

The PONY EXPRESS



May 2017

NRLCA Vice President Ronnie Stutts Will Address the 2017 IDRLCA State Convention

Ronnie W. Stutts was re-elected as vice president at the 2016 National Rural Letter Carriers' Association's National Convention in Nashville TN. Prior to his election, Ronnie was no stranger to the national arena. He served on the 1993 DPS study, was Chairman of the Appeals Process Review Committee, and served as a member of Steward Task Force One. Additionally, Ronnie served as an executive committeeman and held the title of Director of Steward Operations for national headquarters.

He became a regular rural carrier in 1981, on Rural Route 1 in Dyersburg, Tennessee. Since 1977, working as a sub, Ronnie has dedicated 40 years of diligent service and experience to the rural craft.

Ronnie is dedicated to the national association and is committed to serve all rural carriers nationwide. He vows to *never forget* that **he is a rural carrier!**



NRLCA Vice President Ronnie Stutts

Attention: IDRLCA Non-Members

The May edition of The Pony Express is sent to all rural carriers in Idaho every year. It is the perennial hope of the IDRLCA that non-members will be persuaded to become members by reading this newsletter and realizing how much more informed they become as members.

This year, however, your membership is more important than ever to make our union stronger and better able to continue to protect your benefits and you against the onslaught of those who seek to make your craft irrelevant and powerless.

Please, join now and strengthen the union that won you the benefits and protections you enjoy.

Special Retirement Seminar

NRCLA Vice President Ronnie Stutts will present a special retirement program on Wednesday evening, June 7, 2017, prior to the IDRLCA 2017 State Convention.

Carriers, especially those currently preparing for retirement and those whose retirement is still in the future, will find the information presented at this seminar invaluable in preparing for their retirement.

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Rep. Michael K. Simpson(R) www.house.gov/simpson.gov **Rep. Raul Labrador (R)** www.labrador.house.gov

Please report changes and corrections to The Pony Express.

LOCAL STEWARDS

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Athol				
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Boise Boi-Cole	Sharon Atkins	7106 San Fernando Dr	Boise 83704	(208) 376-1955
Boise Boi-Five Mile	John Urquidi	34276 Hot Creek Rd	Bruneau 83604	(208) 599-0979
Boise Boi-Garden				
Burley	Nancy Neiwert	339 S 50 E	Burley 83318	(208) 678-2541
Cambridge				
Caldwell Main	Sam Doyle	819 Settlers Dr	Caldwell 83607	(208) 392-0841
Coeur d'Alene	Peter Haynos	2984 W Grange Ave	Post Falls 83854	(208) 773-1925
Cottonwood Main				
Craigmont				
Culdesac				
Deary				
Eagle				
Emmett				
Filer	Marilyn Carrico	56 Northridge Way	Jerome 83338	(208) 326-5220
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Genesee				
Glenns Ferry				
Grangeville				
Gooding Main				
Greenleaf				
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Kendrick				
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McCammon				
Melba				
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Pingree				
Plummer Main				
Pocatello	Lesley Greenwell	712 N Marsh Creek Rd	McCammon 83250	(208) 221-2912
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Priest River Main				
Rathdrum				
Rexburg Main	Rhea Price	1910 E 200 N	Rexburg 83440	(208) 356-6524
Rigby				
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Star				
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Please Report Address and Telephone Number Corrections to The Pony Express
 Email - ponyexpr@pmt.org or Telephone - (208) 436-0687



Southern Idaho District Representative's Report

Salt Lake City/ Nevada-Sierra District Representative Brian Draper

Utilizing the MDD Scanners

We have come a long way from a few years ago when we were first given MDD Scanners. The future of our craft is growing more and more dependent on the information collected by the scanners, so I felt it important

to update all of you on some current issues and what is going to transpire in the future.

several months, there is no agreement. The RSD test routes have been doing additional daily scans for two years. These scans have been factored into the route for compensation and the carriers are required to complete them each day. This information is vital to the study and the scans are being tracked and reported when not done. Discipline can result if a carrier is not completing these scans. For the future, everything we do and how we are to be paid is going to be done through the MDD scanner. That is why it is vital that you scan when and where you are required to scan. Carriers have been disciplined for not scanning properly or for falsifying scanning data. If a manager is instructing you to improperly scan an item, do as directed, but have a discussion with your manager and file a grievance, if need be, to stop an incorrect practice. Carriers have always been required to scan packages delivered to the door, at the door.

to update all of you on some current issues and what is going to transpire in the future.

I have been receiving calls from carriers on being compensated when the manager text messages them on the route, using the MDD scanner. The message is usually to pick up a parcel or take action on some other delivery issue. There is no way to be compensated for that because the manager should not be texting any messages except those related to safety or emergency situations. I know it was used properly one night this winter, when an ice storm was hitting hard and management informed all the carriers who were still out at 7 p.m. to return to the post office. Here is a headquarters e-mail message to the field stating:

The USPS does not pay for, or provide you with, a cell phone and there is no requirement for a carrier to have a cell phone while on the route. The district and the USPS have cell phone policies in place that prohibit their use in all but emergency situations.

This email is to indicate that effective immediately, only safety-related messages or alerts are to be sent via text messaging to rural carriers using the MDD. In addition, if there are identified locations where management may have provided a stand-up talk indicating additional supervisory use of text messaging, please ensure that they are informed that only safety-related messaging may be sent to rural carriers.

If your manager is utilizing the MDD to text you, inform them that they are not to be texting. If they continue to do so, inform your ADR or DR who will address it with the district. Now, some managers will turn to the use of a cell phone. The USPS does not pay for, or provide you with, a cell phone and there is no requirement for a carrier to have a cell phone while on the route. The district and the USPS have cell phone policies in place that prohibit their use in all but emergency situations. If a manager has a pick up or delivery situation, they will have to address it as they did in the past which, in most cases, involved using an RCA, waiting until the carrier returned to the office or finding the carrier on the route. Finding you on the route is no problem as the MDD scanner lets them know your location.

The USPS is already tracking your route and knows if you are behind schedule. Postmasters and supervisors receive e-mails from the district, reporting routes that are behind schedule. The message is to scan properly and get used to doing all scans as required, because your future is going to revolve around your MDD scanner. The scanners are being used to show miles traveled and walking time as well as walking distances. Also being recorded are the number of stops made, the delivery times and how long you are there.

For information and updates on the MDD scanners, it is best to go to the nrlca.org website, type MDD in the search box and you will find everything you need to know.

Our union, the NRLCA, is only as strong as its membership and the strength of the membership is in its numbers. Seek out the non-members and the newly hired RCAs; speak to them of the caring, family friendly nature of our union's society.

Remind them that the benefits they share with the members, were won by the union and wouldn't exist without the members' struggles and support over the past 114 years.

We have been receiving calls on SPM scans not being compensated. This is correct in accordance with the MOU signed on 08/16/2016 and effective 09/03/16. The carriers are to track their occurrences, while management will not be required to pay until the parties reach agreement on what the proper compensation should be. At this time, even after



Northern Idaho District Representative's Report

Alaska District Representative Patrick Pitts

Mailbox Improvement Week

Each year, the Postal Service designates the third full week of May as Mailbox Improvement Week to encourage customers on city, rural, and contract delivery routes to examine and, where necessary, improve the appearance of their mailboxes. Neat, attractive mailboxes make a significant contribution to the appearance of the countryside and streets in suburban areas.

That's how the USPS Postal Bulletin opens the topic of Mailbox Improvement Week, each May, via the Postal Bulletin, usually as the cover story. The bulletin goes on to say Mailbox Improvement Week calls attention to the need for providing mailboxes that are:

- *Approved by the Postmaster General*
- *Fully operational*
- *Designed to protect the mail from weather*
- *Safe to use*
- *Conveniently located*
- *Neat in appearance*

The bulletin, in years past, has also said **Postmasters should send Notice 209, Mailbox Improvement Week, to all rural route customers the**

week before Mailbox Improvement Week to alert them of the event. I have little doubt that this year's Postal Bulletin will contain the same language. (Emphasis added)

Regarding rural routes, customers must use only approved traditional, contemporary, or locked full/limited service curbside mailboxes for new installations or replacements. When new delivery is established or extended, postmasters must ensure that customers use delivery equipment that is approved by the postmaster general, unless the local postmaster has approved, in advance, a custom-built curbside mailbox and the box conforms generally to the same requirements as approved, manufactured boxes relative to the flag, size, strength, and quality of construction.

Without covering the entirety of the bulletin, what follows is some key information which may be of interest or importance to rural carriers. The information in some places has been paraphrased, but every effort was made to retain the original intent.

Where street names and house numbers are in use on rural routes, the mailbox must display the number on the side of single mailboxes, visible to the approaching carrier, or on the door of grouped mailboxes. If the mailbox is on a street other than the one on which the customer resides, the street name and house number must be on the mailbox. The address information must be in contrasting color, in neat letters and numerals not less than one inch in height.

Rural customers should be encouraged, but cannot be required, to group mailboxes whenever practical, especially

where many mailboxes are located at or near crossroads, service turnouts or similar locations. Customers should also paint mailboxes and supports/posts and keep them rust-free. Advertising on mailboxes and supports is prohibited. In areas where snow removal is a problem, the Postal Service suggests using a semi-arch, or extended arm-type support which allows for snow removal and provides easy access to the mailbox.

