



# ***NORTHWEST PASSAGES***

***THE OFFICIAL NPMHU LOCAL 316 NEWSLETTER  
FOR MAIL HANDLERS OF ALASKA AND WASHINGTON***

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**October 2024**



**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**  
*Don Sneesby, Local 316 President*

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Greetings Brothers and Sisters. The lower temperatures and shorter days are a sure sign that the fall mailing season is upon us and peak season is close at hand. Meanwhile, we will soon be in open season for health benefits, dental and vision, as well as health care FSAs to sign up for. See below regarding the opportunities to save thousands of dollars on your PSHB (Formerly FEHB) health insurance. In addition, Branch Presidents from every branch in our Local have valuable information to share.

## **OPEN SEASON. SAVE THOUSANDS ON HEALTH CARE!**

Details on the upcoming Open Season are below. I do want to make sure no one misses the compelling value that is the Mail Handler's Benefit Plan (MHBP) sponsored by Aetna/CVS. I bring this up only

because the benefits are comprehensive and very comparable to other large Standard plans, and on premiums MHBP wins, hands down. MHBP plans had a 2% increase in premiums for consumers, but Blue Cross Blue Shield had hefty increases of 15%. Other plans even more. If you compare premiums with other standard plans, you will find that by switching to MHBP Standard, self-only subscribers can save **\$2,389.66** per year in premiums. The annual savings for self +1 are **\$5,168.28**, and yearly savings for Family plans come in at **\$6,353.36**.

The MHBP was acquired by Aetna and then CVS giving us among the most robust provider networks available throughout Washington and in Alaska and 1.9 million providers nationwide. The MHBP continues to be one of the largest nationwide fee-for-service plans in the Federal Employees sector and we are currently the 4th largest.

I encourage you to look at the MHBP plans to see if any are right for you. The NPMHU receives no extra monetary benefit when Mail Handlers sign up for the plan. Other non-Mail Handler federal employees pay \$52.00 per year in associate dues to be on our plan.

The **MHBP Standard Option** is our most popular plan. It provides more robust benefits for those consumers with more health care needs, including 100% coverage for physical exams, preventative screenings, immunization, lab screenings and maternity along with low co-pays for prescriptions and doctor visits. For more information go to [www.mhbp.com](http://www.mhbp.com) and consider the MHBP now and during the upcoming open season.

The MHBP also offers two of the lowest priced fee-for-service plans in the FEHBP, including the Value Plan and the **MHBP Consumer Option**, the latter is a High Deductible Health Plan combined with a Health Savings Account that you can add pre-tax dollars to. The MHBP Value Plan continues to offer one of the lowest premiums in the FEHBP and includes PPO benefits that give you 100% coverage for physical exams, preventative screenings, immunizations, lab screenings and maternity. The MHBP Consumer Option includes an HSA account into which the plan will contribute money for you to spend on health care or meet your deductible, \$1,200.00 for self only and \$2,400.00 for family coverage along with PPO benefits that give you 100% coverage for physical exams, preventative screenings and immunizations. Both the Value Plan and Consumer Option are suitable for consumers that don't normally use expensive name brand prescription medications and don't have a lot of specialist visits.

The most important thing is to have a plan that's right for you and your family. I don't care if you switch but I urge you to at least consider MHBP. Compare rates and benefits because MHBP Standard is such a compelling value. Our NPMHU National President Paul Hogrogian has had it for 50 years as do I along with hundreds of thousands of active and retired federal employees. OPM administers all of the plans in the Federal sector and they have a handy comparison tool on the web at: <http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information>. Or you can google "FEHB OPM comparison tool" Note that the rates for PSHB will be very slightly different (usually higher) than FEHB rates.

## **OPEN SEASON**

The dates for **PSHB**, **FSA** and **FEDVIP** and **MHA Non-Career Health Benefits and Annual Leave Exchange** are: **November 11 – December 9, 2024** at **11:59pm EASTERN TIME**. Please do not wait

until the last minute in case login.gov is overloaded and can't handle the web traffic. To change your benefits go to: [www.login.gov](http://www.login.gov). More details will be provided soon on this new login procedure.

**PSHBP** Choose a health plan for yourself and your family. The USPS will pay 72% of the premiums. Note: if you choose to forgo health insurance due to coverage by a spouse but you wish to have coverage in retirement, **you MUST have PSHBP/FEHBP coverage for five years prior to retirement in order to maintain coverage in retirement.** Once you meet this requirement and retire, you are still able to change plans and coverage in retirement during open season or with a qualifying life event just as you can as an active employee. Active USPS employees pay the same rates as retirees, though retirees are billed monthly rather than bi-weekly.

**FSA:** Flexible Spending Account. With this often-overlooked benefit, Mail Handlers can set up an account for the following year to use pre-tax dollars for **child care** and also for **medical, dental, or vision expenses** not covered by your health plan and **save up to 30%** by paying no income, Social Security, or Medicare taxes on your contributions. Take advantage of this for predictable out of pocket expenses and major expenses, like braces. Funds for the full year are available right away and reimbursement is usually simple and fast, but estimate carefully because you may only rollover a limited amount from year to year. For more information, go to [www.fsafeds.com](http://www.fsafeds.com).

- Health Care FSA maximum for 2026 is \$3,200 self and \$8,850 family.
- Dependent Care (day care) FSA maximum (filing jointly or head of household) is \$5,000. For couples filing separately it is \$2,500 each.

**FEDVIP:** Separate dental and vision plans are available during open season. Determine your needs versus the cost of each plan and decide if these are right for you. Employees pay the full cost of premiums for these benefits.

**EXTENDED: Annual Leave Exchange:** Pursuant to the MOU on Annual Leave Exchange Option and a negotiated provision originally due to COVID, **for an additional year, employees may carry over 520 hours of leave.**

In addition, those with over the maximum 520 hours of AL and who have not used more than 75 hours of sick leave this leave year **may sell the overage between 8 and up to 80 hours of annual leave.** Employees wishing to do so may apply on postal ease at [www.liteblue.usps.gov](http://www.liteblue.usps.gov). Note that the deadlines are the same as Open Season.

Please be aware that if you have more than 520 hours of annual leave as of the first day of the first full pay period of the new calendar year (January 11, 2025) you will lose any hours exceeding 520. Care should be taken to take leave or sell back hours if you are eligible

## **DEJOY'S 10 YEAR PLAN**

As we all know by now, the PMG has been rolling out his 10-year plan to change the USPS network and has committed some \$40 billion to make it happen. The plan aims to lessen transportation costs by centralizing processing. At this time, DeJoy envisions around 60 RDCs around the country that will

sort originating letters and flats, sort parcels, perform Surface Transport Center functions where possible, and THS operations where possible.

DeJoy also plans currently for some 180 LDCs where destinating letters and flats will be processed, as well as serving as transfer hubs to dock transfer mail.

After delivery standards for the Atlanta, GA and Richmond VA RPDCs dropped precipitously and subsequent pressure from congress, further rollout of the 10-year plan's RPDC and LDC network has virtually stopped. Things can be expected to heat up again next year. Hopefully the kinks will have been worked out by then.

In addition, the plan calls for SDCs or S&DCs which will consolidate several surrounding post offices and centralize carriers from stations within the surrounding 30 miles. These plans continue to materialize though slower than planned. **The Everett SDC** has seen delays and is just starting to take in letter carriers from surrounding stations. Meanwhile the Olympia SDC has seen even more postponement, allegedly due to an environmental impact study which is currently preventing them from expanding the parking at the facility.

Seattle Branch President and Local 316 Washington State Executive Board Member Shaun Bezella accompanied me to meet with management and the APWU in Everett to discuss jurisdiction in the facility, now that it is an S&DC. The following week Tacoma Branch President Craig Hurley joined me for the same meeting in Olympia.

I am pleased to report that the USPS and the NPMHU have signed off agreements on most operations, including giving the dock entirely back to Mail Handlers. The APWU disagreed with the USPS' determination on every operation. We will now press even harder for immediate Mail Handler staffing, starting with those with retreat rights. We also have a signed agreement to put **4 Mail Handlers in Everett**, though I believe that number is much too low. The APWU is of course not happy about these developments. We will show them the same concern they showed when former Senior Plant Manager Lisa Shear dishonestly maintained there was not four hours of continuous Mail Handler work in the Everett Transfer Hub and forced 16 Mail Handlers into grueling commutes to Tukwila. That grievance remains alive in the Dispute Resolution Process. In the meantime, we will work to get all of our work back.

The consolidation of several post offices into the Pasco SDC has already seen the hiring of two additional Mail Handlers in the Pasco SDC.

## **POSTAL SERVICE HEALTH BENEFITS PROGRAM (PSHBP)**

This section is for those wanting more information or wondering why we are leaving FEHB and moving to the PSHB plans. As previously noted, the passage of the PAEA contained provisions to achieve full Medicare integration among Postal Employees and annuitants (retirees) beginning in 2025. By requiring most Postal Employees and annuitants to enroll in Medicare Part B when they reach 65 and are no longer working. The reason this is expected to produce large cost savings is that for these retirees, Medicare will become the primary payer of health claims and your PSHB will be secondary. This obviously will result in a lot of savings to the PSHB and in order to capture these savings, USPS employees must therefore be in a separate actuarial pool.

