



Volume 42 Issue 4 Circulation 5000 Edited in Spring Lake NC January February 2026

Official News Publication of the North Carolina Rural Letter Carriers' Association

RELIEF CARRIER APPRECIATION WEEK

FEBRUARY 7TH TO FEBRUARY 13TH, 2026

The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association has designated the first full week of February as Relief Carrier Appreciation Week.

Your North Carolina board wants to say THANK YOU to all our Relief Carriers for all you do!

This entire issue is dedicated to our relief carriers. It is filled with information targeted toward our RCAs, PTFs & ARCs.

We are encouraging all North Carolina carriers to please take the time to show our leave replacements that they are an incredible asset in your office. **Tell them** that their hard work, dedication and commitment to the job has not gone unnoticed.

As we wrap up 2025 and another record breaking holiday season, (*seems like every year we are breaking new records at Christmas*) now is an especially good time to recognize and thank them. Why not ask your Postmaster if they would be willing to show them some appreciation this special week. Have a little party, buy them a cake or donuts? Acknowledge them at the very least!

As we all know, a little recognition and gratitude can go a long way towards boosting the morale in an office.

The extreme shortage of personnel plus the overwhelming amount of Christmas packages placed a tremendous strain upon the entire postal service.

We all know that our relief carriers seem to get the worst of it. They are thrown on routes they don't know, get sent to offices they have never even heard of and end up working late and in the dark! Many of them are working for days on end without a day off. If you have RCAs & ARCs that survived all that and are still with us then now is absolutely the time to thank them! Thanks for hanging in there and getting us all through this exceptionally exhausting year.

Our relief carriers play a vital role in the craft. We need them. Treat them well and thank them whenever you can, not just this one week. We should value and appreciate them all throughout the year! **THANK YOU!**

Please send your pictures of RCAs, ARCs, PTFs and/or office appreciation party to Vicki Gray (address and email are on page 2) for possible publication in the next issue of the NCRC.

**I n s i d e
T h i s
I s s u e**

**W h y
B e l o n g ?**

**W i n t e r
D r i v i n g
T i p s**

**C y b e r
S a f e t y**

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Articles are the opinion of the Author and not necessarily the NRLCA, the NCRLCA or the Editor.

National Emergency Hotline

**1-888 EMERGNC
(1- 888-363-7462)**

is a toll-free number for USPS employees to use in the event of a facility or weather-related emergency.

In an emergency, the hotline provides employees with information about the status of their facility and special instructions or guidance.

Please keep this phone number for future use.

WEBSITE

Please visit

www.NCRLCA.org
for all the latest news.

This month the password will be DrivE*\$\$@fe!!

The password will be changed to the above on January 31, 2026.

At this time the password is only needed to access the Junior Auxiliary page.

Cover Photo

“Big Pete”
Dambo Troll in Charlotte, NC

By Debbie Bennett

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Important Dates

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| January 1 | New Year’s Day Holiday |
| January 19 | Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday |
| January 24-26 | South Atlantic Conference |
| February 7-13 | Relief Carrier Appreciation Week |
| February 14 | Valentine’s Day |
| February 16 | President’s Day Holiday |



President

Elaine Althoff

Relief Carrier Appreciation Week

The NRLCA National Board has designated the first full week in February (February 7-13, 2026) as "Relief Carrier Appreciation Week."

We ask that you join us in showing our hardworking leave replacements that they are an imperative and essential part of the rural carrier craft. As peak season winds down, now is an especially good time to thank our leave replacements for their hard work and dedication. We appreciate you not only during this week but all year long. Thank you!

Please send in pictures of your RCAs, ARCs & PTFs as you celebrate in your offices across the State. We will print them in our next newsletter. Send to Vicki Gray at NCRLCAsecTreas@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Spring Meetings: As we set dates for the District Spring Business Meetings, Presidents and Secretaries, please ensure you contact your assigned Board member and Steward. **DO NOT** set dates and times without confirmation that both will be in attendance.

We will be doing workup for our Legislative visits and planning our State Convention in the coming months.

It's not too early to start talking about the State Convention; however, if you plan to attend, please remember that to be paid, you must complete two steps. They are:

1. Be elected as a delegate from your district and
2. Send in your registration form to Vicki Gray before the deadline. Please remember the mail has slowed down, so **MAIL EARLY!**

We will keep you updated on the website (NCRLCA.org) and in the next Newsletter.

EMA to Decrease 0.5 Cents Per Mile Effective January 10, 2026

On December 18, 2025, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released the November 2025 Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Based on the release, the Equipment Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for rural carriers will decrease 0.5¢ to 97.0¢ per mile. This EMA rate will be effective January 10, 2026 (Pay Period 2026-03).

Rural Carriers

In accordance with the provisions of Article 9, Section 2.G.3 of the USPS/NRLCA National Agreement, effective January 10, 2026 (Pay Period 2026-03), the Equipment Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will decrease to 97.0¢ per mile, or a minimum of \$38.80 per day, whichever is greater.

Auxiliary Rural Carriers, Rural Carrier Reliefs, Rural Carrier Associates, Rural Carrier Part Time Flexibles, and Auxiliary Assistance

Employees providing auxiliary assistance or serving auxiliary routes under the provisions of Article 9, Section 2.G.5, will receive EMA of 97.0¢ per mile or \$10.30 per hour, whichever is greater. This EMA should not exceed the amount provided in the special EMA chart for route stops and miles.

This was the second opportunity for an EMA adjustment under the terms of the 2024-2027 USPS/NRLCA National Agreement. The next quarterly adjustment will occur after the release of the February 2026 Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) and will be effective the second full pay period after release of that index.

