be involved with generating revenue. It might change your way of thinking to know that our competitors also receive sales leads from their drivers. They're out there trying to convince those same customers to use their services. If we don't do the same, we are passing up an important opportunity to protect our jobs. Letter carriers, all 250,000 of us, have the

ability to be one of the largest "sales" forces out there, and without a doubt the most successful. Remember, there is no such thing as a bad lead. The fact that you are out there trying to raise revenue is not only helping you, but also your sister and brother carriers.

Leads don't have to come only from your route. They can come from family, friends, or by observing mail coming to your route. Another great place to get a lead is by observing where our competitors' trucks are. Does anyone shop online? You can turn in a sales lead if the return package label is to be shipped by the other guys.

Let's not stand idling on the sidelines while a few carriers get involved. Let's all get involved in Customer Connect, and help each other and the Postal Service weather the "PERFECT STORM."

Branch 38 Does it Again!!!

With donations still rolling in, Branch 38 is expected to have raised well over \$150,000 for MDA this year. Thanks to the efforts of our members, we were once again the leading fund raiser in the entire NALC. The Branch was recognized at the National Convention in Anaheim by NALC President Fred Rolando for our consistent dedication to this most worthy of causes. Thanks go out to all those who organize and support our MDA fund raisers including the mailing, the Columbus Day Golf Outing, the National Bowl-a-Thon, the Night at the Races, and all of the other local efforts. Keep up the good work!!!

Worried about the future of the USPS?

Worried about the future of your job?

Tired of listening to all of the rumors?

Want to know what's really going on?

**Sign Up as an e-Activist
Now!!!**

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

Want to keep your job?

Want to keep your health benefits?

Hoping to collect a pension some day?

***Would you like someone looking out for your
interests in Washington?***

Sign Up for COLCPE Now!!!

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

Branch 38 **Holiday Party**

The Annual Holiday Party will be on Saturday, December 18th from 7:00 to 11:30 pm at The Chandelier, located at 340 Franklin Avenue, Belleville, New Jersey. Tickets are \$25.00 each, and include beer, wine, and soda, and an extensive menu of appetizers, entrees, and deserts. A DJ will provide the entertainment, and there will be a number of door prizes awarded.

The Holiday Party is a very popular event, and usually sells out. The tickets, therefore, are limited to Branch 38 members and one guest. Reservations for full tables are available on a first come, first served basis, with payment. We will try to accommodate all requests for group seating.

Tickets will be on sale at all Branch Meetings. Each member will be required to fill out the request form when the tickets are purchased, with the name of the member, their office, and if they are buying a guest ticket. Members can also send checks or money orders, along with a list of names and guests to Ralph Silvestri at the Branch office, or you can call Ralph at (973) 564-7244 (Ext. 19). The officers and staff of Branch 38 wish all our members a wonderful holiday season, and we hope to see many of you at the Holiday Party.

Branch 38 **Retiree Breakfast**

On Sunday, October 17, 2010 at 9:00 AM, Branch 38 will be holding our annual Retiree Breakfast. The Breakfast will be held at the Chandelier Restaurant located at 340 Franklin Avenue, Belleville, NJ 07109. To reserve a spot, or to get directions, call Director of Retirees, Charlie Connell at 973-564-7244 (Ext. 21). All Branch 38 retirees are welcome to attend.

Charlie Connell will preside over the festivities, and special guest speakers will include NALC Secretary-Treasurer, Jane Broendel and National Business Agent Larry Cirelli. All Branch 38 officers and staff will be in attendance as well. This is an opportunity for retirees to come together to exchange old stories, renew old friendships, and hear the latest news from Washington affecting letter carriers and retirees.

All of New Jersey's Congressional Representatives have been invited and, based on years past, some will be sure to attend. This is a critical time in our nation's history, and for the Postal Service as well. The Retiree Breakfast will be an excellent opportunity to hear first hand from our friends in Washington, find out where our country is headed, and what they are doing to protect the interests of letter carriers and retirees.

NALC National **MDA Bowl-a-Thon**

Sunday, November 7, 2010

Majestic Lanes

525 Route 9, North

Hopelawn, NJ (Woodbridge Township)

732-826-6800

THE BOWL-A-THON IS OPEN TO BRANCH 38

MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

A \$30 PLEDGE ENTITLES BOWLERS

TO 3 FREE GAMES

PRIZES WILL BE AWARDED

**Please contact Charlie Connell or your Area Representative
at the Branch 38 Office if you plan to participate.**

973-564-7244

Health Benefit **Open Season**

Nov. 8 - Dec. 14

Open season for the selection of Federal Employee Health Benefit Plans will be from November 8 through December 14 for Postal Service employees. Information regarding the various plans and the procedure for changing plans will be available as the Open Season approaches.

All NALC members will also receive information regarding the NALC Health Benefit Plan as Open Season approaches. Do yourself a favor and take a good look at your Union plan. You may not be aware of how competitive the NALC Plan has become over the past few years. When the premiums and benefits are compared to the other available plans, it is clear that the NALC plan has made great strides and may very well be the best choice for your family.

Also keep in mind that the NALC Health Benefit Plan is a non-profit plan run by union members, for union members. As a participant in the NALC Health Benefit Plan, you will have immediate access to assistance from the Branch Office as well as the HBP Headquarters. So, give the NALC Plan a look.

THE SENTINEL
NJ Merged Branch 38, NALC
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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.

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.