★ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LETTER CARRIERS

BRANCH 4837

OCTOBER 2026

Aloha, carriers! Big month: ballots, Arrow Keys, Open Season prep, and news from our own branch. Here's what you need to know, fast.

⏱️ This Month in 60 Seconds

- **Vote:** NALC national officer ballots must be *received* by **noon ET (6:00 a.m. HST) Mon. Oct. 19**. If yours is still at home, mail it now.
- **Contract:** no tentative agreement. Mediation ended and we head to interest arbitration. The 2023–2026 contract stays in full force.
- **Arrow Keys:** revised M-41 rules. Keep the key fastened to you all tour, and turn it in at the end of the day.
- **Open Season is Nov. 9–Dec. 14.** The average PSHB enrollee share is up 8.2%, so check your plan.
- **Good news for NALC Health Benefit Plan High Option members:** your 2027 share drops $5.08 per pay period for Self Only and $3.31 for Self Plus One, the only nationwide postal plan with a decrease. Self & Family rises $2.95, and CDHP rises about 20%.

📅 Key Dates

Mon Oct 12	Columbus Day. Federal holiday.
Mon Oct 19 6:00 a.m. HST	NALC ballots must be **received** (noon ET).
Thu Oct 29 6:00 p.m.	**Branch meeting** at Mililani Golf Course. 6–7 p.m. order food & socialize; 7–8 p.m. branch meeting.
Nov 9–Dec 14	Federal Benefits Open Season.
Dec 16 / 17 / 18 / 19	Hawaii holiday send-by dates: Ground Advantage / First-Class / Priority / Priority Express.
Nov / Dec	November meeting: date TBD due to Thanksgiving. No December meeting (peak season). Future dates subject to change, with ample notice.
Sun Jan 17, 2027	Branch holiday party, Sports Box Pearlridge (per Sept. 24 minutes).

📰 National News

CONTRACT

Mediation ends with no deal. Next stop: interest arbitration

The 2023–2026 National Agreement expired May 22, 2026, and remains in full force until a new one takes effect. The parties did not reach a tentative agreement, and the 60-day mediation period has ended. Next, the parties select a neutral arbitrator to chair the interest arbitration panel, then schedule the process.

> **What it means for you:** Nothing changes on the workroom floor. Every article of the current contract still applies, so grieve violations the same as always.

Source: nalc.org/news/the-postal-record/2026/body/September-October-2026-Postal-Record.pdf

ELECTION

Your ballot has to *arrive* by noon ET, Oct. 19

Ballots in the national officer election must be **received** by noon Eastern on Oct. 19, which is 6:00 a.m. in Hawai'i. The Region 1 National Business Agent race is Christopher Reed (Kailua Kona, HI Br. 5516) vs. Allan Rios (Garden Grove, CA Br. 1100).

> **What it means for you:** If your ballot is still at home, mail it right away. The Oct. 9 deadline to request a replacement ballot has passed.

Source: nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/what-to-do-if-you-do-not-receive-an-nalc-ballot-2026

YOUR WORKDAY

Revised Arrow Key rules are final

USPS gave NALC final revisions to Handbook M-41 Sections 261.2 and 431 on Sept. 24. Carriers complete PS Form 1106 *or* use the MDD (or equivalent) to sign Arrow Keys in and out. Keys are accountable, must be securely fastened to a belt or clothing, and must be turned in at the end of the tour. With these revisions, the dispute over MDD key scans is moot (M-02022).

> **What it means for you:** Follow the method your station uses, keep the key clipped on, and always turn it in. Had a grievance on hold over this? Check with your steward.

Source: nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/handbook-m-41-revisions-and-interpretive-issue-settlement

Revised pages: nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/body/Arrow_Key_M_41-changes-CLEAN-COPY_LR3-09.17.2026.pdf

WATCH LIST

Pensions are on the table in D.C.

An OIG white paper projected four alternative retirement models. Diversifying pension investments (60% equities, 40% fixed income) could improve funding without cutting benefits but adds market risk; the other models would reduce benefits or raise employee contributions. Congress would have to act.

> **What it means for you:** Calls to Congress matter. See Capitol Watch.