The PSHB will remain under the FEHB umbrella and will continue to be administered by OPM. With this change, the cost of premiums to the USPS which pays roughly 72% of premium costs should decline over time relative to other government employees and retirees in FEHB. This should also reduce costs to employees and annuitants who pay the remaining 28% of premiums. In order to capture

these savings, it was necessary to create a separate risk pool solely for Postal Employees and annuitants, and this is why the PSHB was created.

There are important positives to note here. First, the vast majority of Postal retirees have always enrolled in Medicare Part B voluntarily. The reason they do so is that with dual coverage by Medicare Part B and PSHB, costs including nearly all copayments, deductibles, co-insurance are reduced or eliminated. In addition, with dual coverage, any doctor, hospital, or health care provider who takes Medicare becomes in-network under your health plan. Lastly, many health plans currently offer a rebate to partially pay for Medicare Part B premiums. MHBP Standard Medicare Advantage for example, gives a rebate of \$75 per month per enrollee if you opt into the plan's Medicare option (and you should). This makes the Medicare Part B cost vs. benefit math work out even better for our retirees.

To participate in PSHB, health plans must have at least 1,500 postal employees and annuitants enrolled and choose to offer a mirrored plan in PSHB. It is largely anticipated that for 2025 the vast majority of plans offered under FEHB will also choose to offer their products in PSHB. For the next Open Season, **if your current FEHB plan is offered under PSHB and you do not actively change your plan, you will automatically be mapped over to the corresponding PSHB plan with the same benefits.**

More information can be found in many ways including navigating with a web browser to **PSHBP.OPM** and by reading the information there. **You can also text PSHBP to the number 39369.** Doing so will give you times you can participate in a live and informative webinar on PSHBP over your phone. After each session you will have the opportunity to ask questions. In addition, over the coming months much more information will be provided.

## **COLA/RAISES**

Following the release of the July 2024 CPI index, Mail Handlers received an additional \$978 annually or .49 cents per hour. Inflation seems to be slowing but if the Consumer Price Index ends January at a higher number than from the July figure, the next COLA will be based on the rise in CPI thorough January 2025. If the CPI is greater than the July 2024 figures we will receive another COLA in March 2025.

In addition, on November 16, 2024, Mail Handlers basic annual salary for each grade and step will be increased by 1.3%.

## **2024 NPMHU CONVENTION**

Local 316 sent 5 delegates and Local President Sneesby to our national convention August 19-23 in Las Vegas. Shaun Bezella, Debbie Retter, Courtney Retter, Tim Kovac and Steven Kim who were duly elected to be delegates by the membership.

The delegates updated the NPMHU Constitution which contains the rules that govern our Union, our officers, members, and union elections. They also passed resolutions including; expressing concern about DeJoy's Delivering for America Plan; on Dignity, Respect and Justice in the workplace, on Internal Organizing, on support of the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, on supporting the Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing others or PUMP Act, on Buy Union-Buy American, on support of Teachers and their Unions, and on **endorsing Kamala Harris and Tim Walz for President and Vice President.**

## CALL FOR BARGAINING PROPOSALS

At our national website found at [www.npmhu.org](http://www.npmhu.org), on the main page "News Center, you can scroll down to September 9, 2024 and find forms to submit suggestions to change our next National Agreement. Bargaining officially begins in June, but proposals must be received by January 31, 2025.

Also, we have an ample supply of 2022 contracts. Each facility should have them on hand to hand out upon request. The digital version is available at [www.npmhu.org](http://www.npmhu.org) and at our local website, [www.local316npmhu.org](http://www.local316npmhu.org).

## MEMBERSHIP

As of PP 21 2024, we have 710 members on the rolls, with about 10 applications in process. We are still close to the highest number of members since March of 2012. Membership rates for Local 316 are also at a high, currently over 92% not including those who are in a non-pay, non-dues deduction status and it does not count those who have submitted 1187s that are waiting to be processed by HRSSC. We currently rank 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the percentage of Union members among the 36 NPMHU Locals. Suffice it to say we can be very proud of these numbers as we continue to serve our members. Notably, we are still offering a **\$50.00 bounty** for anyone who gets a non-member of at least 6 months to join the Union. USPS forms 1187 are available through me or your branch Union Representatives. Nonmember lists are held by the Branch Presidents and available for review upon request.

## SHOP STEWARDS NEEDED!

You already get paid to use your muscles at work, why not get paid to use your brain as well and help your fellow Mail Handler in the process? Many of your Executive Board and Council members as well as Stewards are at or nearing retirement eligibility. Nearly every facility could use more alternate or primary stewards to ensure we have a deep bench to keep this Union serving our membership well. There are many different skill sets that can excel at this job. Some have a lot of skill for writing grievances, others are excellent verbal communicators, or are good problem solvers.

Primary Shop Stewards receive a monthly stipend if they serve for at least six months. All Steward activity should be on the clock. We will be having a two-day training in February, and selected volunteers will get lots of help at learning the job. If you are interested, please let your Branch President or me know. I will partner with your Branch President to choose among any volunteers.

## ARE YOU CONVERTING TO CAREER?

In addition to Open Season noted above, those converting from MHA to career will have a 60-day window from the date of your conversion to make a selection of a medical, dental and or vision plan as well as the other elections above. You will then be able to change your selections if you wish, every Fall during the yearly open season. In addition, you will also have an important decision to make about life insurance. You have the right to meet with the Union before making these choices, so if you have not been provided time but would like to meet with us, please reach out to your Branch President, Chief Steward, or me.

## **LOCAL 316 BUDGET**

We continue to keep costs down and be conservative to ensure we have the ability to provide skilled representation for decades to come. As of the last quarter ending September 30, 2024, our reserves sit at over \$724,000 See Debbie Retter's Treasurer's Report in this newsletter for more information. As always, if you have any questions that cannot be answered at your branch level, please do not hesitate to contact me by mail, by my office phone at 206-870-1166 (voice only), cell phone or text **206-683-3667**, or by email to [local316@outlook.com](mailto:local316@outlook.com).

Thank you for your membership, your support, and for working Union.

In Solidarity,

Don Sneesby, President  
NPMHU Local 316  
Western Region Vice President



**Gene Rezac**  
***Local 316 Vice President***

## **THE NDC FILES**

union (yoon' yen) *n.* A number of persons, states, etc., joined or associated together for some common purpose.

## **KNOCK, KNOCK.**

I had been thinking about this article for quite some time. It was and is my expectation that this is my last contribution to the NDC Files. This version will not be what I had envisioned. A lot of things have changed since the previous article. A doctor sat me down and explained that I had cancer. I expect your world would change too. There is no way for anyone to predict how they are going to respond to a cancer diagnosis. I can say that I was not and am not afraid of what will happen to me. I am doing what I can to survive this. It has not been easy. The daily radiation treatments were some of the most aggressive and destructive of any sort in the cancer world. As I write this it has been more than a month since my last radiation session and the burns inside my throat are only just beginning to heal. I haven't eaten anything on my own for many weeks. After a week or so, the hunger went away... Then

I ended up with a feeding tube. I have lost a bunch of weight, most of my beard and some of my hearing. Still, I keep waking up every day.

I am sorry for not being there for the members these past few months. You deserved better and I can understand your frustration at the lack of representation available to you on a daily basis. I hope you can understand the situation was beyond my control. I also hope the past months have caused you to look around and figure out which of your coworkers will be able to stand up for you as your future Union representatives. The future truly is in your hands, don't squander your opportunities.

## **WHO'S THERE?**

Now for something more upbeat.

Has anyone noticed that there seem to be a whole bunch of "Once in a thousand year," storms happening lately? The Peoples Republic of Flo-rid-a just had two major hurricanes hit some of the same area within a two-week time span. The good news is that most comrades evacuated before the second one hit. That way they could watch the storm on the news instead of being killed by it. I wonder if the old timers who used to scoff at hurricanes, and then refuse to leave their double-wide homesteads, if they are paying attention to the massive tornadoes that seem to accompany the latest super storms. I guarantee that the insurance industry is. Perhaps Governor "De-sanctimonious" should stop trying to bugger Mickey Mouse and just come clean on the whole climate change hoax. Or not, I don't live there.

## **JESUS.**

Has anyone noticed that children can't seem to avoid catching bullets at school these days? Somehow, those damned guns are still getting into schools and shooting up the place. Frankly, I'm shocked. After all of the thoughts and prayers, I expected this problem to be solved by now. I am very disappointed.

## **JESUS WHO?**

Cheeto Jesus, that's who bitches.

I (and many of the other suckers and losers) have great reverence for a place just across the bridge from Abe's memorial. I try to visit most times I'm in the neighborhood. To my mind, there is no greater honor than to be laid to rest in Arlington and no greater duty than to show respect for our brothers and sisters (in arms) who gave everything for their belief in America.

