

The GARDEN STATE LETTER CARRIER



"131 Years Serving Letter Carriers"

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President's Report

Richard P. O'Connell, Jr., President



In my last article, I explained how the President nominates the Board of Governors (BOG), pending the consent of the Senate. I stressed the importance of voting in the Senate elections and how it will affect letter carriers. At that time, President Biden was in office and the Democrats held a majority in the Senate. Both the Senate majority and the President are now Republicans.

This will make it very difficult to pass legislation favorable to letter carriers, and has increased the threats to our jobs and benefits.

We have faced many attacks over the last six months. There has been Executive Orders (EO) by the President, which included ending the collective bargaining rights of many unions and ending vote-by-mail. We have yet to be affected by either of the EO's because we have a new collective bargaining agreement until next year, and the threat of ending vote-by-mail has not resurfaced. Many other federal unions are continuing to regain their collective bargaining rights.

In April, a Budget Reconciliation package directly aimed at Federal Employee Retirement System benefits was introduced in the House and Senate. Fortunately, all the provisions adversely affecting our retirement benefits have been successfully removed from that bill before being signed by President Trump. We prevailed due to NALC legislative efforts, most importantly our members contacting their Congressional Representatives urging them to vote against the negative provisions. After the original provisions of the bill were released, NALC President Renfroe participated in a Capitol Hill Roundtable, encouraging members of Congress to remove provisions adversely affecting letter carriers. These efforts were successful.

During this time, Postmaster General DeJoy stepped down, and David Steiner was named as his successor. It is extremely important to understand what this means to letter carriers. During PMG DeJoy's tenure, we were able to have numerous pieces of legislation passed into law in favor of active and retired letter carriers. President Biden signed The Postal Reform Act in April of 2022 and The Social Security Fairness Act in January 2025. The Postal Reform Act repealed prefunding mandates that crippled the United States Postal Service financially for over fifteen years. The Social Security Fairness Act removed forty years of unfair reductions to Civil Service Retirements System Employees Social Security Benefits. Neither of these acts would have passed or become law without the support of PMG DeJoy and the support of our Congressional representatives.

PMG Steiner graduated from UCLA School of Law, and was named partner of Phelps and Dunbar. He specialized in corporate, securities, and mergers and acquisitions law. In November of 2000, he became deputy general counsel for Waste Management, where he became president in June 2010. Mr. Steiner has served as the lead independent director on the board of governors of FedEx since 2009. He also serves on the board of TE Connectivity, Vulcan Materials Company, and AMP Robotics as recently as January 2025.

PMG Steiner has never worked with a totally union-based company in his career. While some parts of Waste Management and FedEx do have unionized employees, overall, the companies are privately owned. PMG Steiner recently released a letter and video message in which he expressed his appreciation of USPS employees and described his priorities. These priorities include furthering service improvement and remaining a self-sustaining independent entity of the executive branch of the government. I hope his priorities are in line with protecting and furthering legislation for letter carriers. If you have not watched the video or read his letter, I implore you to do so.

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THE GARDEN STATE LETTER CARRIER
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Jeffry M. Fox, Editor
Richard P. O'Connell, Jr., President

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VIEWPOINT

Jeff Fox, Editor

Unfortunately, the political process affects every letter carrier in the country, it always has. Since my earliest days as a letter carrier, I remember attending rallies for politicians, rubber chicken fundraising dinners, visiting with our Congressional representatives in Washington, DC and at home in New Jersey, knocking on doors on election day to get out the vote ... and of course, contributing to the NALC PAC (LCPF/COLCPE). It was always just part of what we did.

There was always an issue to fight, a benefit to protect, I remember when we came up one vote short on the Medicare tax bill in 1983. The Reagan years were difficult for sure; he came into office and fired the air traffic controllers in 1981. In 1984 the Reagan administration changed our retirement benefits from CSRS to FERS. Incidentally, that's when TSP and the supplement were initiated (the supplement is what Congress recently tried to take away).

