

# NALCASTER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

## Pagoda Branch 258

READING, PA.

VOLUME XXVII JUNE 11, 2014



SUMMER BEGINS JUNE 20

**N.A.L.C. Pagoda Branch 258-Reading PA.**

**Officers & Committees 2014**

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Health Plan Rep.  
AFL-CIO  
Sergeant at Arms  
NALCaster Editor  
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<u>Station</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Steward</u>	<u>Phone</u>
19601-11 Downtown	375-7492	Jason Taylor	570-617-1124
19602-06 Reading Station	375-7495	Aaron O'brien	484-955-0917
19604-05 Hampden (Annex)	478-1593	Juan Munoz	610-373-8201
19607 Shillington	777-7143	Mark Swarmer	610-856-1662
19608-09 Wyomissing	378-1247	Paul Purcell	610-451-0244
19610 Annex	478-1593	Dave Dry	610-404-7758
19508 Birdsboro	582-2301	Rich McDonough	484-955-4267
19518 Douglassville	385-3651	Harry Enright	610-385-9078
19526 Hamburg	562-7812	Judy Snitzer	570-573-2689
19522 Fleetwood	944-9077	Blaine Martin	610-944-1456
19530 Kutztown	683-8331	Tim Fisher	610-207-0204
19540 Mohnton	777-1101	Rich McDonough	484-955-4267
19551 Robesonia	693-5541	Rich McDonough	484-955-4267
19555 Shoemakersville	562-4716	Robert Oswald	610-451-5114
19560 Temple	929-1469	Bea Shurr	610-926-3279
19565 Wernersville	678-7668	Rich McDonough	484-955-4267
19567 Womelsdorf	589-4541	Robert Clark	610-589-1469

**Committees:**

Step A designee  
Associate Off. Grievance Chmn.  
Labor Mgt. Team

Food Drive  
Legislative  
Workman's Comp Rep  
MDA

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**PROUD TO BE  
UNION**



***RECOGNIZING A STROKE***

Thank God for the sense to remember the '3' steps, STR. Read and Learn! Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster.

The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions. Remember them and you may save a life!!

**S \*Ask the individual to SMILE.**

**T \*Ask the person to TALK and SPEAK A SIMPLE SENTENCE (Coherently) (i.e. I like Chicken Soup)**

**R \*Ask him or her to RAISE BOTH ARMS.**

If he or she has trouble with ANY ONE of these tasks, call emergency number immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

***New Sign of a Stroke ----- "Stick out Your Tongue."***

NOTE: Another 'sign' of a stroke is this: Ask the person to 'stick' out his tongue.

If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other that is also an indication of a stroke.

A cardiologist says if everyone who gets this e-mail sends it to 10 people; you can bet that at least one life will be saved.

# Regular Monthly Meeting

**NALC BRANCH #258 WILL MEET AT MEDRICK HALL, 950 WEISER STREET ON**

**WEDNESDAY  
JUNE 11, 2014  
@ 7:30 P.M.**

*You're Invited*

The NALCASTER is a publication of, by and for the members of Pagoda Branch #258, NALC, Reading, PA. The opinions expressed herein, may but do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor or Branch #258. All contributions are welcome. You may use any items in this newsletter, just inform your readers of your source. Thank you

## NALC HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN SERVICE LINES

General Claims Inquiries  
Hospital Precertification (Required)  
Prerecorded Benefits Information  
Prescription Customer Service Line



1-888-636-NALC  
1-800-622-6252  
1-888-636-NALC  
1-800-933-NALC

OUT THERE



## Moving?

Let us know . . . Before You Go!



Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Old Address  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_  
New Address  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your change of address to:

NALCASTER  
P.O. Box 777  
Reading, PA 19603

Safety rules have no importance if they are ignored. Often, letter carriers are more focused on getting the mail delivered by a certain time rather keeping their focus on safety. Remember, our job is to "safely deliver the mail." Keep the focus on safety, not speed of delivery. When carriers abide by the safety rules, they have less accidents, they don't have injuries, and they don't receive safety-related discipline.