Maintaining respect and decorum while visiting Arlington should be the minimum requirement. Veterans should set the example, always. No veteran should stand for the politicization of Arlington and its residents. I understand that Ensign Bone-spurs just looks at Arlington as a waste of a good golf course for all those suckers and losers. But what about Captain Eyeliner? I realize that a young marine attached to the Joint Public Affairs Office of an air wing as a "Combat Journalist," knows less about combat than journalism, but he still went to boot camp. He still had to learn about those far off battles even if his mentor refuses to acknowledge their importance. He stood at graduation and sang the Marine Hymn, but he has sold his honor.

## **JESUS, YOU SUCK.**

Haiti is a small country on the island of Hispaniola off the southern tip of the Peoples Republic of Flo-rid-a and east of Cuba. "Haitia" is yet another creation of Captain Eyeliner. I suppose it doesn't matter to him one way or the other if the brown people he is lying about come from a real place or one of his alternative realities. For those of you who are baffled by the foregoing, I am sorry. It seems that there is a political candidate flitting about who cannot refrain from making stuff up. In this case, Captain Eyeliner and the Great Cheeto knowingly spread a false story about Haitian immigrants catching and eating the cats and dogs of the good white folks in a small Ohio town. This was specifically intended to demonize people whose pigmentation is several levels past most of the wonderful people who want



to make America great again. There's nothing better to rally your cult than to give them a new group of brown people to hate, even if you need to make that shit up.

This time their bullshit hit my family. My brother-in-law grew up in Haiti. He emigrated to America many years ago. He met and married my wife's sister almost 20 years ago. They have one son. My nephew is half Haitian and will turn 18 in a couple of weeks. His father hasn't done anything to deserve this bullshit. He has been and is a productive citizen of this country. He goes to work; he pays his taxes and he tries to provide greater opportunities for his son. These are traits we should all be proud of. These are traits that the Great Cheeto could never comprehend, much less emulate.

If you stand silently by as this hatred and vilification are spread amongst the cult members, then you are just as guilty and just as racist as they are. Shame on you.

### **EPITAPH**

As I write this, I do not know what the status of my tumor is. I don't know what will happen next. I do not have any fear for myself. I worry that my wife may become a widow before her time. She deserves a few more decades of having me around to show her appreciation for all of her love and support. Without her, none of this would have been possible. Thank you, Petra.

Gene Rezac, Vice President  
NPMHU Local 316  
Seattle NDC Branch President





**Debbie Retter**  
***Local 316 Treasurer***

**Brothers and Sisters,**

As 2024 comes to a close, I find that my retirement at the end of this year may be delayed for a short period. I find I have a choice to make regarding my sick leave balance, so you may all be stuck with me for just a little longer.

With recent health issues affecting our Branch President, Gene Rezac, I have volunteered to help out where I can on tour 2 at the Seattle NDC, and in Investigative Interviews on both tours 1 and 2. Some issues have been presented that have become important for me to mention to you all.

As a Mail Handler of 25 years, I am seeing more and more of our management team that have been trained to do their jobs even less thoroughly than the craft folks. Though I am not sure if that is because their managers don't want them to know some of the protections we have with a union contract, or it is an oversight, I have noticed that the one thing they are trained to do is issue discipline.

Please be aware that if you are given a direct order from a Manager, Supervisor or an Acting-Supervisor (204B), you need to follow that order unless it is an act that can potentially be harmful to yourself or others. If you feel that it is unsafe, point out the potential of harm to that person, and then fill out a Hazard Report. If the act seems to violate your contractual rights, but is safe enough, do as you were ordered and ask to see your Union Representative. Many of the complaints I am hearing are that the supervisors are ignoring the pecking order of seniority or higher level opportunity. Many of the new management personnel are new enough to the Postal Service that they are ignorant of our contractual rights and protections, and some just don't care, but your Union Representatives are more than happy to help with their education.

Make sure your Union steward or President are aware of the issues you face. Please don't let violations continue for long periods of time. There are grievance deadlines, and we need to know as soon as possible to correct these issues through the grievance process. From the date of incident, we have just 14 days to file a grievance on your behalf. Please don't wait for the 13<sup>th</sup> day, if you can help it.

If your scheduled days off and those of your stewards don't align, please feel free to leave a note regarding the issue, preferably with dates, names and area of violation in the union's drop box. At the

NDC that box is located just inside the door of the hallway leading to the union office (the one with the NPMHU logo on the front). It is checked every day by an NPMHU representative that comes to work.

Attendance issues seem to be a huge problem right now, and as folks are running out of leave, and cold/flu season is here, this becomes very apparent. There are different types of sick leave, and you should be sure you are using the right one, in order to stay out of the spot light when you can.

If you have a scheduled doctor's appointment for you or a covered family member, make sure to schedule it in advance with a request for leave, on a 3971, as soon as possible ahead of time. That keeps it from being unscheduled. If it is for a family member and not for yourself, mark it as 'dependent leave'. Keep in mind that sick leave for dependent care is limited to 80 hours for the year, but if the dependent has ongoing serious health issues consider getting FMLA leave to cover the issues.

Obtaining FMLA certification means you cannot be disciplined for leave taken for yourself or a family member for the certified condition. There are conditions that have to be met to qualify for FMLA, and if you are not sure what they are, ask your Union Rep for assistance. Neither your supervisor, nor your Rep need to know the specific condition or diagnosis. We are not medical officials, but your representative does know how to guide you through the process of obtaining the protection, and what you need to do to get that protection. Employees that have worked for at least 12 months and have at least 1,250 hours of service with the Postal Service during the 12 months before their FMLA leave starts can seek to get FMLA. This protection may have to be renewed periodically, so it is good to use your regular physician or specialist.

If you are waiting for approval for your FMLA case, continue to mark those absences as FMLA, so that once approved, it will apply to each absence. Keep in mind that no matter how many different FMLA cases you have for yourself and/or a family member you have, you only have 480 hours, in total, for the leave year. Once that is used up, your protection goes away until, or if, it is renewed next year. It is a good idea to keep track, on a calendar, of when you use it and for how many hours, so you are aware of your protected period or when it may be close to being exhausted. Typically, your supervisor will only let you know after it's too late.

If you have been to a doctor or hospital, ask the doctor for a note stating you were seen by them, but they do not need to say what you were treated for. Again, only your doctor needs to be privy to your medical condition. If you receive restrictions by that doctor, other documentation may be needed, especially if it was an injury caused by, or contributed to by your job at the Postal Service. Keep in mind that doctors' notes alone do not make leave scheduled or protected.

Leave slips - things to keep in mind: If **you** fill the leave slip in, you can be assured that it is filled in correctly; the right type of leave, or if it is supposed to be FMLA. If you allow your supervisor to print one out from the system – it is often wrong in the comments area. Almost always, the comment section says 'Not IOD, Not FMLA'. Don't sign anything that you haven't verified is correct. It is ok to correct it before signing, or better yet, tell your supervisor you will fill one out yourself. They will tell you it's your responsibility, so take that responsibility for filling it out right. If that becomes a problem, make sure to see your Union representative as soon as possible.

Tardies; yes, they are considered unscheduled absences! Unless that is part of your FMLA condition, they will be used against you and counted as part of your scheduled absences. If it is part of your FMLA condition, make sure your leave slip reflects that.

EAP (Employee Assistance Program), is a term thrown around towards the end of an Investigative Interview, but not always explained. Please be aware that it's a great tool offered for employees of the Postal Service, and for our families. They can help with mental health, substance abuse, stress, grief, anger and other situations that could be affecting you at work. As a Postal Employee you are entitled to 10 free sessions; the first session can be on the clock. It is **confidential** and can be a great help when dealing with issues that challenge us. It can be for you and/or your family members.

You should also know that if you are asked to be in a meeting with your supervisor and/or your MDO, and are asked questions you reasonably believe could lead to you being disciplined, please be aware that you have the right to have a Union representative there with you. These are your legal rights, and if they insist on talking to you or asking you questions, the only thing you need to say is that you want your Union representative there before you answer their questions. These are your Weingarten Rights!

Recently, Local President Don Sneesby walked around the NDC at the end of tour 2 and the beginning of tour 3. He let folks know that if they were interested in being a Union Steward, or knew of anyone else that may want to be one, the NDC definitely needs some help on that front. With two of us looking to retire in the next year, and that leaving just the one steward, the membership needs your willingness to protect them from the events that try to take away our rights under the contract. NPMHU has shown itself to be an aggressive union, looking out for each of our Mail Handlers. I've been proud to be a member, a steward and an officer over the last 25 years. I know that there are those of you who would make great stewards, and possibly even officers in the future. Let us know who you are. We are committed to getting you all the training and the help that you need to be the best representative you can be. Reach out to Don Sneesby or Gene Rezac. Have that conversation! We need you to speak up sooner, rather than later.

If you feel that you are being bullied or harassed at work, by your supervisor or a fellow craft member, please let your Union folks know. No one deserves to have that stress at work, and we may be able to get you some help in that area. Your reps don't know everything that goes on without you on the floor sharing with us. Witness statements, and statements from the affected party are the best way to get us started. Whether you come to see us or drop a statement off, we care and will do everything we can to help. You don't need to deal with anything all by yourself.