Following those battles, the 90's were relatively good under Clinton but we were still constantly fighting to preserve 6-day delivery. The Bush years found us again fighting against privatization of the USPS. During the Obama administration, we were constantly cited in the budget to go to 5-day delivery, which somehow would save money even though we were an off-budget agency. Finally under Biden, the Postal Reform act mandated 6-day delivery.

Well, now the Trump administration is bringing back all the hits. Attacking our pensions, privatization of the USPS and threatening the very existence of federal unions. I say none of this to scare anyone; I say all of this to say "We're still here!" I couldn't be prouder of our recent efforts to fight back the attacks on our pension benefits and successfully defeating the unfair Social Security offset that CSRS letter carriers had to put up with for 40 years.

Those victories did not just happen these past two years; this is something we've been doing for a very long time. The NALC is a political machine, not because we want to be one but because we have to be one. I urge every letter carrier to get involved; the attacks have not stopped, in fact, they may never stop. But that's okay, if we all stick together and fight as one the NALC will prevail and when the NALC prevails, we all win. ☐

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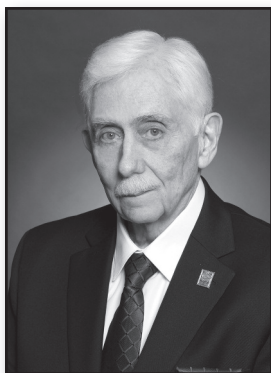
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Legislative Goals

Bruce Didriksen, NBA Region 15



It is unfortunate that America's Letter Carriers had to tolerate some of the recent threats to their job security and other attacks on their pension viability in order to appreciate the value of the Union's legislative program, but there should no longer be any doubt that the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF) pays dividends in the form of repelling these threats.

For the benefit of those who may not follow the day-to-day activity in the United States Senate and the House of Representatives, you should be alerted to some of the proposals that were in the original Congressional Budget bill for the upcoming fiscal year.

First, the House of Representatives budget included the following an increase in the amount that active USPS employees pay into their retirement program from their paychecks. The effect of this proposal would have been to offset wage increases that are guaranteed in the collective bargaining agreement. Next, the budget proposal would have revised the way that annuity entitlements are calculated, from the current average of the "high three" years of earnings to a proposed "high five" years of earnings. A successful amending of the annuity calculation would have resulted in future retirees receiving less per month in their annuities than would have been paid under the traditional calculations.

Finally, and perhaps the most damaging of all, the House proposal would have eliminated the Social Security supplement paid to employees who retire from the USPS before they reach the age at which they first qualify for Social Security Old Age benefits. Under FERS, an employee is eligible to retire once he/she reaches the minimum retirement age if he/she meets the service requirements. The minimum retirement age is currently 57 for most employees who haven't already retired. Since Social Security "Old Age" benefits aren't payable until age 62, the Social Security supplement covers the amount that Social Security would otherwise pay until the annuitant reaches eligibility age. Elimination of the Supplement would effectively prevent employees from retiring before age 62, even if they were eligible to do so, simply because they couldn't afford to retire without the supplement. As the budget bill advanced to the Senate, there was briefly a proposal to increase the FERS contribution for employees hired after January 1, 2026, to 15.6%, a dramatic change that would have diminished the number of prospective employees

who would consider making the Postal Service a career. All of these proposals ultimately failed.

The NALC formulated a political fund many years ago to financially support the federal legislators who back legislation favorable to the Postal Service and postal employees. Originally called COLCPE (Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education), the fund has since been renamed the Letter Carrier Political Fund. Letter Carriers' voluntary donations are used to support the fund-raising activities of our friends in the Congress and gives the Union's effective lobbying team more leverage in fighting our legislative battles.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the Letter Carriers from the three states that Region 15 represents (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut). Each of these states has two NBA Regions within their borders, and very capable State Associations working in coordination with NALC Headquarters to promote our legislative goals. The Congressional delegations in those three states are comprised of six United States Senators and 43 members of the House of Representatives. In the vast majority of cases, the NALC can depend on 100% of the Senators and more than 90% of the members of the House from the those states for support of legislation that the Union advocates and endorses.