Generally, mailboxes should be installed at a height of 41-45 inches from the road surface to the bottom of the mailbox or point of mail entry. Boxes should be set back 6-8 inches from the front face of the curb or road edge to the mailbox door. Because of varying road and curb conditions, especially on rural routes, the Postal Service recommends customers contact their local office before erecting or replacing mailboxes and supports.

Customers must place mailboxes so the carrier can **safe-**

Customers must place mailboxes so the carrier can safely and conveniently serve them without leaving the delivery vehicle. Customers must remove obstructions, including vehicles, trash cans and snow that impede safe and efficient delivery.

ly and conveniently serve them without leaving the delivery vehicle. Customers must remove obstructions, including vehicles, trash cans and snow that impede safe and efficient delivery. Except when a mailbox is temporarily blocked, carriers must have access to the mailbox with-

out leaving the vehicle unless authorized to dismount.

Regarding cluster box units (CBUs), and neighborhood delivery and collection box units (NDCBUs) and outdoor parcel lockers (OPLs), postmasters, or their designees, must review all CBUs, NDCBUs and OPLs during Mailbox Improvement Week to identify any hazards or irregularities and **they must record the results of the review** using PS Form 8143, *Equipment Checklist and Follow-up Review*. A copy of the form is to be kept at the local office and a copy sent to the designated growth coordinator for the district. The postmaster, or designee, conducting the review, must complete PS Form 1624, *Delivery/Collection Equipment Work Request* for any equipment that poses a safety hazard to postal customers or employees.

When examining the equipment, the postmaster, or designee, should ensure all delivery and collection equipment is straight, vertical, and firmly mounted. They should observe whether the carrier access door is locked and secure. The manager is instructed to open the door and observe whether it is bowed or warped and whether the door and locking bar operate smoothly. With the carrier access door open, they should check whether the restraining devices prevent the master doors from blowing closed. These devices should be serviceable. The person conducting the review should ensure the arrow lock operates smoothly and easily. They should also check to see that all customer access doors are present, closed and locked, with no visible damage or signs

(See *Mailboxes* on page 9)



IDRLCA President's Report

IDRLCA President Patti Upton

The Importance Of Your Union

Since 1903 the NRLCA members have joined together in the democratic process to exercise a voice in our own lives and futures with the Postal Service. Today, our union is more important to our carriers than ever. As you know, changing technologies are revolutionizing the many ways our job is done.

Your union leaders are concerned about your future. They are committed to making working conditions for all carriers fair. They strive to promote a congruent work environment and will fight to protect each and every carrier across this nation.

The NRLCA is a leading advocate of good government and fights for the protection of individual carrier rights. It continues to fight for the expansion of diverse opportunities for all rural carriers. Your membership provides for you one united voice and continues to bring about various avenues to protect you and your livelihood.

The importance of your union steps far outside your daily job requirements. It pools its strengths and resources to gain an upper hand in the very things we need for collective bargaining. Our union uses a means and support system to deal with the Postal Service and continues to keep informed of the changing conditions. This is done with a well-versed foresight which brings about many things including wage increases, representation, networking and benefits. The tireless efforts of your leaders continue to better our livelihoods. These beneficial essentials are a direct result of what the union has done for you.

Joining with the rural carrier craft as a member of the NRCLA offers many benefits. On the job, your union brings together the collective strength of you and your co-workers to insure meaningful negotiations with management for an equitable contract. Negotiations are not limited to wages and salaries, but also include health benefits, cost of living adjustments, continued education for new hires, and a workable grievance system. Through your union, you and your co-workers oversee and carry out the provisions of the contract. Those who do so, essentially contribute to the success within the office. This gives them a voice that affects change. Rural carriers can come together through our

rights as members and speak as a collective group about working conditions. If we work together, this can not only improve workplace environment, but can gain credibility and respect from management.

The union is always prepared to listen to the needs and concerns of its members. It continues to keep us informed through various channels such as the national website, *nrlca.org*, the *National Rural Letter Carrier* magazine, our own state publication, *The Pony Express*, and the IDRLCA website at *idrlca.org*. District meetings around the state provide carriers with valuable information. It is our desire to better serve you, so that your questions are answered.

The NRLCA is dedicated in helping working carriers stand up and be heard. There is great power when we join together to make a difference. In life everything of value has a price. You cannot afford to not belong to your union. Union dues are a sound investment in your future.

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Retirement Seminar

A special retirement program will be presented by NRCLA Vice President Ronnie Stutts on Wednesday evening, June 7, 2017, prior to the IDRLCA 2017 State Convention.

All carriers, those currently considering retirement and those whose retirement is still in the future, will find the information contained within this seminar invaluable in preparing for retirement.



IDRLCA Vice President's Report

IDRLCA Vice President Brett Parkinson

Have You Noticed?

I've been looking over my past years' pay stubs and have noticed some things you might find interesting. Maybe you have noticed the same things.

Did you notice on the pay stub for pay period 09 16, that your annual salary rate increased by an amount equal to 1.2% of your previous annual salary rate? Do you know why? This pay increase was negotiated by union leaders in our current contract with the Postal Service.

Did you notice on your pay stub for pay period 25 16, that your annual salary rate increased by another 1.3%? Do you know why? This pay increase was also negotiated by union leaders with the Postal Service in our current contract.

If you are paying attention you will see another 1.3% salary increase around Christmas time of this year. That will be the last of the three pay increases negotiated by our union leaders with the Postal Service for the term of our current contract. That's a total of 3.8% increase in our salaries over the three years.

If you haven't noticed these increases in your pay, it is probably because you are an RCA and you will be paid a little differently. If you were an RCA prior to August 11, 2012, an amount equal to the Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) paid to full-time rural carriers on an hourly basis will be rolled into RCA hourly rates during the first full pay period of August, 2018. RCAs hired on or after August 11, 2012, will be paid the basic hourly rate in table four. The hourly rate will be adjusted as follows: 1.0% increases effective November 14, 2015, November 26, 2016, and November 25, 2017.

Did you notice on your pay stub for pay period 06 17, that there was another few hundred dollars added to your salary rate? Do you know why? This increase was due to one of the COLAs that were negotiated by union leaders with the Postal Service in our current contract. There were six possible COLAs negotiated for during the term of our current contract. The COLAs are paid only when there is an increase in the Consumer Price Index(CPI). Therefore, we may or may not see an increase in our checks twice a year due to COLAs.

Have you noticed other incremental increases in your pay? Perhaps you haven't been a rural carrier as long as I have. I maxed out at step 12 on the pay scale some years ago. You may still be working your way up through the periodic step increases on the pay table. As you work through your career, the waiting times for the next increase get shorter and shorter until you make it to step 12. If you were hired later

and are being paid according to table 2, those step increases come every 52 weeks.

This may seem to be a lot of talk about pay increases. However, periodic pay increases are only one of the many benefits of having a union to represent the rural craft members as we work through our careers with the Postal Service. Those of you who are members of the National Rural Letter Carriers Association (NRLCA) may have noticed, on page 53 of the March issue of the national magazine, *The National Rural Letter Carrier*, the full page list of reasons why it pays to belong to the NRLCA. Receiving the national and state publications is another benefit of membership. There's a lot

of valuable information contained in those publications. All of the above pay information was taken from the contract issue of the *The National Rural Letter Carrier* that all members received recently.

There are numerous other benefits of having a union behind us. There are many insurance programs available to members. The union holds meetings at the local, state and national level which provide information and fellowship, where all members may participate in the democratic process of developing NRLCA policy. We have national and state web sites with accurate and up to date information that affects our jobs, wages, and the changing environment of the Postal Service.

Without the union, any one of us could be subject to layoff or involuntary reassignment to other crafts within the Postal Service. Because of the union, no employee from another craft can be assigned into the rural craft, which could take future jobs away from our own RCAs.

Without the union, all of us would be subject to the whim of the employer. None of us would have any protection or rights. None of us could be assured of having a job tomorrow, let alone next year.

I'm sure many of you feel as I do, that it truly is a benefit to belong to a union that is looking out for our best interests. If you're not a member, I encourage you to join the NRLCA and support the union that works for you. New members receive the first three months membership free of charge.

Without the union, any one of us could be subject to layoff or involuntary reassignment to other crafts within the Postal Service.
Without the union, all of us would be subject to the whim of the employer. None of us would have any protection or rights.

Your PAC contributions are more important than ever in getting our voices heard in the United States Legislature.



IDRLCA Secretary/Treasurer's Report

IDRLCA Secretary-Treasurer Lori Bennett

A New Training Program For RCAs

On October 1, 2016, the Postal Service began a new training program for rural carriers. It includes a two-day orientation, a four-hour web based defensive driving course, LLV training and course debrief, a shadow day, the rural academy, which has been extended to four days, and on-the-job training in the assigned office for three days.

The program is more uniform nationwide from start to finish. The shadow day is to consist of: up to an 8-hour day of shadowing. After attending the welcome to the Postal Service, newly hired rural carriers will shadow an experienced carrier for up to eight hours at their assigned duty station. The shadow day allows the new carrier to become familiar with the duties of a rural letter carrier. It is important to note that newly hired carriers are to only observe the full range of carrier duties and are not to handle mail or drive postal vehicles. A jump seat should be provided for the ride-along portion. Newly hired carriers must attend a welcome to the Postal Service and take the oath of office before being permitted to handle any mail.