Let's all have a good holiday season. Stay safe, be careful, and strive to leave at the end of each workday no worse than you came in. In solidarity, and best wishes to you all!

Debbie Retter, Local Treasurer  
NPMHU Local 316  
Alternate Steward/Seattle NDC



**Shaun Bezella**  
***Seattle Branch President***

**Dear Brothers and Sisters of Local 316,**

Wow, 2024 has flown by. Hard to believe we are headed into our busy season once again. I hope that you are all doing well and/or overcoming any challenges that may have occurred this year. For those that may still be dealing with challenges, I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers.

### **Political Season and the Direction of the Country**

By the time this newsletter is published, and, in your mailboxes, the General Election will soon be over. At least the voting part. Probably not all the whining and gnashing of the teeth as to the results. As some mail handlers know, I am not a Trump or MAGA supporter, and I would rather not take a chance on having Trump return to the Whitehouse. I believe the former president is simply unfit to return to office. I could write an entire article on the reasons why the former president is not qualified to serve the interests of the American people. I will digress on that aspect....

However, whoever wins the election, I pray that the policies enacted in the next administration and in the legislative branch will be to the benefit of the working men and women of this great country. Doing so in a manner that does not destroy the very fabric of what makes this country great. I would prefer that policies enacted by our government improve our overall welfare and health. We do not want policies that will drive inflation higher, result in stripping veterans of earned benefits, reducing the rights of women, impacting the safety nets our society has come to rely upon, or result in marginalizing swaths of our communities. I am rooting not for society to return to policies that are being proposed in Project 2025 or for the rich in our society to be provided with even more opportunity to consolidate the overall wealth of our nation. Any politician or political force behind the scenes is intent on taking our society backwards to an undefined time of so-called greatness, I have my reservations. Especially if the objective to achieve this greatness results in a desire to divide, take away benefits, reduce rights, or uproot communities. I am in full opposition.

Furthermore, I 1000% disagree with all the constant bombardment of lies regarding the immigrant populations in America. They do not commit more crime than natural born citizens. Why? The fear of deportation being a strong driver. The prisons are filled with criminals that were born and raised right here in the US of A. The use of immigrants is a common tactic to find a bad guy for people to blame for

their lot in life. The Nazis and their Fascist regimes were probably one of the greatest examples of using others in this manner.

I am a Christian that believes that Christ's teachings and examples are the pinnacle of being a Christian, and Christ's message about immigrants is crystal clear. This is not to say that there cannot be steps to be taken to improve the immigration policies, but as a Christian, there is no allowance for demonizing the immigrant. Jesus did not give preference of a national agenda over that of a relationship with him or other people. Regardless of your belief in who Jesus was or was not, he gave us the Golden rule. A rule that summarized the ten commandments that if followed would be the reason for much optimism. He does not speak about gay rights or abortion, but he speaks about the way to treat the alien among us. Furthermore, attacking the immigrant, while historically something that Americans have found convenient to undertake for political gains, runs counter to the fact that the history of the United States is one of immigration. A country built on the backs of immigrants.

Of course, my apologies if I have offended. There are clearly those that find the Bible to support an institutionalization of Christianity. In doing so, justifying the concept that Christian nationalism is the answer; regardless of or if the policies and actions fail to represent Jesus of Nazareth. For those, I respect your opinions, but do not find them based in Christ's teachings.

What is this hyperbole about this not being a great nation. Please. What I see is a great nation and a nation built for continual growth. We are a nation that came out of the pandemic better than every other industrial nation as it applies economically. Many of the other industrial nations are still working their way through the fallout of their economies due to COVID-19. They are envious of us. Sure, there continues to be higher prices, but that is due to a combination of reasons. Supply chains, Avian flu killing millions of chickens (price of eggs), increase in the wages (increase in everything that is purchased), a reduction in the other nations producing oil on the world stage, admitted corporate greed resulting in price gouging, and a lack of bipartisan cooperation in Congress to deal with the issues of working-class Americans.

For the aspects of gas prices and production of oil. The United States is outproducing other nations and producing the most in our history. Even more than when former president Trump was in office. So, why are the gas prices still high? Maybe because the oil and gas companies that pull out our natural resources are NOT required to sell the oil to America. They are free to sell the oil to anyone in the world. The market sets the price. We pay for what the market is set at. It is called Capitalism. Even if we produce more oil, the OPEC nations can simply reduce their output to keep the oil available on the world market depressed. This results in the overall prices being set at a level they are comfortable with. They do not care how much it costs to fill your big truck, only that the cost per barrel remains at a level that continues to keep them filthy rich. As for gas prices and inflation being down during the former President's term in office, that was because a large swath of the population was not working and/or driving. Supply and demand sound familiar. Pandemic? In case this was already forgotten.

On the flipside, having the ability to produce our own oil is indeed a crucial and necessary step. Why? We can always nationalize the collection of our resources in the event of a major war. So, national security is improved by having the capacity to drill and produce our own oil. Unless there is a requirement to sell the oil and gas produced within the US, the prices set at the pump will be dictated by the market and other mitigating circumstances such as taxes within the state and distance to refineries.

Speaking of national interests. Tariffs. Tariffs are a tax on the consumer. The United States cannot tax another nation. Nope. Just as Mexico did not pay one penny for the “big and beautiful wall.” When China sells their product and it arrives at our country, the buyer pays the additional charge when a tariff is applied. In turn, the product is sold to the consumer. How many people realistically believe that the sellers will be willing to eat the extra cost of doing business? If you believe that, I have a bridge to sell to you.

Sure, Tariffs are not completely devoid of use or purpose. However, other than for the protection of key industries that are relevant to our national security, Tariffs will result in additional inflation and costs passed on to the consumer. Essentially a national sales tax. Sales taxes always benefit those that have lots of expendable income over those that do not. In closing on this subject, I would argue that there is likely a balance to be achieved with Tariffs and other tools available to the United States. This is because we continue to use Tariffs to protect American interests in both Republican and Democratic administrations over the years.

In closing for this portion of the newsletter, the diversity of our countries’ people is why we are GREAT already. Keeping things in line with a Union newsletter, whatever the outcome of the election, I hope that all Americans will have the right to easily join a union and bargain for better wages and working conditions, have a robust NLRB to keep the cooperations in check, have a place at the table in government discussions on policies that impact our livelihood, and that the hard-fought benefits achieved by our brothers and sisters over the last century are not destroyed with the stroke of a pen. God forbid.

### **Peak Season and Safety**

We are headed right into our busy season. More mail, longer hours, and not enough mail handlers to support our operations. So, for those that want more work hours, this is the time to get yourself situated into a bid that will provide a higher likelihood of getting that extra cabbage. Be smart and work safely in the process.

Fun and games. The Seattle P&DC continue with having a rash of work-related injuries in 2024. I have found myself helping numerous mail handlers with their OWCP claim process. From getting them COP to helping with appeals for denied claims. The interactions with OWCP are outside of the Union’s obligations placed on them by the National Labor Relations Act. However, I am more than willing to help members with their cases. If they listen and don’t insult me in the process, I do the best I can to get their claims approved and whatever pay, or benefits is owed. The fact that there have been many injuries, some serious, I felt it relevant to discuss safety for a good portion of this newsletter. Injuries negatively impact the mail handlers that are injured but also impact the employee’s co-workers when they are unable to return to their bid assignments.

I am sure that some of these are due to some mail handlers believing that they have no choice but to work unsafely to get the job done. My brothers and sisters, you indeed have a choice in how you work. Why place your health and welfare in jeopardy? This is not a combat zone that requires life and death decisions. Well, unless you do things so unsafely that you risk your own life or that of your co-workers. So, while we have some hard charging mail handlers in the Seattle Branch, I implore you to work smart and work safely. Even if that takes more time to do the job.

Regardless of your desire to work more hours or not, please remember a very simply contractual principle. SAFETY TRUMPS EVERYTHING! The mail handler craft is not paid on how fast we work. We are required to work safely. Safety rules are for the benefit of the employee. Following the safety rules will make working far more manageable for the individual mail handler than cutting corners and believing everything is your responsibility to finish based on an arbitrary and capricious time or work standard. **We are required to provide a fair day's work, for a fair day's pay.** There are no enforceable time or work standards. If you are working, you are golden. If you are on your cellphone on the workroom floor, that is not part of the mail handler job assignment.

### **Common work areas and work standard issues:**

#### **Dock operations:**

So, if you work on the dock, and management expects you to load three trailers in a short span of time, you load the trailers to the best of your own ability. However, you should only be manually moving one container at a time. Push do not pull. That is a Postal Service Safety rule.