The lesson that we all should have learned is that legislative action can destroy all of the Union's gains if we aren't vigilant in our commitment and involvement. Our strength could be enhanced if all of our members participated in contributing to the LCPF. The stakes are high. Survival of the United States Postal Service could well be a fight that will be fought in the very near future, and every member, whether active or retired, could potentially have his/her job, security and retirement at risk. I encourage every member to become more involved in legislative education, participation and advocacy while there is still time and opportunity to do so. ☐



Are You Concerned Yet?

Chuck Goushian, Executive Board



Hey letter carriers! Are you concerned yet? I'm not talking about being concerned about the things that have been dividing us over the last couple years. I'm talking about the real concerning issues. Things like attacks on our retirement, attacks on our salaries, and possible attacks on our collective bargaining rights.

We just recently dodged a bullet when President Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" was stripped of any provision that would negatively impact letter carriers, our bargaining rights, and the postal network. Our retirement has always been described as a three-legged stool: our pension, Thrift Savings, and Social Security. And because we can retire after thirty years at a minimum age of fifty-seven, we are paid a Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) special annuity supplement to compensate for the Social Security benefits if we retire before the age of sixty-two (the minimum age to qualify for Social Security benefits). The current administration tried to take that away. If they were successful, many of us would have to work much longer than thirty years in order to survive in retirement. Another attack on our retirement was an attempt to reduce annuity (pension) payments by calculating a retiree's annuity based on their high-five year's salary average instead of the high three.

The administration also tried to increase our contribution into the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) rate for all existing employees up to 4.4 percent. Currently, if you were hired prior to 2013, your contribution to your retirement is 0.8 percent. It's a 3.1 percent contribution for those of us hired in 2013 or later. This increase to 4.4 percent would have been to all employees, regardless of when you were hired. There would have been no "grandfathering in" of any previous amounts. We would have been paying more, out of our paychecks, into our retirement. That's a pay cut.

How did we fight all this? How were we able to fend off these attacks? It was because of financial contributions from thousands of letter carriers, through the Letter Carrier Political Fund (LCPF). The LCPF gives us the opportunity to educate our members of congress. It also helps us educate the general public. The NALC has held "Fight Like Hell" rallies all over the country.

We held several of them in our own state of New Jersey. We need to continue these efforts in order to preserve our pay and benefits. These attacks are real, and are a real concern, and we need to stay united. The cards have always been stacked against us, but we've always come through in the clutch. And that's because of our strong union and our vibrant PAC fund. The LCPF gives us our voice on Capitol Hill.

President Trump has already eliminated collective bargaining for the majority of unionized federal workers. Approximately four fifths of federal workers who were represented by unions have had their collective bargaining rights taken away. We could be next. We all know what it was like prior to our gaining the right to bargain collectively. They called it "collective begging". We needed an act of congress to get a pay raise. And good luck trying to get this president to sign a bill giving us a pay raise.

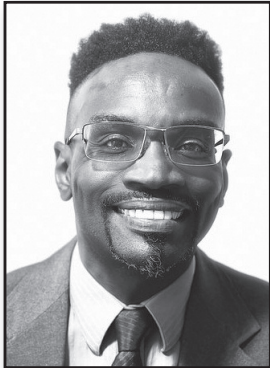
At a time when our new PMG is from the board of our competitor (FedEx), and anti-union factions are running rampant in the White House, we need to be concerned. We need to be focused and speaking with one (very loud) voice. The LCPF is that voice. We cannot be divided. So perhaps, if you don't already contribute to the LCPF, maybe you would consider doing so. Maybe if you were so concerned that you were considering contributing money to another "concerned" organization, you may think about making that contribution to the LCPF instead. ☐

O'Connell continued from page 1: I would be remiss if I did not express my condolences to Branch 903 and the family of Branch President, Michael Calise, who unexpectedly passed on May 15, 2025. Michael retired after carrying mail for thirty-six years. In his retirement, he remained Branch 903 President and served as a co-chair of the Committee of Presidents. Michael's pure pride and joy was his family, but he was committed to serving letter carriers and strengthening our union. Michael will be sorely missed.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended our recent Congressional Conference in Washington, DC. Visiting our Congressional representatives continues to be an important part of our mission as a State Association. Please contact your representatives in Congress when asked to do so by NALC. I am certain the next three and a half years will prove to be successful for our membership if we unite and fight together. ☐

The Importance of EAP and Management's Negligence

Ozzie Lecky, Jr., Executive Board



The month of April was Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Awareness month. The following true story reveals management's negligence in not utilizing this resource.