### Opting and Hold-Downs

The terms opting and hold-down mean the same thing. CCAs have the right to "opt" on temporarily vacant full-time assignments. An assignment is a route or other work performed by a full-time regular letter carrier on a daily basis. When an assignment is temporarily vacant for five days or more (because the regular letter carrier is on vacation, ill, the assignment temporarily has no regular letter carrier assigned, etc.), CCAs may exercise their right to opt to work (or hold-down) that assignment for the duration of the temporary vacancy by submitting a request to their supervisor.

### Overtime Work

CCAs are paid time and one-half for all work over 8 hours in a service day and over 40 hours in a service week. This is referred to as regular overtime. CCAs are paid double time for all work over 10 hours in a service day and over 56 hours in a service week. This is referred to as penalty overtime.

## *Full-Time Worker Poverty*

*By Congressional District Liaison Neil Zarchin*

On March 31, there was a panel discussion of the bill to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10. Featured speakers included Congressman George Miller, Congressman Mike Thompson, California Labor Federation President Art Pulaski, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 5 President Ron Lind.

The underlying issue is the total and complete inadequacy of the current minimum wage. Although several states, including California have a higher minimum, for most of the United States, the minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour. At that salary, a person working full time would earn \$290 a week, \$15,196 per year. Enough to qualify for SNAP (food stamps) and medicare. Less than the federal poverty level for a family of two.

No one who works full time should live in poverty.

In many states as well, (again California is not one) there is a separate minimum wage for tipped employees, such as waiters and waitresses. That amount has not risen since 1968. They can be made to work for \$2.13 per hour. Next time you eat out in a right-work state, please leave a big tip.

### **Studies Presented**

Several studies were presented on how raising the minimum wage improves the economy, rather than destroying jobs as opponents constantly state. When San Jose raised the minimum wage, all the usual predictions were made – businesses will relocate, workers will be laid off, etc. What happened was the exact opposite. There was a 2% drop in local unemployment, 4,000 more jobs were created downtown. 9,000 new businesses opened and overall, downtown San Jose business revenue grew by 3%.

Why? Consumers had money to spend. When the 1% makes money, it gets invested overseas, or in buying other companies. No goods or services are produced. When low-wage workers get a raise, they buy food, or they buy household goods, they spend it.

Congressman Thompson, whose district now includes Vallejo, Benicia and Northwest Contra Costa County, quoted a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that said “stagnant wages create a vicious cycle that has business waiting” for customers to walk in the door with money to purchase goods and services.

Congressman George Miller (who sponsored H.R. 1010) called for agitation and legislation to bring about change. He noted that large corporations such as McDonald's and Walmart are receiving taxpayer subsidies for paying low wages, as their employees need SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) and medicare assistance. He said that if Speaker of the House John Boehner would bring it to the floor for a vote, enough Republicans would vote for H.R. 101 to pass it – they would not want to explain to their constituents why they voted against it.



cent per item.

Perhaps the most moving testimony of all came from a young man named Dominic Ware, a Walmart employee who is trying to bring about the change. Here is his statement:

### **Young Man's Testimony**

*"I'm not really into the stats of the matter....I'm more concerned about the facts of the matter.....stats change all the time but poverty...."*

*Poverty stays the same no matter what time or place it occurs...."*

*Now we have a lot of people with different views about the minimum wage increase in this country...and even in this room...."*

*And there always will be pros and cons to every law passed.... But... to the lives they effect....especially on the hand of more take-home pay, more food on the table, being able to pay your bills, keeping your residence, and spending more time with your kids because your NOT Forced to work another job .....is always and I mean ALWAYS a winning deal...."*

*In places like San Francisco and San Jose ..... A 12.25 wage increase would only boost it to a extra 2-3 dollars a hr.....So to them....it's not as spectacular...."*