Furthermore, do not use a forklift or pallet rider to load/unload OTRs and GPMCs (unless damaged). This is not a proper way to load and unload these types of mail containers. For unloading rolling stock of OTRS and GPMCs the preferred method is either manually (if too heavy, ask for assistance) or via a tugger. Regardless of what some mail handlers may attempt to convince you that it is acceptable, it is not. It can and has damaged the equipment, creating an unsafe situation for other employees down the line. Also, loading GPMCs, ERMCS, and APCS sideways throughout the trailer without any discernible reason to match these containers to an OTR, creates an unsafe and laborious unloading situation for the mail handlers at the next facility. These are safety issues that will be addressed in the coming months.

Also, for the dock, unsafe trailers are configured for loading and unloading. **It the communication lights do not present a green interior light or a red/green interior light, you do not enter. Furthermore, all trucks and trailers parked at the Seattle P&DC are required to be chocked. The communication lights requirement cannot be overridden by the fact a trailer is chocked.** Anyone that tells you that is okay is full of ..... If you guessed knowledge, you would be incorrect. If it does not have the above stated lights or no lights at all, simply notify management that the trailer is set up unsafely for loading and unloading. They can adjust the trailer to provide for the USPS, Seattle P&DC, and Manufacturer's method of safe loading. If this does not work, the trailer must be moved to another door. **Under no circumstances should we be entering trailers on an interior red light.**

If management attempts to overstep their basic authority and instruct you to enter, simply state, **"I will continue working but refuse to be placed in a dangerous situation. I will not be entering the trailer until there is a safe loading configuration."** Once again, inside red light only and chocked is not a safe configuration. If the brainchild persists in acting stupid, let me know ASAP. I will be glad to not only file a grievance, but an OSHA safety complaint, and an OSHA Whistleblower charge if they are stupid enough to violate your rights under Section 11 C of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Actions of retaliation for your stepping up and pushing back against the unsafe condition or work practice. When they double down on dumb, while it adds extra work for me, I enjoy taking on those cases. So, please do not place yourself in harm's way. Even if that means that adjustments to the operation to ensure it is indeed safety compliant. The Union takes these issues extremely seriously.



Strapping the rolling stock in an outbound trailer. I know many mail handlers only strap one every 10-15'. Of course, many supervisors fail to address or abate the work practice. Not strapping approximately every ten feet with two sets of e-track straps is procedurally incorrect. This is not only a Postal Service policy but a Department of Transportation regulation under General Cargo Securement. While it may take longer to properly strap an outbound trailer, the theme which we get paid by the hour still stands. I personally strap my outbound loads as required. No shortcuts and management will just need to wait while the trailer is being properly secured.

While not necessarily a safety issue, don't forget to scan. Do not use anyone else's scanner and never let anyone use your scanner ID. If clerks or supervisors are assisting in the loading or unloading process, do not let them use your scanner access. I request and calculate dock cross-craft activities based on these two groups. You should only scan as you place the container into the trailer yourself. Having many hands touching the mail with you scanning can result in misloads and you being blamed for something that you did not do. You scan it, you load it.

### **APBS/ADUS machine**

If you work on the APBS machine, you should use proper lifting techniques when pulling NMOs from the containers. Be that before they are dumped onto the belt or afterwards. That means one parcel at a time. If management does not want NMOs to make it to the clerk craft keyers, they have two options: (1) place additional mail handler supports for the culling and loader job and/or (2) stop the belt to safely pull the NMOs.

If you are the loader for the APBS machine, you should not be creating a congestion issue or staging empty equipment into the PIT driving lanes. There should be a plan to have the empty containers moved to a staging area as they are unloaded. You should be red tagging defective equipment upon discovery. These are duties that are part of the job and any management official that says otherwise, I will gladly have that conversation with. Followed by a grievance and whatever other appeal process will provide them with clarity that safety must be considered in all aspects of the operation.

If you are sweeping and you cannot keep up. Remember, you should do your best but don't permit there to be an unsafe work environment. When mail starts falling onto the ground, that becomes a trip and falls hazard. If you cannot keep up with pulling the containers without the mail falling on the floor, ask for assistance. If management does not provide assistance, stop the machine if the trip and fall hazards become persistent. I would suggest that you file a PS Form 1767 on the matter. Make sure to request a copy of the initial submission or take a picture and submit. Contact the Union and we will follow up.

### **LCTS/LCUS:**

If you are working on the LCTS or LCUS and there are lights for the legs going off, that should not be overly concerning to you. Sure, it provides notice to management and maintenance that a leg may have a jam, but for the mail handler, the need to properly lift one tray of tub off the roller belt is paramount to working safely. If the leg is full, if you are working, you are following Article 12, 14, 19, and 34 of the national agreement. Management's basic authority granted to them in Article 3 is governed by the rest of the contract, federal laws, Postal Service rules and regulations, arbitration decisions, etc. One of the worst things that an employee can do from a safety standpoint, throwing the tubs and trays into a container on the other side of the roller belt.

Do not work inside the PIT aisleways. If you are inducting mail, ensure that all mail and mail equipment are inside the yellow lines. Reducing the PIT aisleways is an OSHA and Postal Service safety violation. If space is an issue, it is management's responsibility to plan to ensure that the situation does result in an unsafe work practice.

### **PIT related safety**

If you have not passed the written classroom test, passed the on-the-job training portion, and had the necessary training paperwork completed, do not drive PIT. For each type of PIT in the facility, an employee must be trained and show proficiency in operating that type of equipment. If a supervisor tells you, it is okay to operate PIT without the above, please contact the Union and we will make sure to have that management official be held responsible for their actions.

Make sure to perform your pre-trip checks whenever you use a piece of equipment. It is your responsibility as a licensed operator.

Do not use a pallet rider for transporting double stacked cages or double stacked MTE inside the facility. This is permissible on the dock during the loading/unloading process and nowhere else.

There are other scenarios. The above is provided to help you understand that the contract provides you with rights as to your safety and welfare. What I don't want anyone to do is to refuse to work due to an unsafe working condition. If there is a working condition that a reasonable person would consider resulting in injury or death, then OSHA indicates it is proper to refuse this work. Not wanting to work in lieu of that is not permissible. Ask for other SAFE work. Any issues with any of the above stated matters of other unmentioned scenarios, please contact the Union. We will investigate and take whatever action is required.

The Union is pushing management to clear up the Link building. IT has improved during certain portions of the workday. There is still more to do, and the Union is going to push the matter until a proper and safe resolution is achieved. The fact that they stage PIT and empty mail containers in the aisleway is an OSHA and Postal Service violation. Next step is Western Area if they cannot do what is necessary locally.

***With the above stated, here is a simple tip for dealing with ignorance, stubbornness, or possibly both as it applies to some within management and safety. Ignorance because they refuse to learn the full scope of their own job. Safety is a prime and core responsibility of the employment conditions of being in management. Stubborn is for those that are taught the right way or pointed in the right direction as to the source of the necessary knowledge, but somehow, they believe that they are above the agency as it comes to complying with their employment conditions. As for the tip of ensuring you remain calm, cool, and collected with the desire to ensure your work environment is safe, healthy, and hostile free, you need to keep things simple. Ask yourself, if management does not adjust staffing to compensate for understaffing, what is the proper way to deal with them when they lose their minds about the mail not making their commitments?***

***Smile and say, "I'm working as fast as I safely can," Continue working and doing your job. If that results in anything other than the management official supporting your efforts and worse***

***yet they tell you to hurry up or otherwise chastise you, the next thing out of your mouth is, "Please contact my Union as I want Union time. Please stop harassing me as I am working."***

As soon as you get off the workroom floor, contact me via text at 425-232-5175 (unless you are one of the few that have lost the privilege of calling me on my personal cell, then you call 206-768-4508 and leave a message) and let me know what is going on. I will get back with you as quickly as possible and get you set up with a union steward. If they are problematic, we will make sure to spend quality time in reigning in their terror. I personally do not come to work to be hassled. Also, when I work on the floor and I am short-staffed, I don't let it bother me one iota. This job is a marathon and not a sprint. You show up to move the mail. That is what we get paid to do. Moving mail safely, so that we leave the same way we came in that day. It is ultimately up to management to properly staff and schedule the operations within the limitations placed upon them in the contractual agreements. We all know local management has been terrible at following the contract as it applies to proper staffing and scheduling. The Union grieves this on the regular. Don't let management make you believe, for them to follow the contract, you must cut corners or work unsafe.

Let's talk some more truth. With the above stated, there are mail handlers that will moan and complain about everything. However, these same mail handlers are their own worst enemy and honestly work to the detriment of the entire craft. For those mail handlers that purportedly perform their daily work routines unsafely, there are other negative consequences of your actions. One of the main ones being the reduction in mail handler support within your work area. As I stated above, "This job is a marathon and not a sprint." Management has the recall of a goldfish when it comes to the hard work and efforts put forth by the mail handler craft. Especially when it comes time to reduce mail handler staffing during a downturn in mail volume. If you like to work mandatory overtime, mandatory holidays, have less choice vacation, and find it necessary to call in to recover (possibly disciplined thereafter) feel free to do three jobs unsafely so you can please management. Just know, you may not be able to continue doing that for the duration of decades. Instead, it is best to work safely within your capabilities. This is not saying you slow down for the sheer desire to be slower. No, I am saying work safely within the scope of the safety rules and see where that goes. Let management make the necessary adjustments. Even if that means you take only the time allotted for your breaks and lunches. Taking longer ones with the intent of cutting corners is not a winning plan in the long run. As some of the mail handlers have found, there is little incentive to do much more than work safely for some of our newer supervisors. Once again, what is the contractual requirement after getting to work? "A fair day's work, for a fair day's pay."