Source: uspsoig.gov/reports/white-papers/comparative-analysis-alternative-retirement-models

HAWAIʻI PACKAGES

Since Oct. 1, USPS Ground Advantage to and from Hawai'i has a 10-days-plus expectation (was 2–5 days), and Priority Mail went from 2–3 days to 2–4. Customers will ask where their package is during peak season; this is why.

Source: supplychaindive.com/news/usps-lengthens-some-delivery-expectations-outside-contiguous-us/831958/

🛡️ Know Your Contract: Steward Tip

Hurt on the job? Speed matters more than ever.

In April, OWCP (FECA Transmittal 26-2) removed language deferring to the injured worker's statement, and delays in filing or getting treatment can again be used to cast doubt on a claim.

- **File the CA-1 right away**, the same day if you can.
- **Document everything:** what happened, when, where, and who you told.
- **Get witness statements** while memories are fresh.
- Call your steward before you sign anything you don't understand.

🦺 Safety Corner

Beat the heat: use the HIPP

- **Hydrate often:** start before your shift and drink water through the day, not just when thirsty.
- **Heat breaks are extra:** per the 2026 USPS HIPP (p. 6), take "all guaranteed contractual breaks, including lunches, and additional heat-related breaks as necessary," notifying your supervisor before, during, or right after the break.
- **Know the signs:** thirst, fatigue, dizziness or lightheadedness, headache, muscle cramps. Confusion or fainting means call 911.
- **Report symptoms** to your supervisor right away. If you may need medical attention, don't hesitate to call 911 first.
- M-02017: the HIPP is not a contractual requirement, but management's safety responsibilities under **Article 14** still apply.

Sources: Postal Bulletin 22706 · 2026 USPS HIPP · M-02017

Storms & floods: hurricane season runs through Nov. 30

- Hurricane Lowell damaged the Kekaha Post Office on Kauaʻi, and on Oct. 8 a flash flood warning covered all of Oʻahu, with water over parts of Kamehameha Hwy on the North Shore.
- **Turn Around, Don't Drown:** never drive or walk into flood water. Just 12 inches of rushing water can carry away most cars (NWS).
- Hit an unsafe road or flooding on your route? Don't enter it. Tell your supervisor and your steward; management's Article 14 safety duties apply.

Source: weather.gov/safety/flood-turn-around-dont-drown

💵 Benefits & Money

Open Season: Nov. 9–Dec. 14

- The average PSHB enrollee share is up **8.2%** for 2027.
- **NALC HBP High Option:** your biweekly share drops $5.08 (Self Only) and $3.31 (Self Plus One); Self & Family rises $2.95. CDHP rises about 20%. See OPM PSHB premiums.
- **UnitedHealthcare Choice Plus Primary Postal East is ending.** If you're in it and don't pick a new plan, you'll be moved to FEP Blue Focus.
- Adding a family member? You must submit **eligibility documentation**.

Source: opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/open-season/agency-benefits-officers/housing-for-os-materials/2026-federal-benefits-open-season-highlights-for-plan-year-2027.pdf

Retirees: projected 2027 COLAs

3.5%	2.5%	3.6%
CSRS	FERS	FECA

Projected, based on August CPI-W. CSRS/FERS finalize with September CPI-W in October; FECA finalizes in January and applies only to injuries more than a year old.

Source: nalc.org/news/cola

New leave MOUs (Sept. 8)

- **M-02019:** career carriers at the 440-hour carryover max who used fewer than 75 hours of sick leave in the prior leave year can sell back up to 80 hours of annual leave.
- **M-02020:** carryover limit rises to 520 hours into Leave Year 2027 only.
- **M-02021:** Article 12.3.A bidding continues during negotiations and interest arbitration.

Source: nalc.org/news/nalc-updates/new-memorandums-of-understanding-and-national-level-settlements

🏛️ Capitol Watch

Bill tracker. Cosponsor counts as of Oct. 11, 2026.