*But to OAKLAND and RICHMOND....places where you can feel the poverty, smell the despair, and hear the echo's of souls being lost to the brutality of oppression....In places like these.... Where the minimum wage is only 8.25....My home.....the place where I grew up and once lost my faith in Justice and the American dream...There....this is a miracle*

*It is a way out for boys who think that dope is the only way to provide for his family...."*

*For young girls lost in the streets it's a resource to be used as income and a tool...to pull them out of the gutters and to stand as better mothers ...."*

*This wage increase is more than about money to my urban city's and my people....it is a sign...that this beautiful country did not give up on them.... Did not forget them...and when the time came did not neglect them ...."*

*I tell you this is the Dream to those of us who has so far only dreamt nightmares....this is the dream.....now let's make it a reality....Thank you"*

On a final note, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka spoke to the California State Convention this month. He added this gem - if the federal minimum wage had kept up with inflation, it would be \$10.75 an hour.

# OWCP COMPENSATION

## Finding a Doctor

Finding a doctor to treat you when you have been injured at work is a common problem. Many make the first appointment with their primary care doctor, exercising their right to free choice of a physician. This is your right to see the doctor you choose. ELM 544.112 says in the case of traumatic injury, the supervisor must advise the employee of the following: a. the right to select a physician of their choice and Article 14.3c reinforces this regarding complying with applicable regulations of Office of Workers Compensation Programs.

If you cannot get an immediate appointment with the doctor of your choice, management can require you to go to the contract clinic. However there are limits to what can be demanded of you. If you have chosen your own doctor and cannot get an appointment until 3 pm and it is 9 am, management will likely send you to the clinic for an examination or evaluation. Management cannot require that you accept treatment

from the clinic physician. You eventually go to your own doctor and follow those instructions in regard to medical treatment and work restrictions.

There is much confusion when it comes to medical treatment. In some cases the more advanced a claim becomes the more confused a medical provider is about what is needed by OWCP. Some doctors are agreeable to take on the challenge and others do not want to be bothered with the whole process involved in treating a long term claim. Some primary care physicians are willing to take on a work-related injury but do not understand the documentation necessary to keep the claim moving through the process. The injured letter carrier then takes on the responsibility to request the medical report and hope it is adequate to insure an approved claim. It is very important to send medical information to support your claim. As soon as you get your claim number give it to your doctor and get copies of everything from your doctor visits and any tests given to you regarding the injury. Send this information yourself! Do not rely on the doctor to do it for you or to do it correctly.

If you do not have a doctor that will do this for you than you have to find a doctor that will take federal worker's comp. To find medical providers that are on the Department of Labor's list of doctors you can see, go to <http://www.dol.gov/owcp/defc/>. Next, you must go to Division of Federal Employees Compensation (DFEC) as there are several other federal programs for other federal workers. Under the DFEC heading, you go to Stakeholder Web Portals, and under that you click on Claimants and Representative, and then select Medical Provider. This gets you to a page titled Provider Search. This page has detailed instruction on obtaining a list of medical providers from many categories such as; location, specialty or even practice name. Finding a doctor that is understanding of your needs and the needs of the claim is important to succeeding in the OWCP process and succeeding in your recovery.

By Jeanne Larch, Branch 4374  
OWCP Compensation Officer

## When a CCA is Injured On-the-Job

CCA's are just as susceptible to on-the-job injuries as any other carrier delivering mail. CCA's are protected under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA) and the FECA has the sole authority to award benefits. Benefits include compensation for wage loss and medical treatment for accepted injuries. Many CCA's do not have health insurance coverage when initially hired but this should not hinder their ability to choose their own physician if injured.

FECA gives the injured employee the right to choose their own doctor. If the supervisor takes the CCA to "their" doctor, keep in mind that they may be examined by their doctor but are not required to be treated by their

doctor. A doctor of your choice should be picked before the second visit. The choice of physician should be a medical doctor. If a clinic is staffed by a physician assistant or nurse practitioner, their reports are accepted as long as the reports are co-signed by a qualified medical doctor.