(From the NRLCA website)



Chaplain Jesse Ray Farmer Jr.

themselves locked in our back garage—a place we use for storage. It's a secure spot with plenty of windows, away from the elements, and within clear sight of our back window. We've never had any issues with the lock in almost 10 years of having the building.

But in this case, the girls found a way to open a window and, with their adventurous spirit, threw out pillows and blankets to create a sort of "escape route." They then attempted to use a Christmas ribbon as a rope to lower one of them out of the two-story window. Miraculously, no one was hurt. After a thorough check of everyone's well-being and lots of hugs, we had a serious discussion about the importance of patience and the potential consequences of rushing into risky decisions.

In life, it's easy to act impulsively—to speak before thinking, to react in anger, or to try to solve problems before fully understanding them. We can become so

Take A Minute

This past Thanksgiving, we had quite an eventful time gathering with family and friends. While finishing dessert, my 6-year-old grandson ran in, wide-eyed, to inform us that two of our older granddaughters had gotten

caught up in the moment that we forgot to stop and consider the bigger picture. In the rush, we might not think about the cost of our actions—whether it's losing our jobs, damaging a relationship, or making a decision we regret.

This is where wisdom can be a great guide. As the message in James 1:19 suggests, "*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.*" It's a gentle reminder to pause, take a breath, and reflect before we react. When we give ourselves just a moment—one extra minute—it can make all the difference. That extra moment might protect a relationship, preserve our peace of mind, or even save us from greater harm.

In our fast-paced world, especially in the demanding work of a rural mail carrier, taking that pause can be a powerful choice. Whether dealing with a difficult customer, managing a heavy workload, or navigating unexpected challenges on the road, the ability to take a step back and breathe before responding can prevent unnecessary stress and conflict.

So today, I encourage you to take a minute. In your daily life, at work, or in your personal relationships, remember that one moment of patience can save much more than you might expect.

Obituaries

Roger Clyde Lookabill, age 74, of Lexington, North Carolina, passed away peacefully with his family by his side, on Saturday, October 25, 2025, at Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Lexington Medical Center.

Roger was born on June 15, 1951, in Davidson County to the late Carl Davis Lookabill and Mabel Virginia Parks Lookabill. A lifelong resident of the area, he was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, and friend whose quiet strength and kind heart touched all who knew him.

He attended Bethany United Methodist Church and found great joy in faith, family, and the simple pleasures of life. Roger loved spending time with his

family, traveling with his dear friends Doug and Marcia Reid, and tending to his farm—work that brought him peace and fulfillment.

Roger retired from the United States Postal Service after many years of dedicated service as a mail carrier, where his friendly smile and reliability made him a welcome presence along his route.

In addition to his parents, Roger was preceded in death by his brother, Reid Lookabill, and his brother-in-law, Mike Carrick.

Left to cherish his memory are his beloved wife, Linda Veigh Foster Lookabill; his son, Chris Lookabill and wife Claire; his daughter, Leigh Anne Leonard and husband Mike; grandchildren Thomas, Jane, and Ellis Lookabill, and Kindal and Abbie Leonard; his brother, Jeff Lookabill and wife Vickie; his sister, Carla Carrick; and sister-in-law, Kathy Lookabill. He also leaves behind many extended family members and friends who will miss him dearly.



Executive Committeeman
Telisha Locklear

Hello, North Carolina rural carriers!

Whether you are considering retirement or just starting your career, here are some helpful tips to prepare you for the future.

Did you know that even as a Rural Carrier Associate (RCA), you have access to tools that can help you plan for retirement?

You can learn about federal employees' group life insurance, TSP contributions, and the details of retiring under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) for your annuity.

Why not get a head start?

Utilize www.liteblue.usps.gov as your digital gateway to all USPS benefits. The USPS offers online retirement seminars where you can ask questions before your career officially begins.

****Seminar Schedule:****

****Every Wednesday Morning: 9 AM - 11 AM**

****Every Wednesday Evening: 6 PM - 8 PM**

To join the seminar, use the following information:

****Webinar ID:** 161 204 8439**

****Passcode:** 321538**

Be In The Know For Your Future Retirement

These sessions cover topics such as annuities, health benefits, TSP, and retirement timelines. It's a fantastic opportunity to seek clarification on these important subjects. Understanding your retirement better now can help you avoid mistakes later.

Thank you to all rural carriers for your hard work every day.

Below is contact information from the National Office to be in the know.

Retirement Resources

For questions and concerns regarding retirement issues, please contact:

John Embleton

Retirement/Special Projects, NRLCA
1630 Duke Street, 4th Floor
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Phone: (703) 684-5545

Additional Resource:

Joni L. Montroy

Key Retirement Solutions
Post Office Box 536
Fishers, New York 14453-0536
Phone: (585) 486-4310

https://www.keyretirementsolutions.com

Federal Retiree COLA for 2026 Announced

The 2026 federal retiree cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will be 2.8 percent for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuities, military retirement annuities and Social Security benefits, and 2.0 percent for Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuities. The COLA will be effective with the January 2026 payment.

Each year's COLA is determined by comparing the change in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPIW) from year to year, based on the average of the third-quarter months of July, August and September. The CPI-W is the current index used for measuring increases in the prices of consumer goods, including food and beverages, housing, clothing, transportation, medical care, recreation, education, communication, and more.

Last year, Social Security and CSRS annuitants received a 2.5 percent COLA and FERS annuitants received a 2.0 percent COLA

RCA's and Health Care

Over the years, the NRLCA has achieved major milestones in Healthcare for RCA's.