A member of management will be on site at the rural academy on the first and last day. Their role is to support the facilitator, provide input on safety and answer any questions. This course includes those elements common to all rural carriers, such as safety, casing, rural delivery, customer relations and techniques for marketing and selling postal products and services. They are presented in an academy environment using instructional methods, such as discussions, demonstrations, and role-play.

The four days in the rural academy are broken down into the following segments:

- Day one: rural carrier responsibilities; classes of mail; the carrier case; accountable items and extra services mail.
- Day two: forwarding, returned, and undeliverable mail; pulling down the carrier case.
- Day three: leaving the office; delivery types; mail receptacles and delivering the mail; marketing postal products and services; collecting outgoing mail.
- Day four: returning to the office; accident procedures; practice delivering the mail.

A driving course, complete with delivering addressed mail, has been set up for the RCA to become more familiar and comfortable with the practical application of putting the on-the-street portion of the job into practice. They begin with a vehicle inspection, and practice curbside and dismount deliveries. This is a brand new addition to the training curriculum.

Other training elements will be presented in an on-the-job environment such as casing, delivery, and hands-on

(please see *New Training* on page 9)

IDRLCA Statement of Activities July 1, 2016 through May 1, 2017

Income	
Interest / Dividends	1,076.32
Membership Dues	102,930.58
Miscellaneous	275.00
National General Insurance	5,993.72
Reimbursements	0.00
Sales	0.00
Western States Conference Receipts	0.00
Total Income	110,275.62
Expense	
Accounting Fees	1,600.00
Awards, Recognition, Other	425.00
Education and Training	196.28
Equipment Maintenance	0.00
Equipment Purchases	1,519.97
National Convention	18,736.32
Office Expense	2,039.47
Payroll Taxes	2,364.90
Per Capita Dues	6,386.84
Postage	942.83
Printing	1,446.27
Rent	336.00
Salary & Wages	27,576.32
State Meetings	2,792.98
State Paper	3,668.25
Telephone & Internet	1,571.08
Travel	25,203.40
Western States Conference	255.50
Workers Compensation Insurance	353.00
Total Expense	97,414.41
Net Income	12,861.21

IDRLCA Statement of Financial Position (As of May 1, 2017)

ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Checking APCU	9,317.73
Savings APCU	55,504.30
CD-APCU 70 April 4	26,978.47
CD-APCU 71 Oct 23	26,413.40
CD-APCU 72 July 20	21,218.01
CD-APCU 73 Jan 18	26,043.85
Total Checking/Savings	165,475.76
Total Current Assets	165,475.76
TOTAL ASSETS	165,475.76
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
Payroll Liabilities	161.84
Total Other Current Liabilities	161.84
Total Current Liabilities	161.84
Total Liabilities	161.84
Equity	
Net Assets	152,452.71
Net Income	12,861.21
Total Equity	165,313.92
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	165,475.76



Voice Of The PAC Representative

PAC Representative Bret Helle

Why Should You Support PAC?

Hello, fellow Idaho rural letter carriers. My name is Bret Helle. For those who don't know me, I'm a rural carrier in the Nampa, Idaho, office. I've worked in Nampa since 2001 and have seen many changes since my start as a rural letter carrier.

Many of the issues that our NRLCA-PAC have been addressing is fighting to keep six-day delivery, defeating the efforts to restrict collective bargaining, keeping single piece parcels in the market dominant category and diffusing anti - labor amendments.

Every penny contributed to PAC adds up to a collective sum to forward to our national office which aids in the continuation of our fight for a better working environment and the tools and resources to keep our association competitive and viable toward a successful and prosperous future.

I hear all the time how carriers give, give, give to their union dues and don't have anything to spare. I agree it is difficult in this day and age just to keep the lights on. But, while you are considering those setbacks and reasons for not contri-

buting to PAC, let me tell you that without PAC, without your union negotiating contracts for the benefit of its members, we could all be working the same or similar job without many of the benefits for pay, vacation, health insurance, retirement...the list goes on. For the cost of a cup of coffee each month, you can have PAC automatically deduct a one-time contribution from your checking account. Better still, with the addition of another payroll deduction, you won't even see it as it comes right out of your paycheck. That's such a small price to pay for all of the hard work and dedication, at the national level, that goes into making our lives better.

For those of you who attend state and national conventions, you see the wonders, as well as the setbacks, in our efforts to make our jobs better for all rural carriers. For those of you who have no idea about these meetings, our state convention comes around to each district once every four years. This year, the convention being in Boise, it is easily accessible to a large group of you with only a short drive. I encourage you to attend even if only for a part of the meetings. There is always something to learn and guidance to help you do your job better and with a greater purpose.

(from page 5)

Mailboxes

of forced entry and should ensure the exterior surface of the unit is free from rust and graffiti. The person conducting the review is to examine the unit, checking it for defects or damage and whether it reflects a proper Postal Service image.

The Postal Bulletin also indicates carriers must note equipment deficiencies and report them to the postmaster, supervisor, or designee. The postmaster or designee must then submit PS Form 1624, *Delivery/Collection Equipment Work Request*, reporting the equipment defects. In addition, carriers should complete PS Form 1767, *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition, or Practice*, for items that pose an immediate threat to safety, such as an improperly secured or leaning CBU / NDCBU. It seems prudent to me, that curbside mailboxes which pose an immediate threat to safety should also be reported using PS Form 1767. **The postmaster or supervisor must immediately notify by telephone the office responsible for repair of reported hazards and must follow up to ensure the work is satisfactorily completed and documented.**

Not mentioned in the Postal Bulletin, but important nonetheless, is PS Form 4056, *Your Mailbox Needs Attention*. There are 19 potential mailbox/support deficiencies identified on the form. Carriers are encouraged to review the form and the mail receptacles on their routes and assist their managers in correcting deficiencies by requesting PS Form 4056. The form is prepared by the postmaster and delivered to the customer to notify them of problems with the mailbox/receptacle.

The foregoing should not be considered all-inclusive information but is intended to give carriers, both regular and relief, information related to not only Mailbox Improvement Week, but to the necessity of well-maintained mail receptacles throughout the year.

(from page 8)

New Training

environment such as casing, delivery, and hands-on practice.

The primary goal of this training program is to provide new rural carriers with the basic skills and knowledge to perform their duties. The advantage of on-the-job training, following the academy portion of training, is to take what was learned in the classroom and apply it to the work unit. Your willingness to share information, demonstrate how to perform tasks and answer questions is essential to the success of the training process.

Remember when you were just starting out? Many of us didn't have any training other than from the regular carrier. Since I was hired, in 1990, I have seen many changes in the way new rural carriers are trained. In addition to improving the training received, there is a video on the *usps.com* website, under careers, for those interested in applying for an RCA position. It is one of the most accurate descriptions of the RCA position that I have seen to date.

As an experienced carrier, you should show a caring attitude and encourage RCAs to ask questions and to share experiences and information. This creates an environment of trust in which they are more likely to learn and apply the information. Your goal is to help them understand the tasks and apply them to the job. We should encourage the new carrier to provide feedback and share what they see as obstacles in completing a task.

The Postal Service has made a commitment to better train the RCAs. Postmaster General Brennan has made a commitment to improve not only training, but retention. The Postal Service is investing a lot of time and money. We all need to do our part by setting a good example. Remember: by helping them, we are helping ourselves.

Contribute to PAC



Voice Of The Legislative Representative

Legislative Representative Russ Hutchison

The New 115th Congress

House Resolution 756, *The Postal Service Reform Act of 2017*, was introduced to the House of Representatives on January 31, 2017 by Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) along with five other members of the House Oversight and

Government Reform Committee. The purpose, as defined by the bill, would be, "To restore the financial solvency and improve the governance of the United States Postal Service in order to ensure the efficient and affordable nationwide delivery of mail and for other purposes."

The entire bill can be viewed on the *nrlca.org* website.

Some highlights of the bill include:

- 1) Converting all business deliveries to centralized or curbside delivery by September, 2023.
- 2) Converting residential door delivery to centralized or curbside delivery with a preference for centralized delivery which they refer to as "delivery point modernization".
- 3) Establishing a Postal Service Health Benefits Program.
- 4) The Postmaster General would appoint a Chief Innovation Officer.

If passed, no later than 30 days after enactment, a one year review will be made to study the impact of the POSTPlan post office restructuring plan on Postal Service expenses, revenue, and retail service provision. It would include changes both before and after the implementation of the POSTPlan Initiative.

House Resolution 760, *The Postal Service Financial Improvement Act of 2017*, was introduced by Representative Stephen Lynch (D-MA-8). This bill would require the U.S. Treasury to invest a specified percentage (25%) of the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund in index funds, modeled after those established for Thrift Savings Fund investments, using one or more asset managers. The bill would also establish a Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund Investment Committee that would consult with the Treasury Department.

On March 16, 2017, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee passed both an amended H.R. 756 and H.R. 760 out of committee by a voice vote.

Five amendments were offered; one by Rep. DeSaulnier (D-CA) and four by Rep. Issa (R-CA).

The DeSaulnier amendment passed by voice vote and would require the Postal Service to notify a member of Congress, ten days before sending out public notice, of a post office closing if that post office was in his or her district.

The four Issa amendments were all similar and sought service cuts if the Postal Service did not meet certain financial benchmarks. Three of his amendments were withdrawn and the fourth failed by voice vote.