## **Grievances**

The Seattle P&DC has 765 grievance files on record for the Seattle P&DC and PMA. Most being at the Seattle P&DC this year. I have around 40 grievances filed at the SDDC. At least 80% of those resulted in grievances being subject to the Article 15 process. Ranging from settlement or decision at Step 1 to Arbitration.

As usual, we have a wide range of issues that we address. Of course, the ongoing issues of cross-craft and supervisors doing mail handler craft work. Payments continue to be slow coming out from management, but I am hopeful that more will be made as the year progresses.

Discipline has been hot and heavy. While some of the disciplines issued were tossed due to poor work on behalf of management, some have resulted in a settlement. Usually with a reduction in either level

or duration. In the past, I would inform a mail handler that we grieved their discipline, and it was reduced in duration to six months. Sometimes there is also a reduction in level from what was issued. Many, not all, over the 2.5 decades of working at the Seattle P&DC would try to improve their attendance until the discipline dropped off. Unfortunately, this is not the case now. I deal with multitudes of mail handlers receiving discipline and getting numerous subsequent ones issued. Not helpful. If you think that you will not lose your job for attendance, think again. There are mail handlers that are no longer with us, because they thought it was a big joke. That is until they were issued removal papers and then they cried about how much they needed this job. I would suggest caring about your job well before running through all the levels of progressive discipline. While we will do what we can on your behalf, coming to work as scheduled is kind of a key requirement. If you cannot make it due to your serious health condition or a serious health condition of a qualifying dependent, please investigate getting FMLA protection. It is your job to keep or lose.

Speaking about discipline. Fighting at work, and/or verbally threatening/cursing out your co-workers are not in your best interests. I know people have bad days and sometimes life can be overwhelming. The Postal Service is not the place to conduct this type of business. If you have an anger problem, seek professional help. If you wish to lose your job quickly or get discipline stacked up on you, feel free to do these types of things. While the Union will always review the mitigating circumstances and see if there is something that can be done, teeing off on your co-workers because you don't like them or you do not like their work ethic is not even close to being a legitimate reason for unsavory conduct. Worse yet, physically striking your co-worker could result in your co-worker filing charges with the police. This is not high school where they call your parents, and you get a suspension for a fight. No, you could be charged with assault. I strongly suggest this nonsense discontinues ASAP. If not, you may end up looking in from the outside due to losing your job.

Other contractual issues that the Union has been dealing with. Management has been doubling down on blatantly disregarding the proper application of calling overtime. For example, if you worked on your DDO, and management told you are not allowed to work ET overtime, that is not true. While they may not need to call you for the OT, or they call a different scheduled rotation, if you are available and have the same ET for an OT call as the other ET OT mail handlers in the rotation, they must consider your seniority in relation and how it would apply to the overall rotation. If you are in doubt, make sure to contact the Union.

Bid rights have been reported and the Union is grieving as they pop up. Things such as the assignment of higher-level work or excessing from a principal work area or section being the two main issues. Report these when they occur, and we will file individual grievances.

### **Some Key Reminders**

**If you sign a 3971 that is pre-printed by management, always verify that it is correct. If you cannot verify that it is correct, do not sign it until you can. Check the entire 3971 for the information listed. Also, always sign the 3971 and include the DATE THAT YOU ACTUALLY SIGN THE 3971. NOT THE DATE OF THE ABSENCE.**

**You have 14 days to notify the Union when you wish to file a grievance. That starts on the date when the violation becomes known. Some issues that come up can be argued are ongoing, but it is always best to be prompt in your notice to the Union.**

**If you cannot make it to work, be it your DDO, your holiday, your regular day, you need to contact management as soon as possible. Ideally, before your shift starts. There may be circumstances that make that impossible or impractical, but not contacting management for an entire week is hard to defend. Especially in this age of technology.**

**If you are hurt at work, report the injury to management. Do not sign anything that is presented to you that indicates your desire not to file a claim at the time. This is improper and a violation of your rights under federal law. It is also codified in the USPS Employee Labor Relation manual. If management is not helpful, of which is commonly the case in on-the-job injuries, make sure to contact the Union for assistance.**

### **Last thoughts**

I want to thank the members of the NPMHU Local 316 for their support over the many years. As I most likely, God willing, embark on the latter part of my Postal Service career and my time as the Seattle Branch President, I am very grateful for all the fond memories and great folks I have had the pleasure of working with. I still have around 16 months before I will likely retire, but I hope that in the next 16 months I can work towards equipping a new group of union representatives. The process has begun. Please be patient and supportive of the new primary stewards. They have much to learn but are willing and able to step up as required.

I want to personally thank Lavern Carlson for stepping up and serving the Union with dignity and professionalism. Even in the face of some adverse treatment during her time. She has been a great asset and friend. She will be greatly missed. I wish her a healthy and blessed retirement.

In closing, stay frosty during the upcoming peak mailing season. Take the results of the election in stride. Know that regardless of the fringes of our society not being happy with the results of the election, we will prevail and there will be a peaceful transition to the next administration. Don't let management's incompetence bring you down. Do what is right and you will be fine. If you need to get in touch with me, you can text me on 425-232-5175. For the one mail handler that is blocked from using my cell phone number, please call and leave message at 206-768-4508. In both cases, I will contact you back as soon as possible. On my days off, my response times will vary. Please be patient.

You also can contact me via my email at [sbezella@msn.com](mailto:sbezella@msn.com). Please use this if you have anything extensive to report to me.

In Solidarity and God Bless,

Shaun P. Bezella  
NPMHU Local 316  
Seattle Branch President/SDDC Chief Steward  
WA State Board Member at Large



**Steven Kim**  
***Anchorage Branch President***

Hello everyone!

As of right now we have 15 bid position for the THS operations. 11 bids on tour 1 and 4 bids on tour 2.

Management and the union have been meeting to get our RI-399 inventory. We have two inventory subjects that are in dispute, that are not signed off. They are LCUS and THS. LCUS has been sent to RDRC which later sent it up to NDRC. We are still waiting for an outcome on the LCUS. Management and your mail handler union agrees that the THS work is our work but clerks want to contest this work.

Apologies to brother Gerry Rambaud, He was part of the 18 that was converted October 2023 but was left out on the last newsletter.

There have been 5 conversions from May 2024 to now, Congratulations Brother Marion Fitisemanu, brother Aoatua Jr Liua, brother Royce Erickson, brother Yorick Li, and brother Darwin Valdez.

I do need to remind everyone that cell phone usage on the workroom floor is punishable with discipline. If you do get caught on your phone and someone from EAS (SDO, MDO, Engineer) tells you to put it away, please put it away in your pocket. I strongly recommend you do what they say first, and then ask to see your union steward if you feel they have wronged you in any way. Please do not argue with them.

When management brings you into the office for a discussion, you can ask to see your steward afterwards but not during discussions. Article 16.2 Discussion "For minor offenses by an employee, management has a responsibility to discuss such matters with the employee. Discussions of this type shall be held in private between the employee and the supervisor. Such discussion are not considered discipline and are not grievable." You should not be answering any questions during a discussion, they are the ones telling you what you did wrong.

PIT equipment operators, please do not operate your PIT equipment while drinking sodas or water or looking at your phones. If you need to drink water, stop your PIT equipment before taking a drink. If you need to do something on your phone, I recommend you go to the bathroom and make a quick text or what you need to do. Please do not drive distracted. There have been 7 accidents this year alone. Please do not rush and drive safe.

In the Rewrap section, you will need to be trained in Hazmat. Management here did not want to train Mail Handlers in Hazmat for some reason. I had to talk to people above management here to make sure that everyone gets trained before being required to rewrap wet or powder mail package. Even if you are not Hazmat trained, you still need to do rewraps but stay away from wet or powder packages. IF MANAGEMENT TELLS YOU TO REWRAP WET OR POWDER MAIL, PLEASE FOLLOW GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS FIRST THEN ASK TO SEE ME.

I would like to remind everyone not to leave your work area to find a union steward to ask a question without getting permission from supervisors. We need to stop asking questions on the work floor. Management has been lenient with that as of now but from the looks of things they will most likely start attempting to discipline you for leaving your work area. That includes union stewards for leaving their assigned work area. Ask to see your union steward and you will should get 30 minutes in the office with a steward to ask your questions. It is another thing to try and to remember everyone's concern on the floor, especially during operations, as opposed to being in a controlled quiet environment such as the union office.

Attendance is an important issue. Management has been issuing too many disciplines for attendance. Please try to get FMLA whenever possible. If you call out sick, please stay off social media, do not live stream what you are doing when you call out sick. If you take pictures of any activity while you call out sick, do not post them on Facebook that same day. The pictures you take usually have time and date stamps on them.