For many years, there were no benefits for part-time employees and thankfully that has changed. You now have access to Health, Dental, and Vision insurance.

Enrolling for benefits can feel overwhelming and confusing but don't worry, I am here to help!

There are several websites you can visit for information.



Executive Committeeman

Tracy Greer

- ☞ <https://www.carefirst.com/usps/> is **BlueCross BlueShield and is the sole insurance provider for RCAs.** You can find information about the plan and contact information.
- ☞ <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance> OPM.gov is a great source of information. Here, you can compare plans and website information for each provider.
- ☞ <https://www.benefeds.gov/> is where you will enroll and find information about dental and vision insurance.
- ☞ https://myhr.usps.gov/en/pay_benefits/wellness/wellness_at_usps This website is a treasure trove of knowledge. There are many articles and webinars listed along with contact information.
- ☞ https://myhr.usps.gov/en/pay_benefits/wellness/employee_assistance_program if you need any assistance with things like mental health, substance abuse, etc., this website will provide that information.
- ☞ <https://usps.ndbh.com/EAP> another great website with app-based information to assist you with depression, anxiety, insomnia, and much more.

There are also many important numbers if you prefer calling for assistance:

Reminder

You must be a member to carry the Rural Carrier Benefit Health Plan.

Membership ends with retirement.

You MUST REJOIN to remain a member.

Employee Assistance Program: 800-327-4968

Benefeds: 1-877-888-3337

Carefirst: 833-960-4025

As always, shall you need assistance you may contact me, and I am happy to assist and answer any questions you may have.

If you are a non-member, I encourage to sign up today. It is important to stay informed and updated on current information and as a member you receive the NRLCA monthly publications, NCRLCA publications every other month. You also have access to the NRLCA.org website as well.

I would like to thank you for your service as an RCA. You are the backbone of the craft, and you play a critical role in the success of the United States Postal Service.

Prepare for Safe Winter Driving

It's that time of year again, everyone! Winter has officially shown up in North Carolina — and as many of us have already seen, it doesn't always ease its way in. One minute we're enjoying a mild morning, and the next we're staring at the dreaded S-word (yes... snow) or dealing with freezing rain that turns a perfectly fine gravel road into a skating rink.

As rural carriers, we know better than anyone how quickly North Carolina weather can change. A hill that felt safe yesterday might be a slip-n-slide today. A shady driveway can hide a patch of black ice. So this is a great time to slow down, take a breath, and refresh ourselves on winter safety.

North Carolina weather likes to keep us on our toes. It might be 28 degrees at sunrise and 62 by lunch. Because of that, winterizing our vehicles isn't optional — it's essential. A few daily habits can make a huge difference:

- ✿ Give your tires a good look. Tread and pressure matter, especially first thing in the morning when the air is cold.
- ✿ Make sure antifreeze and all fluids are topped off.
- ✿ Swap out those tired wiper blades and keep freeze-resistant washer fluid on hand.
- ✿ Check your lights daily — headlights, tail lights, brake lights, flashers, turn signals. And don't forget to check your amber light!
- ✿ Clean off all frost or ice: windows, mirrors, roof, lights. If you can see clearly, you can react safely.

We all know some parts of our routes can feel like the middle of nowhere — and in winter, that isolation matters. A small emergency kit can be a real lifesaver. If you ever get delayed, stuck, or stranded, you'll be glad to have these with you:

- ✿ Ice scraper and snow brush
- ✿ Small shovel
- ✿ Sand or cat litter for traction
- ✿ Warm blanket or extra clothing & socks

- ✿ Snacks, bottled water, and a phone charger
- ✿ Flashlight and spare batteries
- ✿ First-aid kit and reflective markers

Here in North Carolina, freezing rain is a big troublemaker. It coats everything in a thin layer of ice that you can't always see. Black ice, wet snow, and muddy roads still soft from yesterday's thaw — and winter driving becomes very unpredictable. These reminders can make a tough day a little safer:

- ✿ Slow down. Rushing isn't worth the risk.
- ✿ Give more space. Four to six seconds following distance gives you time to react.
- ✿ Go easy on the pedals. Gentle acceleration and braking help you stay in control.
- ✿ Use headlights whenever visibility drops, even if it's daytime.
- ✿ Be careful on hills and curves, especially on backroads that freeze unevenly.

Our state has some... let's call them special winter moments. Whether your route runs through the mountains, the Piedmont, or the coastal plains, winter brings challenges that deserve extra caution and respect.

- ✿ Watch out for tree branches or debris after storms.
- ✿ Be aware of overnight refreezing that turns melting slush back into ice by morning.
- ✿ Look out for gravel roads that turn into rutted mud pits as temperatures bounce up and down.
- ✿ Don't try to climb icy, unplowed, or drifted hills.
- ✿ Don't cross flooded or washed-out areas — "Turn Around, Don't Drown" is for rural carriers too.



Executive Committeeman
Alicia Pressley

(Continued on page 9)

Start the New Year Protected with the ONLY Auto Insurance Endorsed by the NRLCA

As we begin a new year on the rural routes, one thing stays true—your vehicle is the heart of your job. Whether you're an RCA, PTF, or regular rural carrier, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association wants every member to start the year safe, protected, and prepared.

That's why National General Auto Insurance is still the ONLY auto insurance endorsed by the NRLCA. Their coverage is built around the real risks rural carriers face every day: country roads, weather, wildlife, and constant stop-and-go delivery.