All of this being said, the first day the new 115th Congress convened, in the first session, Congressman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-VA) introduced H.R. 15, a resolution expressing that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of its six-day mail delivery service.

Representative David McKinley (R-WV), along with three other republican and four democrat Congressmen, introduced H.R. 31 which expresses that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to restore the service standards that were in effect as of July 1, 2012. Both of these bills were replicas of bills introduced into the 114th Congress last year in which they had over 236 cosponsors.

Congresswoman Susan Davis (D-CA) introduced H.R. 28 which expresses that the Postal Service take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery to all business and residential customers.

Postal reform has been on the congressional docket for many years now. Each year we closely follow the different bills, some which are favorable and some which are not. Many times, the bills introduced are a mixed bag of proposals that include both. There is a lot of wrangling in Congress. Our new president is also keeping them very busy. We shall see if the 115th Congress will be able to get any further on postal reform than the 114th Congress did.



Kortney Hutchison Thanks the Idaho State Auxliary

My name is Kortney Hutchison, daughter of Russ and Lisa Hutchison, and I am one of the recipients of the Idaho State Auxiliary Scholarships.

I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity. I will be attending Walla Walla Community College in the fall to begin my studies in Business. This scholarship was exactly what I needed to finish paying for my first year without taking out any loans. Thank you so much for helping me further my education.

IDRLCA DISTRICT REPORTS

District One

District One Vice President Jo Aguirre

The District One annual election meeting was held on March 30, 2017, at the Fiesta Guadalajara restaurant in Meridian, Idaho, and was well attended by district members. Those who arrived early, enjoyed good food and visited with members from different offices.

Members in attendance were assigned to election committees and started work on our annual elections of district officers.

The officers elected for 2017-2018 are Mikea Hargrove, president; Mara Chafin, vice president, and Bradie Olveria, secretary treasurer. Mara had to decline the position as vice president so a new vice president will be announced at a later date. In the meantime, Jo Aguirre will serve in that office. The district officers were sworn in by IDRLCA President Patti Upton.

The 2017 Idaho State Convention, being held in Boise, is in its final planning stages. This year, for the first time, we will have a Retirement Seminar presented by NRLCA Vice President Ronnie Stutts. The seminar will be held on the evening of June 7th. This is a great opportunity to help you get started on your retirement planning. More information will be forthcoming.

Retirees will be having their Appreciation Luncheon on June 9th at the Olive Garden. All retirees and their spouses or significant others are invited. A \$100 door prize will be given away. Watch your mailbox for your invitation.

District Two

District Two Vice President Chad Anderson

Spring has sprung and the rain won't stop! District Two stayed dry at the Tomatoes Italian Grill in Twin Falls on April 6th, for the election meeting. This year only eight members were present for the election meeting along with three special guests: two state officers and IDRLCA PAC Chairman Bret Helle. With only eight members present, Helle was proud to announce, at the end of the meeting, that we had contributed \$525.00! As a result of reaching \$300.00 or more in contributions, Mr. Helle gave away an Amazon Echo and an Amazon Kindle Fire.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 P.M. by District Two President Russ Hutchison. Vice President Chad Anderson then read the ground rules for the night. Secretary Amber Warr read the minutes from the previous meeting, which were then approved. This meeting was a busy and sufficient one as we were all appointed to certain committees by President Hutchison. With only eight members present, we combined the constitution and resolutions into one committee led by Renee Samples. Others, who worked with her, were

Chad Anderson and Joni Walker. Sue Masino led the audit committee with her partners, Deb Hurd and Amber Warr. Tim Warren led the nominating committee solo, as he walked around gathering nominations for the second half of the meeting. In the teller committee, Chairman Patty Upton worked alongside Lori Bennett to get the job done.

With the state convention coming up in just a short two months, we discussed the 2018 state convention that will be hosted by District Two. President Hutchison wants all members to keep an open mind and send him any thoughts or ideas of a theme. Rumor has it that it will be held in a beautiful area with mountains to our back and the peaceful Snake River winding through - Burley, Idaho!

The second half of the meeting started with the voting. This year we are proud to announce that the man who keeps this district running will be doing another term as president. Yes, Russ Hutchison was voted in as District Two President. President Hutchison works hard at keeping District Two running smoothly and always has answers to any question that a member may have. The answers to your questions may not be addressed as promptly as one would wish, because he may need to do some research to find them, but he does get back in a timely manner. Thank you, Russ, for all you do for us. Two other seats were re-nominated and voted in for another year. Vice President Chad Anderson will be doing another year along with hard working Secretary Treasurer Amber Warr.

After the District Two officers were appointed by acclimation, we nominated 12 delegates to this year's state convention being held in June in Boise. If you were nominated please watch your mail for the letter containing your credentials. If nominated, please try your best to support District Two at the state convention in representing our part of the voting.

Thank you for time and hard work our state officers put into their elected offices on a regular basis, along with our District Two president.

The District Two summer meeting will be announced at a later time and we hope for more members to join us. Delegates, we will see you in Boise this June!

***Election reports
were not received
from
Districts Three and Five.***

IDRLCA STATE BOARD MINUTES March 25, 2017

The regularly scheduled IDRLCA State Board meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, March 25, 2017, at the Candlewood Suites, Meridian ID.

Attendance: President Patti Upton, Vice President Brett Parkinson, Secretary/Treasurer Lori Bennett, Executive Committeemen Mikea Hargrove, Russ Hutchison, John Thomas, Jim Sullins, Editor Lou Freeman, Webmaster Glenda Sanders, Retired Representative Jo Aguirre, and Auxiliary President Robin Carver.

Ground Rules

Vice President Brett Parkinson read the ground rules.

Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and adopted without objection.

Reports

The following reports were presented and placed on file: President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer and Financial Reports. Executive Committeeman: District One / Auto Representative; District Two / Legislative; District Three; District Five / Provident Guild.

Voucher Review

Chairman Brett Parkinson presented their report.

Reports

The following reports were presented and placed on file: Editor, Retired Representative, Webmaster, Auxiliary President.

Retirees

Jim Sullins made a motion for the state to provide a \$100 door prize for the Retirees' Brunch at state convention. A second was made, the motion passed. Mikea Hargrove made a motion for the state to provide \$150 for door prizes for National General at the state convention, a second was made, the motion passed.

Unfinished Business

Contact Sheet Review

The contact sheets were reviewed and no changes were noted.

Symposium Review

President Upton led a discussion regarding the recently held symposiums. She reviewed the comments received from the attendees. The board discussed how District One can access the information, so it can be presented in conjunction with their local meetings. There was a discussion about presenting future information using the district meetings.

New Business

Western States Conference (WSC)

WSC is scheduled for April 20-22, 2017, in Seattle WA. Lori Bennett made a motion that those members attending WSC in its entirety, beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday, and providing an article to *The Pony Express* as assigned, by the given deadline of April 29th, shall receive three days per diem. A second was made, after discussion the motion passed.

District Annual Meetings

Lori reminded the district presidents to prepare their annual meetings for committees, audit, elections, etc.

State Convention

The Convention, with a Retirement Seminar on the evening of June 7th, will be held June 8-10, 2017, at La

Quinta Inn & Suites (room rate \$89), Boise. Mikea Hargrove gave an update on the upcoming state convention. The state will secure a room specifically for the Elections Committee's use. State Historian Mary Morris has requested that individuals provide her with any photos they might have of state events.

Distinguished Service Award

No nominations were submitted for the Distinguished Service Award this year. Patti and Lou will present some possible changes in the nomination/selection process at the next board meeting.

Auxiliary Discussion

A discussion was held regarding the status of the state auxiliary. Auxiliary Secretary/Treasurer Jeff Marler presented a financial report. The auxiliary board is working on updating/creating a constitution and board policy. There was discussion about who has responsibility of overseeing and financing the Juniors' Auxiliary. Glenda Sanders made a motion that the state provide up to \$1000 towards the Juniors' Auxiliary program expenses, incurred for the 2017 state convention, to be paid upon proper submission of receipts and vouchers. A second was made and, after discussion, the motion passed.

District Representative

Salt Lake City District Representative Brian Draper addressed the board. He said that there has been an increase in removals lately. He reviewed some position changes at the district level. Other topics included the Rural Street Delivery (RSD) portion of the engineered study and upcoming steward trainings.

State Board Resolutions or Constitution Proposals

The State Board will present the following IDRLCA Constitution change proposals to the Constitution Committee at State Convention: *Article IV.1.B, Article IV.2.D, Article VI.1.C, Article VI.3.F.* as attached to the minutes.

Board Policy Review

Jim Sullins made a motion to amend the IDRLCA State Board Policy on Travel to read

"*TRAVEL A.* Mileage shall be paid at the rate of \$0.50 per mile for travel. Per Diem shall be paid at the rate of \$100.00 per day." A second was made and, after discussion, the motion passed.

Mikea Hargrove will research the cost of purchasing sound equipment for the state's use.

Budget Committee Report

The Budget Committee presented their report. Adjustments were made as the line items were discussed. Jim Sullins made a motion to table the discussion regarding per diem payments as written in the IDRLCA State Board Policy until the September board meeting. A second was made and the motion passed 5 – 2. Jim Sullins made a motion to accept the 2017-2018 Budget as proposed. A second was made and the motion passed.

Correspondence

No correspondence was received since the last state board meeting.