Any injury should be immediately be reported to the Supervisor. If a supervisor is not available, advise someone, whether it's a Steward or a co-worker. Failure to do so may create a problem later for the injured employee. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the injured employee should take a CA-1 along with a CA-16. The CA-16 authorizes medical treatment and provides an initial medical report to OWCP. The reverse side of the CA-16 is to be filled out by the treating

physician. In many cases, postal management either fails to issue a CA-16 for an accident or fails to fill it out properly. This could result in OWCP not receiving the medical report timely or delay the acceptance of the claim.

Always make copies of all paperwork. Start a file to include your CA-1, medical reports, and any correspondence regarding your claim. Keeping an up-to-date file of all your injury compensation claim documents will help us to help you.

Liz Dow-Rubio  
OWCP Rep/ Branch 504

## PROCLAMATION

*"The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together.... It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities."*

— POSTAL REORGANIZATION ACT, AS AMENDED

## A POSTAL UNION ALLIANCE

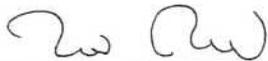
**T**he U.S. Postal Service is under unprecedented attack. A congressionally-manufactured financial crisis drains the USPS of vital resources. Six-day delivery is under constant threat of elimination. The reduction of service standards and the elimination of half of the nation's mail processing centers has slowed service and wiped out tens of thousands of good jobs. Post offices in cities and small towns are being sold or closed or having their hours cut back. Corporate privatizers seek to gain control over larger segments of postal operations – and to get their hands on the Postal Service's \$65 billion of annual revenue. The Postmaster General's policies of subcontracting and degrading service are fueling the privatization drive.

The four postal unions stand together to end the attack. We stand for a *public* Postal Service, enhancement and expansion of service, and protection of good union jobs in our communities. We stand with the people of our country in defense of their right to a universal postal service operated in the public interest.

We commit to work together to:

- Maintain six-day and home delivery.
- Protect and restore service standards and mail processing facilities.
- Maintain full-time, full-service public post offices in every community.
- Oppose the subcontracting of work and privatization of services.
- Expand postal services to include basic banking, notary, check-cashing and other services.
- End the corporate welfare of excessive pre-sort discounts.
- Form a common front in the fight for genuine postal reform legislation.
- Organize joint actions and speak in a united voice.
- Unite with other labor unions in defense of the rights of postal workers and all workers.
- Encourage joint efforts of our union members at the local level.
- Support maximum cooperation in the next round of contract negotiations.
- Build an alliance with the American people in defense of the public postal service.

**WE STAND UNITED TO PROTECT AMERICA'S POSTAL SERVICE!**



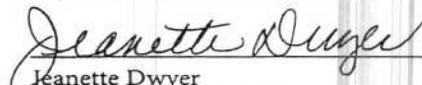
Fredric Rolando  
President, National Association of Letter Carriers



Mark Dimondstein  
President, American Postal Workers Union



John Hegarty  
President, National Postal Mail Handlers Union



Jeanette Dwyer  
President, National Rural Letter Carriers Association



## Summer Safety

As we get into the beginning of summer we need to be mindful of the hazardous weather in the summer months as we are during the winter months. There are many threats we face during the summer such as heat, & violent storms just like the hail storm we faced in late May.

Remember rule number 1 in working outdoors in any weather, your safety comes FIRST, take the precautions to ensure your safety!!!

Below and on the next pages will be some helpful tips to help you get through some of the hazardous weather we may experience over the next couple of months., please utilize these tips to keep yourself safe. Take these pages out and keep it at your case as a reminder for the upcoming summer weather.