- **Designed for Rural Carriers:** They understand POV route driving and offer coverage that supports postal-use vehicles.
- National General has more coverage you can buy, as well on your vehicle policy, such as:
- Auto protection plan that provides ambulance aid, dismemberment, collision loss of use, travel protection, and more.
- Roadside Assistance Available: Towing, lockouts, dead batteries, tire help, and more—especially valuable during winter and long rural trips.

Perfect for RCAs & PTFs Starting the Year Strong

If you're starting the new year with a new route, more hours, or more miles, this program helps ensure you're protected. Not only is your vehicle covered, but they also insure your home, RV, boat, and motorcycles so why not choose National General for your coverage needs?

Get Covered for the New Year

A quote takes only minutes, plus receive a \$10 eGift card for a free quote.—call the dedicated rural carrier hotline 1-877-325-7727 code RRP

Open 7 days a week

Start the year with confidence.



(Continued from page 8) Winter Driving

And we all hope it never happens, but if you get stuck or stranded:

- ⌘ Call your supervisor immediately — and local authorities if needed.
- ⌘ Stay with your vehicle, unless a safe building is close by.
- ⌘ Make sure the exhaust pipe is clear before running the engine.
- ⌘ Run engine heat sparingly to conserve fuel.
- ⌘ Use flashers or reflective triangles to stay visible.

Winter storms can be strange in NC. One road is fine, another a mile away is frozen solid. That's why communication matters. Let your postmaster know when roads or driveways are unsafe. If cell service is spotty, remember your MDD has emergency texts you can send.

One thing we all need to remember — your safety comes first. Always. Never let anyone — including yourself — pressure you into unsafe delivery. Mail can wait. You can't be replaced.

Get In The Fire

When RCAs are going through orientation and join the union, they are excited for the new adventure of working at the post office.

Learning how to case, pull down, load, deliver mail and parcels, and get home safely is what needs to be accomplished. Often left behind is the knowledge of what is in the contract and other postal policies and manuals. Not knowing what the next chapter in their careers will bring or what questions to ask or where, they seek social media groups/podcasts/bloggers. There is a ton of information there.....but is it correct?

The union holds a minimum of five meetings per year members can attend. We talk about our jobs, vote on leadership (if appropriate), talk with full time stewards and discuss possible resolutions to the contract. If your favorite sports team had an event you could attend, would you do your best to be there?

1. South Atlantic Conference (SAC) is held the last weekend of January, and this year it will be in Cherokee, NC.
2. District Spring Business Meetings are held to elect local district officers and delegates to the state convention. Also, you can meet a full-time steward and state board member.
3. State Convention traditionally takes place mid-June. This is where all the fun happens. If you want to be a delegate from your district don't miss out.
4. National Convention is a State Convention on steroids.
5. Fall Booster focuses on specific topics to train or educate union members.

A member of a certain Church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks the Pastor decided to visit him.

It was a chilly evening, the Pastor found the man at home alone sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his Pastor's visit, the man welcomed him and led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited.

The Pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the Pastor took the fire tongs and carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone.



Vice President

Jay Schreiber

**It's the U and I in
UNION
that makes us
STRONG**

He sat back in his chair still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then the fire was no more. Soon it was cold and "dead as a doornail." Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting.

Just before the Pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the Pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit Pastor – and especially for the fiery message. I shall see you next Sunday in Church."

If you are a newer RCA and just completed your first Christmas season, we need you! If you are an active member and at one time attended union meetings but have missed a few, we need you back! Let us spark your interest again!

Support PAC to Effect Change

I'm sure you've heard of the 3-legged stool needed for a successful retirement. For a successful Postal career there are multiple 'legs'. Postal rules and regulations, our Rural Carrier Contract, OSHA, local and state laws and federal laws. Knowing and following all of these are important to a successful career.

PAC is used to let our Congressmen know which federal legislation is detrimental to us and to gain their support for legislation that can help us. This is the legislation we want to become LAW. We are always asking our members to become sustaining donors because this provides a predictable income that the NRLCA legislative department can use to strategize in advance for upcoming legislation.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act gave the Postal Service \$10 billion without the repayment requirement that was originally in the CARES Act. President Donald Trump signed it into law December 27, 2020.

The Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 which eliminated the Postal Service's requirement to

prefund our retirement and require the USPS to continue 6-day a week delivery (instead of going to 5-day delivery as previously discussed) was signed into law by President Joe Biden on April 6, 2022.

The Social Security Fairness Act repealed the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset that unfairly reduced the Social Security benefits earned by Rural Letter Carriers, other federal employees including postal employees and their spouses. President Joe Biden signed it into law January 5, 2025.

These three pieces of Legislation from the last five years are now LAW. This is what happens when we all work together to support each other and make improvements to the career that we have chosen.

Currently, H.Res.70 which expresses the sense of the House of Representatives that the USPS should remain an independent establishment of the Federal

(Continued on page 12)



PAC CHAIR
Brenda Gibbs

Become a Sustaining Donor

Use this form for automatic PAC payments from your checking account.



I hereby authorize my bank to deduct from my checking account the monthly sum of: (circle one)

\$50

\$25

\$15

\$10

Other: \$ _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name (print): _____

Employee ID Number: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone Number: _____

Please attach a voided check or include Bank Routing number along with your account number.

Send to NRLCA-PAC 1630 Duke St, Floor 2, Alexandria, VA 22314

Government and not be privatized has 229 cosponsors with only 4 from NC, while the Senate version, S.Res.147 has only 7 cosponsors. Thom Tillis was one of the creators of this legislation.

H.R.1065 is the “Protect our Letter Carriers Act “ and has 157 cosponsors with 3 of them from NC. The Senate version S.463 has 10 cosponsors. None from NC.