Next Board Meeting

The next board meeting was scheduled for June 8, 2017, at La Quinta Inn & Suites, Boise at 8:30 a.m.

Personal Concerns

The board members were allowed to address any personal concerns.

Adjournment - Meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

2017 Western States Conference

Seattle WA, April 20 - 22, 2017

Retirement As A Three Legged Stool

Reported by Lisa Hall

The 2017 Western States Conference was held in beautiful Seattle, Washington; a great meeting and very well attended. It is always nice to see your friends from other states and to get great information.

My assignment was the retirement seminar presented by NRLCA Vice President Ronnie Stutts, Friday evening. If you are within five years of retiring, it is to your benefit to start planning now. Your retirement is like a three legged stool. You will have your Postal Service pension, your thrift savings plan, and social security if you have met the requirements.

Let's talk about your Postal Service pension first. You have a minimum age requirement, based on the year you were born. It starts at age 55 with 30 years of service. At age 60 you will have to have 20 years of service and at age 62, five years of service. Your pension will be based on the average your three highest consecutive years of service. So it varies depending on several variables. If you retire before you have met the years of service, they will take back 5% per year.

In order to keep your health insurance through the Postal Service you will have had to have carried some health insurance plan through the Postal Service for at least five years prior to retirement. Also, you have to take an immediate annuity to keep your health insurance because your premiums are taken out of that. Plan ahead on this. If you have a Rural Carriers Benefit Plan, you will have to remain a member of the union to maintain this insurance. You also have to select a survivors annuity for your spouse to have health insurance.

Your Thrift Savings Plan is the second leg of the stool. How much money you pay into it determines what you will get out of it when you retire. The postal service will match up to 5%, so if you're not saving at least 5% of your pay, you are throwing money away.

The third leg of the stool is your social security. If you are in FERS you have paid into social security. You must have 40 quarters of working in the system to qualify. Medicare also comes into play at age 65.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is always backed up, so plan on having enough money on hand to tide you over until everything is figured out on your pension. This could take some time. Several deductions will be made from your annuity check such as federal taxes, state taxes, health insurance premiums and life insurance. When you are ready to retire, you can request your blue book up to six months prior. It will be mailed to you to complete the forms and send them back. Prior to retiring, OPM will set a phone



conference to answer any of your questions. You will need to have your questions ready prior to that phone conversation. There are several websites you can visit to start planning and calculators to help you as well.

A few examples are: opm.gov; ssa.gov; and tsp.gov. You also need to go into your personnel file and print it in hard copy, so if there are any questions or things that need to be fixed, it can be done prior to your retirement. Once you retire, you can't access that anymore.

Stutts finished up by saying each person is responsible for their own retirement. So you need to plan! He will present a seminar the evening prior to the opening of the 2017 state convention, so plan on attending and become more informed.

Reaching Out to EAP

Reported by Patti Upton

I recently attended the Western States Conference in Seattle, Washington. The conference is always filled with information vitally important to rural carriers.

I was tasked to attend the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) seminar and bring you valuable information about it. So, what does EAP do? This program is free for all postal employees, their families, or anyone living in their households. It is a confidential benefit that the Postal Service provides for all of its employees.

There are many reasons you might need to call an EAP specialist. It might be for personal reasons, emotional reasons, work stresses, and issues such as substance abuse. EAP has 25,804 licensed counselors and affiliates available 24-7. Once you make a call to them, they will set you up with a counselor in your area for a consultation. The purpose of the consultation is to provide problem solving assistance. They will also furnish you with suggestions for resolving your concerns. They are there to help clarify your needs and how to address them. In some cases up to 12 free sessions may be approved, most often only six are needed.

EAP also can help you with life coaching. Even when your life is going well, EAP can help teach you how to set goals and how to reach them. Coaching helps build you up, showcases your strengths, then identifies and clarifies your visions and goals.

EAP also has what is called a Critical Incident Response program, set up to reach out to you when traumatic events occur. When an office suffers a loss, these events can potentially overwhelm a person's ability to work or cope. EAP will step in and offer a continuum of service based on needs at that time. This might include on site response, grief groups, individual sessions, service talks, psychological first aid and follow up sessions and services if necessary.

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Reaching Out to EAP

continued

Reaching out to EAP is easy. You may reach them by calling 1-800-327-4968. They also have a website at *eap4you.com*. This website offers web based counseling and other valuable information. Other material on this site also includes quizzes that can help you determine how stressed you might be.

Please remember that EAP is a life management tool to help you sort through life's ups and downs. It's really quite simple; EAP is a program that you can trust. Make the call. You will be glad that you did.

RCA Duties & Benefits

Reported by Lori Bennett

NRLCA Director of Labor Relations Joey Johnson presented an evening seminar on RCA duties and benefits. His presentation focused on the RCA knowing the National Agreement as it applies to them. It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that they are aware of their rights under the contract and that management complies. I have often heard from the field that RCAs have few rights and not much in the contract applies to them. That is a misconception that needs to be fixed.

Many articles in the National Agreement apply to leave replacements. For instance, Article 7.2 identifies the different leave replacement positions and if there are any situations that may put them into a leave earning status. Did you know that a Designation 74, *RCA on a Vacant Route*, would be earning annual and sick leave, but when leaving that status as a 74 and returning to a Designation 78, their annual leave would be paid out to them, but their sick leave goes away unless they are back in a leave earning status within three years? You need to know how so many different possible situations might apply to your specific circumstances.

Article 8.3.A deals with compensation for leave replacements. It breaks down the different table and pay schedules dependent upon the hire date; know what your rate should be and make sure you are being paid correctly. If an underpayment exists, you are typically more aware, but if an overpayment exists, it could subject you to a letter of demand for the return of the overpayment. Article 8 continues with information on the two-hour guarantee of pay, if scheduled, and the relief scheduling options if the regular carrier is working their relief day.

Information on the basic annual salary and the hourly pay breakdown when a leave replacement becomes a new regular carrier, can be found in Article 9. It is imperative that you not only know your hire date, which can be found on your Form 50, but that you verify it is correct, as this can affect not only seniority, but pay. Your hire date determines the step you will be at when converting to a regular carrier. This article also shows any general wage increases and Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) that were negotiated.



Another important section to know as a relief carrier, is Article 9.2.D.5.j. This article deals with several important items concerning relief carriers requesting a day off. Article 9, in general, also applies to providing vehicles, auxiliary assistance, and the Christmas allowance and procedures as well as training pay.

Specifics on seniority and the rights that are applicable, are covered in Article 12, which addresses the seniority list, and how ties are broken when multiple people are hired on the same day. It reviews job biddings and postings, as well as vacant routes.

In Article 30, you will see information on the matrix, transfers, filling of auxiliary routes, Sunday work and other additional duties. Not only does the National Agreement have a lot of language that pertains to the leave replacements, there are MOUs. MOU 7 is about job-related injuries, while MOU 8 details how to qualify for a right-hand drive incentive payment.

So, if you are a leave replacement or simply have questions about the duties and responsibilities of RCAs, review your contract. We often depend upon management to get it right, but in my experience, our managers can't and don't know everything. They will always have the interest of the "company" in mind. There is no one better able to know how to protect your interests, than the educated you.

NRLCA President Jeanette Dwyer

Reported by Sharon Atkins

NRLCA President Jeanette Dwyer is always informative and knowledgeable. She began her portion of the Western States Conference by welcoming all 36 first-time attendees and thanking local stewards for the service that they provide to our carriers.

She advised us of a group, National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees (NAPFE), that is actively recruiting members in all unions. It was originally established to prevent the elimination of blacks from railway mail service. She wanted to remind us that the NRLCA is the only union authorized to represent rural carrier interests with the Postal Service. If this group, NAPFE, tries to organize within our offices the national office of the NRLCA should be alerted.

Dwyer said, "The Postal Service has never prepared for success."

Under the prior postmaster general, preparation was actually made for failure, i.e., closing plants, selling off equipment, etc. As those in our work force know, we have gotten busier – with Amazon parcels, obviously. Some carriers want a count and some do not, depending on where you are with those. Ever heard of per cent to standard? Management is not getting those bonuses. A 2018 count will capture these because a faster fix will probably not happen.



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NRLCA President Jeanette Dwyer

continued

Rural carriers are an integral part of growth. A rural carrier recently brought in a \$700,000 rural reach contact! We can make a difference.

Growth is happening overall; route numbers are up. H & J route numbers are down but K-route numbers have increased as well as auxiliary routes. L routes are up, as well as non-L routes. Carrier numbers are increasing. Applications for relief carriers - 31,905. Why isn't the Postal Service hiring?

A post office in Cold Springs, Texas, was named for a murdered rural carrier recently. At the South West Area Conference (SWAC), a sexual assault case came to the union's attention. The workplace environment has to be taken seriously. Everyone has the right to be free of bullying, intimidation, etc. It is management's duty to see to that, even if it is being caused by them. If not, the grievance procedure is in place. Don't be afraid to rock the boat; the union will stand behind you. In this case, others who felt alone found their strength in numbers and the manager was removed.

Membership is important to our carriers. The union stands between you and the employer who is concerned about the bottom line and may not be working in your best interest. The resolution may not be the perfect solution, but chipping away at an issue can eventually eliminate the iceberg.