Open season is coming for health benefits. I personally have the MHBP Standard Plan. The reason I like this plan so much is their low deductible on most primary care doctor visits, specialist visits, chiropractic care and urgent care visits are copay without meeting the deductible. Also, MHBP has a toll-free number that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week except major holidays. You will be able to talk to a representative anytime you need. My son broke his leg in February 2024. We went to the Emergency room where they did a temporary cast. We were referred to OPA which I made sure was in network by checking online and calling MHBP. MHBP was there every step of the way. There was no surprise bill, and everything was explained easily to me by MHBP representatives.

Steven Kim  
NPMHU Local 316  
Anchorage Branch President  
AK State Board Member at Large



**Tim Kovac**  
***Spokane Branch President***

Hello all!

I unfortunately must start this newsletter with the saddest of news from Spokane. In the last few months, we have lost two of our Mail Handler brothers. Robert Heaney and Welton “Skip” Bellamy have both passed away. I knew both of them well and worked with both since I transferred here in 2008. They both were good men and I will remember the conversations and times that we shared.

**“Do not cry because they are passed! Smile, because they once were!”**

**—Ludwig Jacobowski**

Benefits open season is almost upon us (November 11 - December 9, 2024) and all career Mail Handlers will be able to make changes to their benefits plans soon. Now is the time to start comparing and thinking about any changes you would like to make. There are a number of plans and options but I would like to remind Mail Handlers that the union does have their own health benefits plan that is one of the most affordable and provides some of the best coverage of all the health plans available. The Mail Handlers Benefit Plan, or MHBP, can be accessed at the website, <https://mhbp.com>. There is also a federal comparison tool for all the plans at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov).

The time for bidding for vacation for next year is coming up next month as well. The Union would like to remind all career Mail Handlers to begin to think about what weeks each member would like to sign up for. Once you are presented with the annual leave sign up roster, you have 24 hours to make a selection. The local rules for bidding are (usually) included with the sign-up roster. If you have any questions about the sign-up process for annual leave, please ask your steward or myself. If you have a copy of the local contract, it starts on page 5.

In a recent labor management meeting, the Union inquired into staffing for peak season. Management has been instructed that there will be NO extra hiring of peak season MHA’s. I believe that this only means one thing, the full utilization of the ODL and MHA’s on overtime and mandatory OT for non-ODL personnel. I am stating this here and now to inform everyone that this is most likely going to be December’s reality and so that you may plan accordingly. The rules for overtime in December are covered in Article 8.5 F of the NPMHU contract. See a steward for clarification.



I would like to take this opportunity to speak about a topic that I do not discuss in the newsletter often. TSP and retirement. If you are currently not taking advantage of the TSP program and the matching funds that the USPS gives to each employee, you are making a grave mistake. It is easy to say that “I can’t afford TSP.” and ignore it. But if you want to retire and leave the postal service (either 10 years or 40 years from now), TSP savings is a must! I have spoken to too many Mail Handlers that have lost out on a vast potential financial savings through the TSP program and that have regretted not investing sooner! Some of these Mail Handlers have had to delay retirement by huge amounts of time from when they were eligible to retire due to lack of money to fulfill their needs at their retirement age.

The move from Fed Ex to UPS is now “official”. There are some changes in the schedule of the flights to and from Spokane with this change. Management has expressed to me that they may be forced to alter Mail Handler schedules as well. As stated in my last newsletter, if movement is needed, the union will continue to work with management to try and keep changes minimal and as least invasive to the Mail Handler craft as possible consistent with the contract and Article 12.

The clerk craft continues to transport MTE and/or mail, work MTE, and even work mail that is a Mail Handler function. The union has told management again and again that these violations occur, but in most instances the statements fall on deaf ears. That is why we continue to be vigilant and steadfast on wanting Mail Handlers to report what they see so we can continue to grieve these violations of the contract.

Safety. Again. Always. Once again, the Spokane P&DC management continues to not enforce any type of safety program. Oh, there are video screens and many postings about safety. But when it comes to enforcing and/or instructing employees on safety protocols, supervisors consistently look the other way instead of correcting anything they might see. And it is management’s duty to inform the newer (and older) employees of what is and is not safe work practices! The Union continues to champion for safe work habits. Please take the time to work safely!

If you or any other Mail Handler is looking for additional information on almost any postal/union issue, two great resources are the National Postal Mail Handlers and Local 316 union websites: National - <https://www.npmhu.org> Local - <https://local316npmhu.org>

The National also has an app that can be downloaded from most app stores. Just search for NPMHU.

To conclude the newsletter, as always, I would like to personally thank all the Spokane P&DC Stewards for continuing to help and to invest their time and energy into upholding and enforcing the contract.

Tim Kovac  
NPMHU Local 316 Recording Secretary  
Spokane Branch President



**Craig Hurley**  
**Tacoma Branch President**

Greeting from the pit of the Puget Sound. First and foremost, congratulations to our latest MHA conversions; Sandy Molioo, Leticia Cisneros Castro and Abiola Calfos. Your careers are just getting started and we are happy to have you on our team.

On to pressing matters and the bulk of my info dump... Another year at Tacoma P&DC with no seasonal hires... This old hat trick is getting bitter these days. Adding to our personnel shortages, Election season has thrown Tacoma Mail Handlers into a whirlwind of overtime opportunities, some wanted some not so much. Your union has been, and continues to, press management for more Mail Handlers. As of press time there are no Mail Handler Assistants on the rolls AT Tacoma P&DC. And we are hurting for the worse because of it. Not just in elevated call-outs due to being overworked, but our loss rate of Mail Handlers jumping ship and going to other crafts and facilities is dwindling our numbers at a constant high tempo. We see it. We feel it. And no one is happy about it. I feel your frustration.

Last Passages Newsletter I discussed the changes that were coming to Tacoma P&DC as we brace for what's coming in the new year of 2025. I would kindly like to remind everyone, management specifically, that with the changes inbound as we transition, new operations will have to be reviewed and decided upon by new RI-399 deliberations. Earlier this year, management disclosed the number of personnel that will likely be impacted by the change. I am not under the impression that any of the positions being discussed by the impact will affect Mail Handlers, as most changes will be automation machine removal driven, which impacts clerks and maintenance more than our craft. I am, however, concerned that management may use our redirected mail processing operations outsourced to Seattle and NDC to show reduced mail volumes (read: transportation changes and mail package sort changes are just moving the logistics around and is not actually the false advertising overall of a reduction in mail volume as claimed by the US Postal Service) to justify any Mail Handler position being reverted. Don't believe the hype. I can assure you that any proposed position changes will be filtered through our union contract and all cross-craft grievances brought to bear against losing any ground gained at Tacoma P&DC throughout the years.

Looking forward into next year, be aware of 3 items impacting Tacoma P&DC Mail Handlers:

1. Beginning in February 2025, PM DeJoy's moratorium on facility changes will have been lifted. This tentative date will begin to move pieces of the puzzle that will impact further changes in transportation and mail processing. Expected changes on the horizon may include parcel breakdown and dispatch, which will directly put pressure on our craft. I do not know as of press time, any maintenance schedule to remove DBCS machines or our beloved purple monster Barney. Discussions with maintenance managers have implied those machine removals could drag out all of 2025 and into 2026.
2. Too little too late, we should see an influx of positions being filled and our MHA complement to be reinforced. The hiring of Mail Handlers has been a sticky subject for all of 2024 and I suspect our latest debacle of being without MHA's this season is raising eyebrows and drawing attention to the misgivings of HR both in our district and at our National HRSSC level. Work Safely and don't be in a hurry to do more without the help that management knows we need. Or you can expect this again next year; no seasonals.
3. The Postal Service Benefit Health Plan (PSBHP) goes into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. If you are NOT 65 years of age, you do not need worry about this Medicare change being added into our PSHB plans as of this time. For retirees and employees over 65 years of age, you must elect Medicare part B to coincide with whichever health plan you subscribe. For specific details, materials will be made available during our upcoming 2024-2025 Open Season from November 13 – December 9, 2024. Please visit your local Health Fair (Tacoma will host a health fair on November 22<sup>nd</sup> at 0600-0800 and 1200-1400)

Turn out for our Tacoma Branch Meeting on July 14, 2024, had good attendance. 19 of our fellow teammates at Tacoma P&DC showed up at the IHOP to enjoy a free breakfast and had the opportunity to meet with Local 316 President Don Sneesby and our Treasurer Debbie Retter. Next year will likely change venue; please consider making suggestions for where you all would like to meet in the summer of 2025.

In closing, I would like to ask that regardless of who we vote for in the 2024 Election, I would hope that civility and dignity be spread throughout our conversations and neither gloating nor blame be used at work, or in our daily lives. One nation with many voices and only one outcome can sometimes lead to a toxic work and life environment; I have lost friends and family over politics. We are better than that on both a personal and national pride level. As always, I thank you for your time.