H.R.1522 is the “Federal Retirement Fairness Act “ and has 120 cosponsors with 3 of them from our state. Currently, there is no Senate version.

H.R.3011, the “USPS Shipping Equity Act” has 8 cosponsors. Currently, there is no Senate version of this legislation.

NCRLCA Dues for 2025-2026

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Regular, PTF...Cash..... | \$877.00 |
| 1187...Bi-Weekly..... | \$33.73 |
| Retired.....Cash..... | \$115.00 |
| 1187R...Monthly..... | \$9.58 |
| RCA, ARC.....Cash..... | \$293.00 |
| 1187.....Bi-Weekly..... | \$11.27 |

The membership year begins July 1, ends June 30. Please make checks payable to **NCRLCA**. Checks or membership forms should be mailed to Vicki Gray, NCRLCA Secretary/Treasurer, 424 Wapiti Dr., Spring Lake, NC 28390.

NOTE: “Dues, assessments, contributions or gifts to the NCRLCA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.



The Armed Forces Veterans Club (AFVC) is a fraternal organization composed of veterans or anyone who supports their goals of providing financial support for high school seniors and college students whose parents and grandparents are NCRLCA AFVC members. All proceeds go to provide \$150 scholarships for students to further their education.

If you are a member of the AFVC and have a child or grandchild who will be pursuing a higher education for the 2026-27 academic year, fill out and return the application on the next page (page 12) of this newspaper. The application is **due by May 31st, 2026** for the state scholarship. Any applications received after that date will be forwarded to national and entered in the national AFVC drawing. If the applicant is entered in the state drawing and does not win a state scholarship, their application will also be forwarded to the national committee and included in the national drawing. Have the applicant mail their form to:

Mike Shue
325 ED Weavers Rd.
Salisbury, NC 28146

Thank you for your continued support of our veterans and our children and grandchildren.

Debbie Bennett Pres.
Audrey Solomon V-Pres.
Mike Shue Sec.-Treas.

Mail application to: Mike Shue
325 ED Weavers Rd.
Salisbury, NC 28146

Must be received by **May 31, 2026** for State award.

Any late entries will be forwarded to National AFVC for entry in the National drawing in August.

NCRLCA - Armed Forces Veterans Club

Application for Scholarship

Applicant Name: _____

Permanent Address: _____

City/ST/Zip: _____

Applicant Phone: _____ **cell / land**

Applicant email: _____

Name of Sponsoring AFVC Member: _____

Sponsor's State Association: _____

Relationship to Sponsor: _____

School Name: _____

Seeking degree in: _____

Best of luck in your future endeavors!

Please complete all information above neatly and legibly.

..... (for administrative use)

Date rec'd:

Assigned:

Scholarship

Alternate

Ck#

Rec'd documentation

Receipt

Transcript

Other

WHY IT PAYS TO BELONG TO THE NRLCA

1. The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) has an effective legislative program in the Congress to promote and protect the interests of rural carriers.
2. NRLCA holds exclusive recognition to represent the rural carrier craft with the U.S. Postal Service.
3. NRLCA negotiates all labor agreements for the rural carrier craft with the USPS, including wages, benefits and working conditions.
4. Only the NRLCA can represent members of the rural carrier craft in the grievance procedure, including providing protection in disciplinary actions.
5. NRLCA has an excellent health insurance program; The Rural Carrier Benefit Plan which includes a prescription drug benefit program for Regular rural carriers, Part-Time Flexible carriers (PTF carriers), Retired members, and qualified Leave Replacements.
6. NRLCA offers, other than the health programs, some additional insurance programs: Dental (available to all members); Vision (available to all members); Life (for Regular and PTF carriers only); Long Term Disability (for Regular and PTF carriers only).
7. NRLCA also offers the Rural Carrier Auto Insurance Plan and the Homeowners' Insurance Plan (Note: Check State Availability).
8. NRLCA provides a monthly publication, The National Rural Letter Carrier, to keep its members informed on postal and legislative matters of vital interest.
9. NRLCA provides information and fellowship for its members at county, district, state, and national business meetings and at informational meetings where all members may participate in the democratic process of developing NRLCA policy.
10. NRLCA provides an official website for its members at www.nrlca.org. It includes accurate, up-to-date information that affects your job, your wages, and the changing environment of the postal service. Only NRLCA Members can access the full website.
11. Because of the union, no rural carrier can be involuntarily reassigned to another craft or job in the postal service. More importantly, because of this union, no employee from another craft can be assigned into the rural craft. We are protected from that by the contract that was negotiated by the NRLCA.
12. Without the union, any one of us could be subject to lay-off. There would be no consideration of seniority or re-bidding the routes when an encumbered route was eliminated. If your route was gone - you would be, too.
13. Without the union, any one of us could be reassigned to another craft or job anywhere in the Postal Service and displaced employees from other crafts could be reassigned as rural carriers, taking future jobs away from our own RCAs.
14. Only members of the NRLCA are allowed to vote on officers of the union or hold office in the union.
15. Only members of the NRLCA can become union stewards.
16. Only active craft members of the NRLCA can vote on proposed new contracts with the USPS.
17. Only members of the NRLCA have access to union-provided assistance with Workers' Compensation claims.



Do You Belong?

Are you a member of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association? I hope you are. If not, I hope the information in this issue will help to convince you of the values of membership.

The wages, workplace rules, retirement benefits, healthcare benefits, and the right to file grievances are all the product of the union's negotiations through collective bargaining.

On the next page is a list of several reasons from the National Office of the benefits of belonging to the NRLCA.