The engineered study is essentially complete, but there is still a ways to go. Now the stages of testing, debugging and validating all the data that has been compiled begins. This is a study that has never been done before and the professional engineers who have headed this study do not want their professional careers tainted by not doing it correctly. It has been a long and arduous journey, but to finalize the project, we must buckle down and stay the course. It will be right when it is done. Anticipation!

Out after dark issue - 7:00 p.m. - ouch. But 11:00 p.m. is ridiculous! One carrier could read the numbers on the gun that was pointed at him while delivering to the door - not acceptable.

Jeanette finished by saying that we have a dangerous job but, remember, the goal is for you to go home after work. So be safe out there.

The Thrift Savings Plan

Reported by Toad Brandt

The Thrift Savings Plan gives you the opportunity to participate in a long term retirement investment. If you are a FERS employee, this is the third leg to your retirement stool which consists of your postal pension, social security and thrift savings.

It gives you diversified investment options. Traditional pre-taxed money grows in your account tax-deferred. When you withdraw your money, you pay taxes on both your contributions and earnings. In Roth contributions, the money is taxed before it is taken out of your paycheck. When you withdraw money, it is tax free. You won't have to pay taxes on your earnings either, as long as you remember the five-year rule: if you are at least 59 1/2 years old on January 1st of the calendar year you made your first Roth TSP contribu-

tion or if you are permanently disabled or deceased, your earnings will be considered qualified and will not be taxed on withdrawal.

You need to be diversified in your TSP, there are six different funds you can invest in G, F, C, S or I, and L-funds also called life cycle funds. Diversify your accounts among G, F, C, S or I funds, using professional investment allocations which are rebalanced each business day, giving you the highest expected rate of return. You can invest percentages of your allotments in the G, F, C, S and I funds on your own or you can go to the web page, *tsp.gov*, and view your personal account and perform transactions.

There are five different L-funds; investing in one depends on the length of time you have before you retire.

If you're a FERS employee you receive matching contributions on the first 5% of pay you contribute each pay-period.

There are three ways of getting your money out of TSP.

1. A loan
2. In service withdrawal
3. Post separation withdrawal

Any withdrawal will be divided up equally from your Roth and traditional accounts.

Death Benefits:

Make sure your beneficiary designation is current and is what you wish. (Form TSP-3).

There are numerous sources of information about the Thrift Savings Plan:

Website: *tsp.gov*

Thriftline: *1-TSP-YOU-FRST (1-877-968-3778)*

TSP: *Thrift Savings Plan*

P.O. Box 385021

Birmingham, Al 35238



Labor Relations

Reported by Glenda Sanders

"We all have the right to work in a pleasant environment."

This is how the Labor Relations Seminar began. It was like music to my ears and I wanted to hear it!

The seminar was held Thursday evening at the Western States Conference in Seattle, WA. Hosting the seminar was NRLCA Director of Steward Operations David Heather. On the panel was NRLCA Director of Labor Relations Joey Johnson and NRLCA Legal Counsel Michael Gan.



(Turn to next page)

Labor Relations

continued

The hall was packed with rural carriers from all over the west, to hear what these three men had to say. There is a document called the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. It outlines the types of behavior that will not be tolerated in the workplace. It covers bullying, intimidation, harassment and violence. Because it's a joint statement, agreed upon by USPS and the National Rural Letter Carriers Association, the document is solid and strong. It can be found on the NRLCA website, *nrlca.org*, as the number code J-4.40.

The presenters asked the audience if they had ever been a victim of bullying or harassment at their post offices. The overwhelming response was a resounding YES! So, why is it that many rural carriers feel harassed or belittled when we have this joint statement to protect us? Violence and or harassment in the workplace continues when no one stands up to the bully. The employees must come together, document the issues and, over time, build a case for the grievance process to be successful.

Grievances have been won. Johnson told us about an extreme case in Texas, where the female employees were being sexually harassed by their postmaster. When the first woman came forward, and the steward started asking for statements, more women started to talk about their trials with this postmaster. The steward won the grievance at the Step 3 level and the postmaster was terminated from service.

There is hope. The three keys to filing and winning a grievance about workplace conditions are: take accurate and timely notes, get witness statements whenever possible and never, ever retaliate. Many times, retaliating can be twisted to make YOU the harasser. It's just like the old adage, "two wrongs don't make a right" and it could land YOU without a job!

Statements are so important in this process. When a supervisor calls you a "lazy good for nothing sub" in front of your co-workers, it might be a one time slip, or it could be part of a pattern of abuse. The pattern is what the documentation can show. Let's say you start a log in January and by June you have over 100 instances where your supervisor was abusive toward you. Now you have a solid case; with witness corroboration, it's a winnable case.

Documentation is paramount to getting the harasser out of your office. Keeping a clear and factual journal can mean the difference between putting up with a bully of a boss for years or freeing yourself, and your office, of the offender within a few months. "Just the facts, Ma'am." is what the steward needs; not how a person made you feel, but what the person did. Always include time and date and any witnesses that were around at the time. You don't have to ask them to be witnesses; the steward will do that when he or she is working on the grievance. Just write down who was there, what was said and the tone of voice it was said in. After

***Union Membership provides many benefits,
worked for and earned by the members.***

***Non-membership provides only what is taken
from the efforts of others - who are NOT you.***

compiling a hefty journal of the Joint Statement infractions, call your steward and they will take it from there.

The remedy that is always sought by the union is termination. The Joint Statement says, "Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions."

This is what the offender is looking at. With good documentation and a good steward, we can all free ourselves from supervisory wrongdoings. With diligence and hard work we can, together, achieve the dream of, "We all have the right to work in a pleasant environment."

Michael Gan - Legal Counsel

Reported by Bret Helle

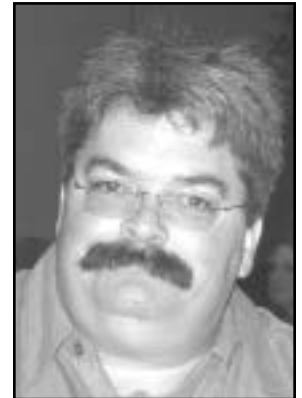
Greetings fellow Idaho Rural Letter Carriers!

I'll begin by saying this was yet another fantastic Western States Conference, hosted by the Washington Rural Letter Carriers Association in Tukwila, WA. It was quite a busy town compared to Nampa, Idaho. The conference as a whole was very educational and entertaining as well. I was assigned to report on Michael Gan's address to the convention body on Friday afternoon. As much as I enjoy listening to Michael Gan at any of our conventions, I had a difficult time keeping up with pen and paper.

Michael's address followed NCRLA President Jeanette Dwyer's address and I begin my portion with her description of the dedication of the Cold Springs, TX post office to the E. Marie Youngblood Post Office. Eddie "Marie" Youngblood was a 10 year veteran rural carrier who tragically lost her life while delivering mail on her route in Cold Springs, Texas in 2013. In May 2016, Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX) introduced House Bill H.R. 5356 to dedicate the Cold Springs post office in her memory. The bill was signed into law in December 2016 and the dedication ceremony was performed Friday, March 3, 2017. This ceremony was attended by the family of Mrs. Youngblood; Congressman Brady; Mayor Pat Eversole; Judge Lovett, Jr.; Chamber of Commerce President Patrick Clark; NRLCA president Jeanette Dwyer; TXRLCA State President Jacqueline Glance; Houston District Manager David Camp; Cold Springs Postmaster Maneika Shankle and other elected officials; family and friends.

Michael introduced himself as an original Western States Conference member by the fact that he was originally from California. He mentioned a mock arbitration with Mark Giesler on Monday night at National Convention which should serve to be very entertaining. He also promoted a fundraiser prior to this year's National Convention at National Harbor, Maryland, a 25-mile bike ride from the Gaylord Convention Center, across the Potomac River and on to Mt. Vernon. Anyone who wishes to participate can sign up at nrlcabikeride2017eventbrite.com. In October, the ride was from Pittsburgh to D.C. on rails to trails.

Gan reported that a lot of time was consumed in the 2018



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Michael Gan - Legal Counsel

continued

bargaining contract negotiations. Our current contract will end May 20, 2018. Negotiations involve meeting schedules and getting all of the appropriate members in place. EMA, COLA and wage increases are always at the bargaining table and, of course, the Postal Service always brings its view of the financial position and economic issues. He compared the collective bargaining process to an "I love Lucy" episode where Lucy is working in a chocolate packaging facility and, trying to keep up with automation, starts eating the chocolate to catch up with the production line. It kind of feels like that when negotiating with the USPS.

He referred to the father of Max Profit and *Employee Production w/ Science* by Max Taylor. Taylor viewed workers as commodities. The new evaluated system should fix the old system, which didn't include fatigue and delay considered in the time allowancing. Gan spoke of carriers failing to notice postings because of fear of retaliation, OSHA laws being ignored and carriers in hot heat index areas suffering heat stroke and other heat related maladies. The Department of Labor is taking these heat related issues seriously.

Gan said he and several other members of our association are looking forward to showing off their workplace, the NRLCA Headquarters. He continued to speak about the ongoing engineering study called the Rural Route Evaluated Compensation System or RRECS. The initial process is almost complete. Coders have finished software development, testing, debugging and implementation as well as data capture including frequency, data, mapping, software, rural workhour tracker and MMDS. 1,445 routes have been successfully developed. Data is flowing and now they are developing procedures to identify and eliminate glitches.