Bill	What it does	Cosponsors	Status
H.R. 1065	Protect Our Letter Carriers Act	231 (House majority)	In committee
S. 463	Protect Our Letter Carriers Act	14	In committee
S. 3296	Lets PAs & NPs treat injured federal workers	10	On Senate calendar
H.R. 3170	House version of S. 3296	17	On House calendar
H.Res. 70	Opposes privatizing USPS	237	Resolution
H.R. 1522	Federal Retirement Fairness Act (CCA time buyback)	157	In committee

Take action: nalc.org/action →

🌺 Talk Story: Local Spotlight

AS SEEN IN THE POSTAL RECORD

Our own Sarah Balmilero turns up the heat on art



Photo: The Postal Record, Sept./Oct. 2026

Branch 4837 letter carrier Sarah Balmilero is featured in the Sept./Oct. 2026 *Postal Record* for her woodburning art, a craft she first explored in a Mililani high school art class in 2012. A carrier since 2021, she runs a business called Eros Embers and has decorated about seven wooden mail trays for her co-workers.

"I think that it has been fun that I've gotten to connect with people like that."

Read the full story (pp. 36–37) →

🎓 **Congratulations, Rian Joss Beltran!** The child of Randy Beltran of Wahiawa, HI Branch 4837 is the Western Region winner of a $4,000 William C. Doherty Scholarship, and plans to enter Rice University in Texas this fall.

The Postal Record, Aug. 2026, p. 5: nalc.org/news/the-postal-record/2026/august-2026/document/Scholarships.pdf

Station News: No Lunch Past Practice grievance

The union filed a No Lunch Past Practice grievance. Management denied restoring lunch to the previous practice at Informal Step A. The union has requested a Formal Step A meeting. If no meeting is held, or the grievance is denied again at Formal A, the union will appeal to Step B. Other issues, including CCAs and PTFs working past ELM work-hour limits, are following the same or a similar path through the grievance process.

Have a concern? Report it to a steward or officer: nalc4837@gmail.com.

From the Last Meeting (Sept. 24)

Minutes pending approval at the next meeting.

- **Holiday party:** Sports Box Pearlridge confirmed for Sunday, Jan. 17, 2027 (MLK weekend). BYOB; food catering suggestions welcome.
- **Scanner swiping:** just a heads-up, management's flavor of the month is scanner swiping. Make sure you're swiping properly, both to street and on all delivery items.
- **Use your MDD:** carriers are not required to use a personal phone to check scanned parcels.
- **Pivots:** Bump, cut, kickoff — different names, same thing: being forced to take extra work when you already have 8+ hours on your own route. If you're made to do it before your own route and end up in OT or bringing part of your route back, tell a steward ASAP. Grievances have timelines.
- **Reports:** the previous minutes and the Treasurer's Report were approved as read.

Minutes: nalc4837.com/meeting-minutes

Treasurer's Snapshot (Sept. 24, 2026 report)

- Balance as of Aug. 27, 2026: **$22,577.41**
- Total receipts $3,651.77 · Total disbursements $1,591.07
- Balance as of Sept. 24, 2026: **$24,638.11**

Reports: nalc4837.com/2023-budget

🤙 Break-Time Fun

❓ Carrier Trivia

In what year and city was the NALC founded?

Answer at the bottom of this issue.

Get involved. This union is *us*.

Come to the next branch meeting: **Thu Oct 29, Mililani Golf Course: 6:00–7:00 p.m. food & socializing, 7:00–8:00 p.m. branch meeting**. November meeting: date TBD due to Thanksgiving. No December meeting (peak season).

Branch Officers: Fagaga Esau, President · Conrad Kong, Vice President · Tina Taijeron, Recording Secretary · Shannon Esau, Financial Secretary / Treasurer · Konrad Kendrick, Sgt-at-Arms · Trustees: Marissa Valiente, Sarah Balmilero, Devynn Kaneshiro

NALC Branch 4837 · PO Box 893922, Mililani, HI 96789 · nalc4837@gmail.com

Mililani Steward: Kylen Cadiam · **Wahiawa Steward:** Shannon Esau · **Alternate Steward:** Marissa Valiente

To reach a steward, email nalc4837@gmail.com

Branch 4837: nalc4837.com

Trivia answer: 1889, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Aug. 29–30).