In my opinion, the number one reason for membership in the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) is that it is the best way to stay properly informed. You need to know your rights and be aware of any and all changes within our craft. The NRLCA provides this information to members and notifies you of any changes impacting your job as soon as possible. Becoming a member ensures that you have the latest information regarding any changes in postal policies or procedures that impact rural carriers.

Management loves an uninformed carrier. Not knowing your rights, actual work rules, or what you are entitled to can hurt you! Being a member gives you access to information about your employment rights as a rural carrier, which is crucial for navigating workplace issues and ensuring fair treatment.

Also, you must be a member to have a voice in the craft. Only members can vote for their local union steward, delegates, or on the contract for working carriers. By joining the NRLCA, you become part of a collective voice that advocates for your interests and concerns regarding working conditions and contract negotiations.

Members, I hope you share this information with your co-workers. Non-members, I hope you consider becoming a member. A dues withholding form (PS 1187) is on page 16. Dues are currently \$11.27 per pay period for RCAs and ARCs and \$33.73 per pay period for PTFs and regular carriers. I believe the benefits our members receive are worth the small cost of our membership dues.

North Carolina currently has **3018 non-members** in our craft. There are 1420 regular carriers, 86 PTFs, 992 RCAs and 520 ARCs that are **not members** of the union. That number is way to high. Everyone should encourage all carriers to become a member of the union.

I want to remind you that our National Office still has the Recruit A Friend Today (RAFT) incentive program. You (as a member) will receive \$15 for each RCA or ARC that you recruit and \$50 for each regular carrier or PTF. You just have to fill in the recruiter information on the bottom corner of the 1187 form. The new member can also be the recruiter and receive this RAFT incentive.

Let's enlist these non members!



UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
AUTHORIZATION FOR DEDUCTION OF DUES

RURAL CARRIER
CLASSIFICATION

Regular PTF Relief ARC

(SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER)

(USPS EMPLOYEE I.D. NUMBER)

LASTNAME

FIRSTNAME

MI

MAILING ADDRESS – INCLUDING APT# IF APPLICABLE

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE +4

POSTAL INSTALLATION WHERE EMPLOYED

ZIP CODE OF INSTALLATION

INSTALLATION FINANCE NO.

SECTION A - AUTHORIZATION BY EMPLOYEE

I hereby assign to the **National Rural Letter Carriers' Association**, from any salary or wages earned or to be earned by me as your employee (in my present or any future employment by you) such regular and periodic membership dues as the union may certify as due and owing from me, as may be established from time to time by said Union. I authorize and direct you to deduct such amounts from my pay and to remit same to said Union at such times and in such manner as may be agreed upon between you and the Union at any time while this authorization is in effect.

This assignment, authorization and direction shall be irrevocable for a period of one (1) year from the date of delivery hereof to you, and I agree and direct that this assignment, authorization and direction shall be automatically renewed, and shall be irrevocable for successive periods of one (1) year, unless written notice is given by me to you and the Union not more than twenty (20) days and not less than ten (10) days prior to the expiration of each period of one year.

This assignment is freely made pursuant to the provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act and is not contingent upon the existence of any agreement between you and my Union.

Contributions or gifts (including dues) to the NRLCA are not tax deductible as charitable contributions. However, they may be tax deductible under other provisions of the Internal Revenue Code.

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

DATE

PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

SECTION B- FOR USE BY STATE ASSOCIATION

R - NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION

SIGNATURE OF ACCEPTING UNION OFFICIAL

DATE

| LOC # | STATE |
|-------|---------|
| | NC |
| DATE | REMIT # |
| | |

Vicki Gray

, STATE SECRETARY

SECTION C- FOR USE BY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Date of Delivery to Employer (For National Office use)

ANNIVERSARY DATE TO BE USED

AT USPS PERSONNEL OFFICE

Send to: Vicki Gray
NCRLCA Secretary Treasurer
424 Wapiti Drive
Spring Lake, NC 28390

Recruiter EID:
Name:
Address:

Resolve to be Internet Secure in 2026!



As we enter the New Year, many of us will make resolutions regarding health and wellness, finances, organization, or learning new skills. However, while we're seeking knowledge, criminals may be seeking inroads to our personal data.

Even if we are not prone to perusing the internet, at some point in the year—perhaps many times—Rural Carriers perform functions online, such as visiting the LiteBlue page, bidding on available routes, changing W-2 information, selecting insurance plans during Open Season, etc.

Maybe you've had an account hacked into before, and if you haven't, you likely know someone who has.

Webmaster

Renee Johnson

Cybersecurity is the best way to defend against such attacks.

What is cybersecurity, and how can we achieve it?

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) calls cybersecurity '*a shield against threats*' while making it possible to achieve priorities and reach goals from the hiring process through retirement and beyond.

The best way to achieve it is through having strong passwords!

- **Use Strong Passwords | CISA**

- According to CISA.gov, strong passwords are 12-16 characters long, the longer the better.
- They should be random or strung together words that are unrelated to each other.
 - ◊ Examples: Yh7*0nMz2&bbwrflK
 - ◊ Or: jogHouseCrayonLemons
- Each site should have a different password and be changed occasionally.
- Turn on Multifactor Authentication whenever possible.
- Recognize and report phishing attempts.
- Update software to the most current version.
- Visit: [Secure-Our-World-Passwords-Tip-Sheet.pdf](#) to get a copy of the recommended practices.