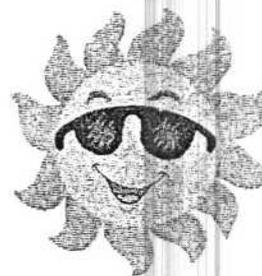
Management can not discipline you for running over for waiting out severe weather, if at anytime management questions you on this safety issue, ask to see your shop steward immediately !!!

For more information for any weather related safety precautions visit <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

**Remember the goal is for you to go home to your family the way you came into work!!**

Enjoy the Summer and Be SAFE

Paul Purcell



### **What is heat illness?**

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and resting in the shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires **immediate medical attention** and can result in death.

### **How can heat illness be prevented?**

Employers should establish a complete heat illness prevention program to prevent heat illness. This includes: provide workers with water, rest and shade; gradually increase workloads and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more to build a tolerance for working in the heat (**acclimatization**); modify work schedules as necessary; plan for emergencies and train workers about the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and their prevention; and monitor workers for signs of illness. **Workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work and are returning can be most vulnerable to heat stress and they must be acclimatized (see box).**

To prevent heat related illness and fatalities:

- Drink water every 15 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Rest in the shade to cool down.
- Wear a hat and light-colored clothing.
- Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers.
- "Easy does it" on your first days of work in the heat. You need to get used to it.

If workers are new to working in the heat or returning from more than a week off, and for all workers on the first day of a sudden heat wave, implement a work schedule to allow them to get used to the heat gradually.

If possible carry cool damp towels, bandannas & spray bottles to help keep your body cool.

**Remember these three simple words: Water, Rest, Shade.** Taking these precautions can mean the difference between life and death.

### **Fluid Intake**

Drink plenty of water, non-alcoholic and decaffeinated fluids. Your body needs water to keep cool. Drink plenty of fluids even if you don't feel thirsty. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney or liver disease, are on fluid restrictive diets or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a physician before increasing their consumption of fluids. Do not drink alcoholic beverages and limit caffeinated beverages.

The next type of hazardous weather we face is severe storms, please follow these guidelines when dealing with this type of weather:

### ***Lightning Safety Tips:***

1. Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are imminent. Lightning can travel 5-10 miles away from the thunderstorm

and strike the ground with blue sky overhead. The storm doesn't have to be overhead in order for you to be struck.

2. Move to a sturdy shelter or vehicle. Do not take shelter in a small shed, under isolated trees, or in a convertible-top

vehicle. Stay away from tall objects such as trees or towers or poles.

3. If in your vehicle when lightning strikes – don't touch a metal surface. You are safer in a vehicle than being outdoors.

4. Remember that utility lines or pipes can carry the electrical current underground or through a building. Avoid electrical appliances,

and use telephones or computers only in an emergency.

5. If you feel your hair standing on end – get down into a baseball catcher's position and plug your ears with your finger tips so if

lightning does hit it will not blow your ear drums out. Do not lie flat!

6. 30/30 rule – if the time between lighting and thunder is 30 seconds or less, go to a safe shelter. Stay there until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder.

### **Large Hail:**

1. Although it is rare, people have been killed by large hail stones after sustaining head injuries. Additionally, several people are injured

by large hail stones each year in the U.S.

2. Some thunderstorms can produce large hail stones that can reach the size of baseballs, softballs, or even as big as computer compact discs (CD) or DVDs! These large hail stones can fall at speeds over 100 mph! – that's why they are dangerous!

3. If a severe storm is producing large hail stones, seek a sturdy shelter and stay away from windows that can easily be smashed.

4. If you are in your vehicle before the hail storm starts, get out of it and go to a sturdy shelter. Glass windows in vehicles can easily be smashed by the hail stones. If you can't get out of your vehicle, then come to a stop and cover your head with your arms and hands.

**DO NOT DELIVER MAIL in Lightning or Hail storms. Take the proper precautions in sever weather!**

## Issa's latest bill would let USPS mandate centralized delivery, allow anyone to put stuff in your mailbox

Congressman Darrell Issa, the self-appointed "watchdog" of the US Postal Service, has introduced yet another "reform" proposal. So far, none of Issa's proposals have gotten much support, even from his own party- whether or not this one does remains to be seen.