Craig Hurley  
NPMHU Local 316  
Tacoma Branch President  
NW Passages Editor

# **REFLECTIONS**

## **Awards & Retirements**

***Our sincere thanks for your continuing membership...***

### **30 Years**

Alonzo Whigham – Seattle P&DC

Gerald Kirk – Seattle P&DC

Thomas Bilodeau – Seattle NDC

Christopher Olivar – PMA

Lawrence Frazier, Jr – Tacoma P&DC

Douglas Spencer – Tacoma P&DC

Richard Clark – Spokane P&DC

### **25 Years**

Eric Batara – Seattle P&DC

Shaun Bezella – Seattle P&DC

Julio Vidad – Seattle P&DC

Pancho Dagan – Seattle NDC

Debbie Retter – Seattle NDC

Crystal Vance – Seattle NDC

Richard Bronner – Tacoma P&DC

Welton Bellamy – Spokane P&DC

### **20 Years**

Victor Kravchuk – Seattle P&DC

Manuel Humarang – Seattle P&DC

Ngoc Loan Nguyen – Seattle P&DC

Paul Sanchez – Seattle P&DC

Scott Jenkins – Seattle P&DC

Ronnie Gaines – Seattle NDC

Sherlyn Sianquita – Seattle NDC

Elsa Shatley – Seattle NDC

PMA – Noel Pascual - PMA

Nova Velasco - PMA

Meria Riggins - PMA

Anthony Robinson – Tacoma P&DC

**Retirements**

***May you enjoy your retirement; you will be missed!***

**Seattle P&DC**

Esther Conrad, Renato Navel, Eric Swanson,  
Lavern Carlson and Raymond N. Amador

**Seattle NDC**

Willie McCoy

**Spokane P&DC**

Eric Wilson

**Anchorage P&DC**

Paul Patrick

**~ In Memoriam ~**

+

Robert Heaney -Spokane P&DC



Tom Bilodeau – 30 yr



Lawrence Frazier Jr – 30 yr



Douglas Sencer – 30 yr



Al Whigham – 25 yr



Crystal Vance – 25 yr



Victor Kravchuk – 20 yr



LeKendrick Covington – 25 yr



Pancho Dagan – 25 yr



Manuel Humarang – 20 yr



Elsa Shatley – 20 yr



Paul Sanchez – 20 yr



**Happy Retirement!**  
**Lavern Carlson**



**THREE PLANS, ONE MISSION.  
A HEALTHIER YOU.**



SCAN ME



## **SHOP. COMPARE. CHOOSE MHBP.**

How do you select the best plan for you and your family? Choice is good a thing, but choosing isn't always easy. And you want to make the best decision. So start by determining what's most important to you:

- What kinds of medical services will I need this year?
- Do my current benefits meet my medical needs?
- Are there upcoming life events that could impact my coverage?
- Does my plan's selection of Network providers meet my needs?
- Are my total out-of-pocket costs (premium, deductibles, copayments and coinsurance) manageable?
- Does my plan's customer service meet my expectations?

Now that you have a feel for what you need for the coming year, use this guide to compare MHBP Standard Option to your current plan or to another health plan. Fill in the blanks for your current health plan — and for any other plans you may be considering. Add in other features that are important to you. Then compare the results. See which plan is the best fit for your health needs.

### **RETIRING SOON?**

Check out how MHBP can work for retirees at [MHBP.com/Retiree](https://www.mhbp.com/Retiree)

If you have questions about MHBP, call **1-800-410-7778 (TTY: 711)**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week except major holidays.



SCAN ME

**You also can make your PAC contribution by bi-weekly salary allotment through PostalEASE  
(access by phone or on the web):**

**PostalEASE BY TELEPHONE:**

Dial 1-877-4PS-EASE — (877-477-3273) and follow the prompt for the Employee Services Main Menu.

When prompted Press **#1** for PostalEASE

When prompted, enter your eight-digit USPS employee identification number.

When prompted again, enter your USPS PIN number. (This is the same as the PIN number you use for telephone bidding and/or other payroll allotments.)

When Prompted, Choose Option **#2** (to select payroll allotments)

Then Choose Option **#1** (to select allotments)

When prompted Press **#2** to continue

When prompted Press **#3** to add the allotment

When prompted for the routing number enter **054001220**

When prompted for the account number enter the following :

**11260001** \_ \_ \_ - \_ \_ - \_ \_ \_ \_ (the last nine digits of your account number is your social security number—this information will allow us to identify you as the PAC contributor).

Press **#1** if correct

When prompted Press **#1** for “checking”

When prompted, input the bi-weekly dollar amount of your PAC allotment.

Press **#1** if correct

When prompted Press **#1** to process

You will be provided a confirmation number as well as the start date for the salary allotment.

For your records:

Record the confirmation number \_\_\_\_\_

Record the start date of the salary allotment \_\_\_\_\_

Press **#1** to repeat or Press **#9** to end call

**PostalEASE on the WEB:**

To initiate your bi-weekly PAC contribution on the web, simply go to [www.liteblue.usps.gov](http://www.liteblue.usps.gov)

Enter your eight-digit USPS Employee ID Number and your USPS PIN

Follow the link to PostalEASE—you will again be asked to enter your Employee ID Number and USPS PIN

Follow the link for PAYROLL- Allotments/NTB

Continue to the ALLOTMENTS section

Your ROUTING TRANSIT NUMBER is: **054001220**

Your ACCOUNT # will be: **11260001** \_ \_ \_ - \_ \_ - \_ \_ \_ \_ (the last nine digits of your account number is your social security number—this information will allow us to identify you as the PAC contributor).

For ACCOUNT TYPE—please select “CHECKING”

When prompted, please input the AMOUNT that you would like to contribute to the PAC each pay period.

To process your PAC allotment, you will need to select the VALIDATE button, and to finalize the transaction, please select SUBMIT. Be sure to print out a copy of the confirmation page for your records.

# Treasurer's Report

Income/Expense – 2024

July – September 2024

		<u>July – Sep 2024</u>
<b>Income</b>		
	Apparel	\$ - 2,181.99
	Dues check off	99,873.74
	Health Benefit Plan	4,364.35
	Interest	6.88
	Locally Collected Dues	217.00
	Revenue Sharing Program	11,806.02
<b>Total Income</b>		<u><b>114,086.00</b></u>
	Gifts to members	2,678.19
	Mileage	519.90
	Insurance	4,386.00
	Hotels/Meals	9,678.62
	Office Supplies	1,696.14
	Legal & Prof Fees	56.79
	Payroll Expenses	
	Benefits	17,250.95
	Gross Wages	54,577.14
	<b>Total Payroll Expenses</b>	<u><b>71,828.09</b></u>
	Payroll processing	1,304.64
<b>Taxes:</b>		
	WA Disability PFL	-179.00
	Federal Withholding	-3,899.10
	AK Unemployment	-22.67
	FICA	-3,402.37
	Medicare	-795.74
	WA Disability PML	-85.04
	WA EmpAdm Fund	1.17
	WA Unemployment	9.44
	<b>Total Payroll Taxes</b>	<u><b>-8,374.48</b></u>
	Per Capita Tax Local coll	38.60
	Postage and Delivery	391.06
<b>Professional Fees</b>		
	Accounting	5,565.00
	<b>Total Professional Fees</b>	<u><b>5,565.00</b></u>
	Quarterly Taxes	455.86
	WAEmpAdm	1.75
	WaStEmpSec	75.00
	Rent	6,109.83
	Telephone/Internet	2,423.88
	Territorial COLA	299.72
	Travel/Transportation	2,608.25
	Reconciliation Discrepancies	-365.72
<b>Total Expense</b>		<u><b>101,377.15</b></u>
<b>Net Income</b>		<u><u><b>\$12,708.85</b></u></u>

Balances as of Sep. 30, 2024

SALAL (checking)	\$ 159,316.46	(savings)	\$9,081.21
Charles Schwab (prev. TD Ameritrade)	\$92,111.93	(\$125K transferred to open Americo in March 2024)	
AuguStar Financial (as of 1/14/24)	\$335,639.59	(reported annually)	
Americo Investments opened with	\$125,000.00		
<b>Totals as of September 30, 2024</b>			<b>\$724,149.19</b>

**Total Assets: \$724,149.19**

# Northwest Passages

National Postal Mail Handlers Union  
Local 316  
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Seattle, WA 98188

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Toll Free: 1-888-595-2316  
FAX (206) 870-8284  
Email – [local316@outlook.com](mailto:local316@outlook.com)

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Gene Rezac-----Vice President  
Debbie Retter -----Treasurer  
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Craig Hurley----- Tacoma P&DC

**Check out our Webpage at:**  
**[www.local316npmhu.org](http://www.local316npmhu.org)**

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TJ Hall ----- Pasco HUB  
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Don Sneesby ----- Wenatchee Branch  
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Don Sneesby----- Vancouver Branch

#### NW Passages

Craig Hurley-----Editor

#### Notice:

*Opinions expressed herein are those of each author and may not reflect the official opinion of Local 316 NPMHU and its officers or representatives. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided by the publication date. Please contact us if you believe an error or an omission has occurred for corrections to be run in future issues. Thank you!*