For questions, email one of OPM's special offices dedicated to online security:

- **CISO Team at CISO@opm.gov**
- **Enterprise Risk Management Team
riskmanagement@opm.gov**
- **Security Operations Center (SOC)
Cybersolutions@opm.gov**
- **Credit Monitoring Inquiries
cybersecurity@opm.govCISO@opm.gov**

To read the entire article, visit: <https://www.opm.gov/cybersecurity/> and make being internet secure one of your 2026 resolutions.

Here's to a healthy—online and off—new year!

South Atlantic Conference

January 24-26, 2026

Harrah's Resort

777 Casino Drive

Cherokee, NC 27819

The Conference will begin at 1 p.m. on Saturday, January 24, with the opening ceremonies and some special guests, then into seminars. This year all seminars will be without competition with other seminars. The seminars planned are Health Benefits Seminar, FERS Retirement, OWCP, Labor, and a question-and-answer session.

Sunday will have our keynote speaker, NRLCA President Don Maston along with other guests. Members of the National Board will be available for a Q & A session on Sunday.

Monday's session will begin at 8:30AM with remarks from USPS managers.

SAC will conclude by 12 noon on Monday.

Please join us for the first SAC meeting held outside of Atlanta!

RURAL CARRIER PHOTOS



Carriers at the Elizabethtown Post Office embrace the spirit of Halloween.

Left to right: Virginia Willoughby, DeQual Wallace and Nyshella Smith

Mr. Bones greeted carrier Tim Rice everyday in October.



RCA CORNER

As an RCA, PTF, or ARC it is imperative that you stay informed about current issues and concerns, postal policies and the union contract. Knowledge is power and management **IS NOT** going to inform you of your contractual rights. The union does it's best to provide you with the knowledge to do your job properly and safely.

As a new RCA or ARC, even after orientation and your Academy training you will still have a million questions. I implore you to find out who your local steward or representative is and reach out to them with any questions you have. In this age of immediate information there is much conflicting knowledge available. It is imperative to get the correct information from your union.

As a member of the union you will also get a monthly magazine from National and access to the NRLCA.org website. You will also receive this state newsletter every other month. These provide you with a wealth of information. **Knowledge is power.** Management loves an uninformed carrier.

Across the nation there are staffing shortages impacting RCAs and regular veteran carriers. As a new hire in an understaffed office, it adds another degree of difficulty and takes a toll on everyone in the building.

First and foremost, the Post Office is responsible for staffing our offices. They oversee the entire hiring process. Management seems to have no urgency to solve this issue. As an RCA or regular carrier you can assist by spreading the word, "We're Hiring". We also need to be filing grievances that management has "failed to hire leave replacements". We must hold them accountable for each and every breach of the contract when they fail to hire!

Retention is also an important role factor in



staffing. As more are hired and stay, your role gets a little easier.

Veteran carriers often forget they were new hires once. As a veteran carrier, please do not leave our new hires to fend for themselves. We need to remember what it was like to be new. We need to guide them. We need to educate and empathize with the stress of learning this difficult job. Help our new hires with this incredibly fast-paced information overload of a journey. They are learning mail classes, casing, forwards, holds, driving on the wrong side of the vehicle and navigating all this while trying not to get dog bit. It can be so overwhelming for a new carrier.

How many times have you old timers said, "Don't worry it will get easier."? Well it really does! So hang in there.

RURAL CARRIER RELIEF APPRECIATION WEEK
YOUR DEDICATION AND HARD WORK HAVE NOT GONE UNNOTICED
WE APPRECIATE YOU!



Asst. District Representative

Amy Russo

Also, we all need days off. (*I am aware how hard that is for any carrier to actually get.*) Family time,

vacation, and time to tend to our health. And just like regular carriers, RCAs can have unexpected illness and emergencies. Support them. We need to work as a team to succeed. Everyone deserves a day off and time to spend with family.

Many of you had the opportunity to meet with a union officer or representative at new hire orientation and joined the union then. If you have not joined I strongly encourage you to do so.

As a member you will receive the union publications I mentioned earlier along with the ability to attend union meetings, seminars and training, voting rights, and most of all the ability to educate yourself on your rights in the workplace. Knowledge and unity will be the most powerful tools in your arsenal.

Stay safe, stay strong and ask questions.

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North Carolina Assistant District Representative

Eddie D. Moss

Wrapping Up 2025

Hello to all rural carriers, members and non-members, in the great state of North Carolina. As we turn the page on another Peak Season, North Carolina's Rural Carriers can take pride in delivering for our customers through an exceptionally demanding holiday season.

December 2025 brought record-breaking package volume across the state, surpassing all previous peak-season totals. Rural Carriers rose to the challenge with professionalism, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to service, despite extended days, heavier routes, and unpredictable weather.

While we celebrate this achievement, it's equally important to recognize the strain placed on our craft. Throughout 2025, and especially during peak season, working conditions, inadequate staffing, lack of vehicles, and management all contributed to our stewards being called upon more than ever.

Since the beginning of the fiscal year, the stewards have processed 594 PDIs and 712 grievances (531 Contractual, 137 Discipline, 44 Class Action). These grievances reflect our union's continuing effort to safeguard contractual rights, advocate for fair workloads, and ensure that every Rural Carrier-Regular, PTF, RCA or ARC is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

We have also been through another Mini Mail Survey and another round of disputes. I want to thank Gail Naillon and Elissa Gonzalez for all the hard work they put forth in helping me to resolve the latest

round of disputes. Remember your dispute has a better chance of success if you provide enough information for your case.

Like it or not, RRECS is here to stay, and we must all work within the prescribed guidelines to ensure that we are being properly compensated for what we do. In that thought, scanning plays a major role in our compensation and yet we have over 1,100 carriers per day in North Carolina who still do not do the required scans.