Issa is obviously desperate to get someone, anyone, to back him. How desperate? He's dropped the most outrageous provisions of his earlier bills, like the one that would have laid off any postal worker eligible for retirement, and he's come up with what I'm sure he considers a master stroke- he claims his bill is actually Barack Obama's idea.

Don't believe me? According to the draft version, the bill's title is "The Administration's Postal Reform Act of 2014". (You can't make this stuff up!) Presumably he will present the bill as an incredibly clever "gotcha" moment that will provide him with some especially snide remarks to make at his next show trial committee hearing.

So what's actually in "The Administration's bill? A couple of items that have appeared in the administration's budget proposals (but which have never actually been introduced as legislation), like allowing five day delivery, and some that the administration has

expressed some support for, like reducing the PAEA trust fund mandate. But the items that will no doubt attract the most attention are ones that Issa himself admits were never proposed by "the Administration":

The bill would allow the USPS to drop Saturday mail delivery, but would also allow "periodicals, newspapers and unstamped mail to be placed in mailboxes on days when the Postal Service does not provide mail delivery service".

Requires the Postal Service to convert residential addresses from door delivery to curbside or centralized delivery on a voluntary basis where possible and authorizes the Postal Service to require such conversions in areas the Postal Service "deems appropriate."

Permits the Postal Service to create a "Legacy Door Delivery Service" that allows residents to pay a fee to continue to receive door delivery if their addresses have been identified for conversion to curbside or centralized delivery.

If Darrell really wanted to pass a postal reform bill, he could do it tomorrow. Allowing the USPS to eventually drop Saturday delivery would be fought by postal workers, but would probably pass, as would reducing the PAEA mandate, allowing centralized delivery for new developments, etc. But if we've learned anything over the last couple of years, it's that Darrell and his party aren't really interested in

proposing legislation that can pass both houses and be signed into law by the President.



U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa

So instead of a comprehensive postal reform package, we'll continue to get bills like this one, designed not to solve problems, but to score points. Even minimal band-aid legislation will probably only become possible if the USPS actually approaches a cash flow crisis that endangers its ability to pay its employees and suppliers. At that point, Speaker Boehner might, as he has on rare occasions in the past, decide it's better to cut his losses and allow legislation to reach the floor that could pass with the support of the Democrats and a minority of moderate Republicans. You know, by majority vote- the way we were told our Government worked back in Civics class- what a concept!

Vincent R. Sombrotto  
Was Truly, a one of a Kind!  
He Had Inner Strength and Insight  
And a Razor Sharp Mind!

Sombrotto Knew His People,  
So He Utilized One Thing!  
He Hand Picked Devoted Members  
And Took Them Under His Wing!

For those Close to Vinny,  
It Came As No Surprise!  
He Had Strong Convictions,  
And Very Street Wise!

If a Person Challenged Sombrotto,  
To a Verbal Debate!  
They Might Rethink, "Challenge,"  
That, Was Their First Mistake!

Vince Had The "Guts,"  
To Call a National Strike!  
For Better Carrier Pay,  
And Bargaining Rights!

From Strengthening Our Health Plan,  
To Reforming the "Hatch Act!"  
What Vince Had Envisioned,  
Kept Our Union on Track!

Though Vinny Has Left Us,  
His Accomplishments Will Live On!  
The NALC is Stronger!  
"Solidarity's Our Common Bond!"

Under Vince Sombrotto's Leadership,  
Our Union Made Great Gains!  
For, it Was More Than Obvious,  
The NALC Flowed in His Veins!

If hard work were such a wonderful thing, surely  
the rich would have kept it all to themselves.

Lane J. Kirkland,  
former President, AFL-CIO



NALC - BRANCH 258  
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