The teams still need to finish data validation standards from detailed engineering studies and a second source physical study of addresses. So far, they've developed over 106 standards. They are reviewing the remaining standards, drive speed standards and traffic control points. Two studies remain incomplete. Still remaining are data cleansing and analysis, logic and calculation. Data bases and code needs to be written for processing.

It's been a long, arduous journey with many setbacks and problems solved. The engineers are completing final work to complete the project.

Michael also spoke about safety, new vehicles, and how important it is, above all, to come home to your family each day!

For more information on any of these topics, feel free to contact me or pull me aside at the state convention or district meetings.

Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP)

Reported by Robin Carver

While attending Western States Conference, I was asked to attend and write about the Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP) seminar. Devin Cassidy, the representative for the NRLCA opened the seminar by stating that that the OWCP is underfunded and has a 1000-page manual used to address the functions of

OWCP.

Cassidy proceeded with some simple facts that we as rural carriers may not be aware of:

Rural carriers have a portal to portal rule which involves coverage from your home to work and back if the carrier's vehicle is used for mail delivery.

Your claim should be paid up to the evaluation of your route, not an 8-hour day.

If you are sent to another office to perform light duty functions, as your doctor ordered, you are entitled to mileage to and from the office assigned. This is determined by your mileage from your office to the office assigned. Management has the right to change your schedule and office within 50 miles.

All carriers should describe to your doctor, in detail, the job requirements and functions you perform every day. The USPS will send OWCP the standard form CA7A which explains your functions, but it is best to write, describe, and explain your functions yourself. The CA7A form is standardized and may not be clear enough for the doctor to determine your abilities.

Cassidy gave a brief description of the forms used when filing for OWCP and I will briefly address the common forms he discussed.

CA1 - Notice of traumatic injury in one workday or shift. You will fill out the employee section. Continuation of pay may be used if you are able to work in a limited duty capacity.

CA2 - Notice of occupational disease. Examples are: carpal tunnel, shoulder injury, knee injuries, hand injuries and so forth. The doctor needs to directly relate the activity to the cause or aggravation.

CA2A - Notice of reoccurrence, with a continuation of documented injury. Spontaneous worsening of activity.

CA7 - Claim for compensation while not working. Compensation pay is 3/4 of your pay or 2/3 if single with no children. A CA7 should be submitted at the end of each pay period.

CA7A - Breaks down the intermittent work you are required to perform as a carrier.

CA7B - Used to pay back carriers if their sick time or annual was used. Do not use your leave after a claim has been approved. It is difficult to get back.

CA17 - Daily status report used to release you for light duty or limited duty. This form is a job offer from USPS to use you for limited duty. You have the right to include your doctor in this offer and possibly submit a new CA17 per the doctor's recommendations.

Management is required to submit the CA7 in five days to Department of Labor (DOL) and CA1 and CA2 are sent to DOL in 10 days.

If you will be off work for a while it is important to know that your Form 50 is frozen till you return, unless it goes up. Management cannot cut your route pay while you are gone.

Continuation of Pay (COP) is used if you are put on



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Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP)

continued

limited duty. COP is available for 45 days after the injury.

If your injury is over 14 days and you cannot return to work yet, the three days of 'waiting' period is repaid to you.

So now, if you're still tuned in and your eyes are not crossed and you're not asleep, let me tell you the good news. All 74 pages of this fascinating subject can be found on the NRLCA website. Yes, Cassidy kindly took that 1000-page manual at the DOL and condensed it for us into a readable, reliable, and necessary report. I walked away with a lot of respect and gratitude for this man and if I need help, I know where to go. You can, too. Go to nrlca.org, then *departments, then workers comp.*

Legislative Update

Reported by Brett Parkinson

At the recent Western States Conference in Seattle, Washington, I was assigned to report on the legislative report of NRLCA Director of Governmental Affairs Paul Swartz.

Swartz's report was pretty much an overview of his articles printed in the March and April issues of our national magazine *The National Rural Letter Carrier*, but I will try to focus on the highlights in this report.

Because postal reform bills didn't make it to the floor for a vote in the 114th congress, they have to start the process over in this new 115th congress.

H.R. 756, *Postal Reform Act of 2017*, was introduced in the new congress through the



House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. This bi-partisan legislation is similar to H.R. 5714, which was introduced in the 114th congress. H.R. 756 includes many of the same reforms included in the previous bill. It would establish a separate postal-only health plan in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP). It also includes a Medicare integration section that would have retirees enroll in Medicare Part A, B, and

D, with a transition period to help cover the costs of enrolling in Medicare. Medicare Part D would be paid for by the employer. If passed, this legislation would continue to require the Postal Service to cover all of the cost of the retiree health benefits liability within a period of 40 years.

This bill also calls for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to use postal-specific assumptions such as salary growth and demographic assumptions when calculating pension costs and liabilities. Any surplus found through these calculations would be amortized and returned to the Postal Service. The bill would also allow the USPS to increase rates by 2.15 percent. While H.R. 756 seeks to include mandatory conversions to centralized delivery of business addresses, and voluntary conversions to centralized or cluster box delivery for residential addresses, the NRLCA plans to work with the authors of the bill and their staffs to

suggest minor adjustments that would give the Postal Service the flexibility to make workable exceptions.

If passed, H.R.756 will give the Postal Service \$26 billion in cost reductions and new revenue over a period of five years. Five other amendments to this bill were considered before it was voted on and passed out of committee on March 16. One of the amendments presented by Representative DeSaulnier (D-CA), which would require the Postal Service to notify a member of congress ten days before sending out public notice of a Post Office closing if that Post Office was located in his or her district, passed favorably by voice vote. Four other amendments submitted by Representative Issa (R-CA), which all sought service cuts if the Postal Service didn't meet certain financial benchmarks, were either withdrawn or voted down by the committee. H.R. 756 is now referred to the House Ways and Means Committee and the Energy and Commerce Committee due to the Medicare provision in the bill.

Another bill that Swartz reported on at the conference, is H.R. 1364 which, if passed, could be an attack on federal employees and unions. This bill was debated and marked up on March 8th, in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Introduced by Representative Jody Hice (R-GA), this bill attempts to attack the use of official time by union officials by leveraging their pensions and benefits. The markup was delayed as Representative Cummings (D-MD) and Representative Connolly (D-VA), as well as other Democratic members of the committee, objected to the bill. After postponement of the markup, H. R. 1364 was voted favorably out of committee on a party line vote. While this bill could possibly be a concern when it comes before the entire House of Representatives, Swartz informed those at the conference that this bill does not affect the Postal Service.

Another bill being considered in congress is H. R. 28 introduced by Representative Susan Davis (D-CA). This bill currently has 218 co-sponsors and seeks to maintain door delivery to all business and residential customers. Another bill, H. R.31, introduced by Representative David McKinley (R-WV), has 156 co-sponsors and also addresses service standards. These bills would be good to keep tabs on as they move through and possibly out of committee.

As postal employees, it's a good idea to keep ourselves informed of the bills being considered by the House of Representatives and the Senate, and how passage of these bills might affect our jobs and livelihood. You can do this by reading your legislative updates in the national magazine and on the NRLCA website. Once you become informed, it's a good idea to contact your representatives and senators and let them know your views.



Average load on the Star Route from Crescent City, CA to Brookings, OR over 32 miles of mountain road.

CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL DELEGATE

to the 2017 NRLCA National Convention

You will soon receive an envelope containing a list of candidates for the position of Delegate to the National Convention for 2017 and a ballot with which to vote for your choice of Delegates to represent YOU at the National Convention in August.

In past elections, only 30% or fewer of the IDRLCA membership bothered to vote for their Delegates to the National Convention. This means that fewer than 30% of the Idaho rural letter carriers decided who would represent 100% of the IDRLCA membership at the National Convention.

DON'T LET SOMEONE ELSE DECIDE WHO WILL REPRESENT YOU! TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REVIEW THE CANDIDATES' STATEMENTS AND CAST YOUR VOTES FOR THE CANDIDATES YOU THINK WILL BEST REPRESENT YOUR INTERESTS!

Patti Upton



My name is Patti Upton and I am once again asking you, to select me, as one of your National Delegates to National Harbor, Maryland. I have often thought about my humble beginnings in Fruitland, Idaho. I was a shy inhibited young woman with little knowledge of the NRLCA, let alone what their purpose was. I was lucky to be surrounded by amazing ladies

with strong union leadership. They taught me that our union gives us a voice and the ability to be represented. Of my 21 years at the post office, 12 were spent as a RCA. I believe that RCA's deserve greater things and I will work hard towards finding solutions for them.

I am finishing up my second year as your IDRLCA President. With this position comes a wide variety of responsibilities to you the membership. I was recently appointed to the NRLCA Appeals Commission. I've found this experience to further enhance my knowledge of this union and the rights that carriers have. As an Ad Hoc Trainer, I am lucky to meet the new hires and the future of the rural carrier craft. It is a privilege to share my knowledge and experiences with them.

I am proud to be a part of the IDRLCA. Challenges may come, but wonderful things can be achieved when we collaborate together. Unity is strength and there is strength in numbers. I am committed to protecting and preserving our livelihoods. It is imperative that you select representatives that will speak your concerns to the National Board. Please carefully consider, and then exercise your right to choose delegates that you feel will best represent you. I sincerely hope that you will allow me the honor to represent you. I value and welcome your thoughts and opinions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sharon Atkins

Can you believe it is time to decide who should represent you at the national convention in August? Time does fly and I am putting my name in the mix of choices for one of those who would love to make your opinions and wishes known at the convention. I am Sharon Atkins, recently retired, so I am aware of those issues that our union should represent. I also can still remember those things that were critical to those fresh off the streets and hoping to join the ranks of rural carriers across our state. Not to be forgotten are those that go to work every day that reached that status of "regular".