Mapping is also an important factor in our compensation. It is a requirement that ALL carriers are allowed to map their route between the 23rd and the 30th of each month with no exception. If this is not happening, you should contact your assigned steward and have them correct it.

If we all work together and do what we are required to do each day, I believe that RRECS can be a successful tool in determining our proper compensation.

As we enter this new year, let's carry forward the spirit of solidarity that helped define our 2025 peak season. Thank each of you for your dedication, your persistence, and your commitment to one another. Together, we'll continue building a stronger future for all Rural

Carriers across the great state of North Carolina.

Lastly, the South Atlantic Conference will be held January 24th - 26th at the Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort. This is the first year that it has been moved out of Atlanta, Georgia. This is a great opportunity for rural carriers to get up close and personal with your National Board and it is right here in North Carolina.

Throughout the Conference there are many informative seminars hosted by the National Board.

Hope to see each of you there.

Mapping:

It is a requirement that ALL carriers are allowed to map their route between the 23rd and the 30th of each month with no exception.

Junior Auxiliary News

From
Easton Smith
Vice President

Get Started Early

I hope all of the Juniors have enjoyed the holidays and are ready to start 2026 with a lot of energy, and enthusiasm towards the Design a Poster or Write an Essay contest. Start early, don't wait until the last click of the clock or you may miss out on some money.

Design a Poster

Ages

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 6-7 | Design a Patriotic Stamp |
| 8-9 | Everyone Needs a Friend |
| 10-11 | Things in Your Emergency Safety Kit |
| 12-14 | Design an Emergency Plan for Your Family |
| Special Education (age 6-20) | Respect the Flag - Know the Rules |

Write an Essay

Ages

| | |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 15-17 | Why Emergency Readiness Matters |
| 18-20 | How to Support Foster Families |

All essays and posters must be on, or attached to, a letter-size manila folder. There is no requirement as to how many sides of the folder you use, but you must be able to fold the folder. Each entry must have the following information legibly written on the back of the folder: name and address, date of birth and age as of 8/1/2026, name of parent or grandparent, state in which dues are paid.

Entries with incomplete/incorrect information will be disqualified.

Send your entry into Miss Sue Kelly, 4701 Main Street, Linden, NC 28356.

I also want to tell you about safety. Safety is very important, Prepare for disasters in your home and surrounding areas. Collect essential supplies such as water, non-perishable food, flashlights, batteries, medications, and a first-aid kit. Practice an evacuation plan for your home.

Practice flag etiquette, it should never touch the ground, be used as clothing, or be flown in poor condition. When displayed with other flags, it should always be in the position of honor-either centered and higher or to its own right. The flag should be raised briskly and lowered ceremoniously, and on days of mourning, it is flown at half-staff.

Hope this will help some of you with your projects. Get started and bundle up for the Winter.

NORTH CAROLINA AUXILIARY OFFICERS

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PRESIDENT
ALLISON HOLT

VICE PRESIDENT
EASTON SMITH

SECRETARY/TREASURER
NATHALIE WARREN

CHAPLAIN
TRENTON GREER

Welcome 2026 Don't Stop Now! Get Involved!

Auxiliary News

*From
Linwood Smith*

All postal employees have just completed the busiest time of the year. Long hours, hard work at our work locations, and at home. Many of us will not make it through that time of the year without making many contributions toward families in need during the holiday season. Don't Stop Now!

Michelle Wertz, the new auxiliary national president has chosen Bananas Foster as the Humanitarian Project for 2025 - 2026. Committed to bringing families together by celebrating the foster care community, by educating and inspiring others to get involved.

You don't have to be a foster parent to make a difference. You can volunteer time, skills, and spread awareness or donate to groups making a difference. The number one reason children are placed into care is neglect and the average age of foster care is 7 - 8 years old. Get Involved!

Safety is another concern for everyone at our work locations and at home. We need to prepare for potential disasters that may affect our area. Start by identifying the hazard, develop an evacuation plan for your home, and practice it regularly and most of all involve your entire family in all the process for protection and avoid panic during the emergency.

Get Involved! If your spouse (regular or retired) is a member in good standing with the association, then you are automatically an auxiliary member. We are a family group, Association, Auxiliary, and Juniors, please join our teams.

Program 2025-2026: A Program of Support

Humanitarian Project Bananas Foster

Symbol Postage Stamp with "Bananas Foster" logo

Americanism Flag Etiquette

Safety Emergency Preparedness

Song King and Queens

Flower Sunflower

Reminder: National Scholarships are due by March 1, 2025.

Applications must be post marked by March 1, 2026. Get the scholarships forms on the National website. www.NCRLCA.org



NCRLCA
424 WAPITI DR
SPRING LAKE NC 28390-1562

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 387
FAYETTEVILLE NC
28302

Address Service Requested

What Difference Does A Union Make?

Union

1. Wages, benefits and working conditions are protected by a legal contract.
2. A contract spells out how much each worker earns.
3. Unions negotiate raises for every one. Members vote on it, and if they feel it's an unfair, they can vote it down.
4. If you are unfairly disciplined, unions provide due process to protect against unscrupulous supervisors.
5. If you don't like something at work you can work together with your union to change it.

Non-Union

1. Management can change wages, benefits and working conditions unilaterally.
2. No one knows how much anyone else earns. Disparate treatment/favoritism exists.
3. If you want a raise you must plead your case to a supervisor or manager.
4. If you are unfairly disciplined, you are on your own (at-will employee). You're subject solely to policy.
5. If you don't like something at work, you are at the mercy of management.