My perspective is of many years in the trenches. I taught many of you in the ad hoc academy and served in many positions in both my district and the state. I am willing to hear your desires and needs as those elected pass resolutions representing you at the upcoming national convention. When you receive your ballot in the mail take time to fill it out and return it. I am requesting that you mark my name for one of those positions for national delegate.



Lori Bennett

It is time once again to consider the candidates for National Delegate as you mark your ballot. My name is Lori Bennett, and I would like to ask for your consideration for Delegate to the 2017 National Convention in National Harbor, MD.

I have been fortunate enough to have met many of our Idaho association members. It is my love and appreciation for the union and my fellow carriers, that keeps me involved. It is for this vast network of friends, who I consider family, that I hope to serve.

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Lori Bennett

We have our new national agreement, and are still waiting for the next phase of the engineered time study to be completed. Once the study is done, and the time standards have been established, that is when the real work begins. The National Board will have to negotiate with the USPS how to implement them, and what mail count will look like in the future. Addressing these questions, and so many others is the key to represent Idaho at the National Convention.



As a mainly rural state, we need to speak up and let our concerns be known, so that our needs don't get overlooked by the more metropolitan states. It is crucial that our delegates are informed and I believe it is through attending meetings, and seeking out the pertinent information that we are better able to make these ever-important decisions. Each decision reached through the democratic process will echo differently in different locations. It is imperative that we make our vote count not only for the individual casting the vote, but to best represent our Idaho members.

With this in mind, I ask for your vote for National Delegate.

Glenda Sanders

Hello Idaho members. I would be honored to receive your vote as a Delegate to the 2017 National Convention. I have thoroughly enjoyed being your State Webmaster for over five years and I'm excited about transitioning to be your State Editor in July. For the past two years, I have been involved in putting on the Symposiums all over the State and have met many amazing Rural Carriers! I love the connections that I have made in Idaho. You are the reason that I'm a local steward and that I'm so involved with the Idaho State Board.



If I'm elected, this will be my 5th National Convention. Meeting rural carriers from all over the country at the National Convention, is one of the many blessings I have been given. Every time that I go, I learn more about our rural craft and our association; where we have been and where we are going. Our future looks bright but we must steer this association in the right direction. The association is US, and we must speak up for what WE want! I am looking forward to voting on issues that will improve our National Agreement and in turn improve our lives as rural carriers. Please consider putting a check mark by my

name and mail in your secret ballot.

In case you didn't know, the IDRLCA web site has links to all the annual conventions and where they will be held. Any member can go to a Convention or Conference. This year our State Convention is in Boise ID. I would love to see all of you come and witness what we do at the state level of this great association. www.idrlca.org is where you can find all the information.

Respectfully Submitted, Glenda Sanders

Robin Carver

Greetings Rural Carriers,

I am requesting your consideration in allowing me to represent you at the NRLCA National convention in National Harbor, Maryland this year. I have been actively involved with the Association by attending most District meetings, Board meetings, and Auxiliary meetings allowing a view of all aspects of the Association. I have been the Auxiliary President for 12 years.



Thank you for your consideration.
Robin Carver

Bret Helle

Hello Idaho rural letter carriers, my name is Bret Helle and I'm asking for your consideration for Delegate to national convention in National Harbor, Maryland this year. I've attended ten national conventions in the past and every year I meet new people with great ideas for growth and understanding of our craft. I wish there were more people who would attend these conventions as well as conferences so they too could see for themselves what greatness is happening to better our rural carrier way of life. As a delegate I will attend meetings, several of which I will report on when I return as well as obtain resources to share with you who have questions of how, when or why. Every year I get asked what I learned. Every year I ask that you give me a list of what you want to know. Most of what happens is written in our articles upon our return, but some of you truly have individual concerns or questions that arise after the fact and are more difficult to answer without a definitive point or issue. I ask that you keep me in mind when you send in your ballot and I will assure you that I will do my very best to represent the state of Idaho in D.C. this coming August. Thank you for all of your support through the years and I look forward to serving you, our members.



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Jo Aguirre

Hello Idaho Rural Carriers and Retirees. My name is Jo Aguirre and I am currently serving as your Retirement Representative and also speak to all the new hires at their orientation in the Boise area about joining the Rural Letters Carriers Association.

The Retirement Representative needs to keep current with all aspects of the retirement process. I would once again like to attend the National Convention and receive the latest information at the Retirement Seminar in order to be able to help you.



I am retired but, I make an effort to be current with all that is happening in the Rural Carrier craft. I feel that I can represent you as one of your National Delegates. Thank you for your consideration.

Please take the time to mark and mail your ballot for the people you prefer to represent you at the National Convention. It's very important and takes only a couple of minutes.

What is the Greatest Benefit Received From IDRLCA Membership?

Responses from the IDRLCA Symposiums held around Idaho

- *Knowledge of the craft and contract.*
- *New and current information.*
- *Better Pay!*
- *Gives me the benefits I need for accurate pay and teaches me the right way to do things.*
- *Every question answered – Always feels like someone has your back.*
- *Steward help!*
- *All of the great information provided in the magazine.*
- *Having a voice.*
- *Peace of mind that the IDRLCA is there if I need them.*
- *Unlimited amounts of information and the support to feel comfortable asking.*
- *Getting the new information on what's happening within the district.*
- *Support, Pony Express.*
- *Knowledge and the network of people to ask questions of.*
- *Information on rights and up-to-date information on changes and policy.*
- *Knowing we are a strong union.*
- *It's like having a support system and legal representation all in one!*

*******ELECTION NOTICE*******

The following positions will be filled by election at the 2017 IDRLCA State Convention in Boise, ID: President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and four Executive Committeemen, one seat from each District. These positions will be elected for a term of one year. Nominations shall take place at the annual State Convention.

In addition to the elected positions, the following appointments will be made by the State President with State Board approval: Editor, Webmaster and Retired Representative as non-voting members of the State Board with PAC Chair, Auto Representative, Benefits Representative, and Provident Guild Representative as non-board positions. This is in accordance with IDRLCA Constitution Article IV Section 1.A.

Anyone interested in any of these positions may contact the State Secretary-Treasurer at 208-452-3539 or Lori.Bennett@nrlca.org for the specific duties associated with the position.

Idaho Auxiliary Scholarship
Application for 2017
Application Deadline is June 1, 2017

Name of Applicant _____

Birthdate _____

Address, Phone, & E-mail _____

Parent/Grandparents Names _____

Address _____

Check one: Regular Carrier _____ Retired _____ RCA/RCR/PTF _____

The number and dollar amount will be decided by the State Auxiliary Scholarship Board. The board will consist of the Auxiliary President, Vice President, and the Secretary-Treasurer. The treasurer shall be the chairperson of the board. The decision of the board is final.

The scholarships shall be awarded based on the following criteria:

The applicant must be a graduated high school senior that has not reached the age of 21 by the date of the state convention.

The applicant must be accepted by a college or trade school and verified with a copy of the acceptance letter or other form of verification.

The applicant must verify their age.

Applicant must be a child of a rural letter carrier, regular, retired, or RCA/RCR/PTF, who is a member in good standing of the IDRLCA. Only one application will be accepted from the applicant or parents/grandparents in a calendar year.

Submit your applications to:

**Robin Carver
State Auxiliary President
3729 E. Benton
Nampa, Idaho 83687**

For more information, Robin can be reached at: (208) 880- 9063

A Slice of LIfe

*Tender, gentle, brave and true,
Loving us whate'er we do!
Waiting, watching at the gate
For the footsteps that are late,
Sleepless through the hours of night
Till she knows that we're all right;
Pleased with every word we say –
That is every mother's way.*

*Others sneer and turn aside.
Mother welcomes us with pride;
Over-boastful of us, too,
Glorying in all we do,
First to praise and last to blame,
Love that always stays the same,
Following us where'er we stray –
That is every mother's way.*

*She would grant us all we seek,
Give her strength when we are weak.
Beauty? She would let it go
For the joy we yearn to know.
Life? She'd give it gladly, too,
For the dream that we pursue;
She would toil that we might play –
That is every mother's way.*

*Not enough for her are flowers –
Her live is so blent with ours
That in all we dare and do
She is partner, through and through,
Suffering when we suffer pain,
Happy when we smile again,
Living with us, night and day –
That is every mother's way.*

Edgar A. Guest

Go to the IDRLCA
Website, idrlca.org, for the
latest and most
comprehensive postal
news.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Please send address changes to:
IDRLCA Secretary Lori Bennett
306 N Dakota Avenue
Fruitland ID 83619

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Coming Events

IDRLCA
2017 State Convention
June 8 - 10, 2017
La Quinta Inn & Suites
7965 Emerald St
Boise ID
(208) 378-7000

IDRLCA
State Board Meeting
8:30 a.m.
June 8, 2017
La Quinta Inn & Suites
7965 Emerald St
Boise ID

IDRLCA Members Invited

NRLCA
2017 National Convention
August 15 - 18, 2017
Gaylord National Resort and
Convention Center
National Harbor, MD