In February 2024, I was asked to be the new Chairman (representing the employees) on the Safety Team at the Camden

Annex. To be clear, this was not the Safety Ambassador Program, but a joint platform between labor and management in the building.

On July 10, 2024, I received a phone call from a letter carrier that hit close to home for me. The letter carrier asked me, "Did Carrier 93003 reach out and call you"? I replied, "No". Immediately, I was informed that Carrier 93003 was involved in an attempted robbery in Westville, New Jersey (Gloucester County). The area where the crime took place was not a city location, but the complete opposite (normally quiet with Victorian homes on the waterfront). However, the unthinkable happened on this day. Two masked individuals approached the letter carrier (who by the way has been carrying mail for less than 2 years at this point) and demanded their arrow keys. During the encounter, the assailants didn't show weapons at all. Ironically, the letter carrier just had their vehicle keys on them and their satchel. Within seconds after the demands, the letter carrier was sucker punched and fell to the ground. The criminals grabbed just the mailbag (which was completely empty), ran down the street and drove away. The Westville Police Department had no leads on the case except it was a vehicle with Pennsylvania license plates. Sadly, a city carrier was robbed in Vineland, New Jersey the very next day. As far as these perpetrators go, you are gutless, pathetic cowards!! Instead of earning a living the right way...YOU GAVE UP AS MEN IN LIFE! My last dying wish is that these two pieces of garbage be apprehended and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

On the morning of July 11th in The Camden Annex (the day after the crime), I gathered up all our employees from our five Branch 908 offices (Bellmawr, Gloucester City, Haddon Heights, Mount Ephraim and Westville) to do a Safety Talk. As Mike Powell (Camden Annex, Branch 908 Shop Steward) and I started to share the traumatic event to our brothers and sisters, someone is

feeling the pain. The "raw" information we immediately disclosed had a huge impact on somebody's mental health. Think about this, one individual or all of the workers in the zone alone (just by hearing the Safety Talk from the union) instantly felt anxiety and or stress. Brother Powell said, "Please pay close attention to what is going on in the streets and on your routes daily". Also, I said, "No matter if it is one person or a group, please give up what they want. Your life is more precious than any package, check or bill". After the union addressed the employees, I asked the newly installed Camden Annex Postmaster to say a few words. The Postmaster (PM) said and I quote, "No Mr. Lecky and Mr. Powell...I have nothing". During the morning meeting, I noticed that a familiar group was missing in attendance (I will get back to that in a few). The following day on July 12th, I saw the PM in the morning walk through our zone. I approached him and said the following, "The situation that happened on Wednesday is still raw to most, if not all of us. I think you need to contact E.A.P." The PM said he would contact them. Eleven days later (July 23rd), there wasn't a trace of a visit from a professional counselor or therapist.

On July 23rd, we held our Joint Safety Meeting in Camden. Among the guests were, the PM, different representatives of crafts in the building and a special appearance by the POOM (Post Office Operations Manager). We discussed updated accidents and old and new business. Afterwards, like a teakettle on the stove that reaches its boiling point, I dove right in and addressed this topic as the last item on the meeting's agenda. I turned right to The PM and said, "You dropped the ball on this"! "During the morning of July 11th, why wasn't E.A.P.(Employee Assistance Program) present to address the employees"? The PM said to me, "Ozzie, I had a plan to do something". Something, really? Try absolutely nothing!! Here is a fact: whether you like it or not, this crime happened under your watch. I stated to The PM, "If I was the lead management head in a 100-route building and this tragedy happened, I would have been on the phone minutes after the employee was assaulted". The phone conversation to The POOM and/or EAP would be this, "Help! We need immediate counseling and therapy. We need something for our workers because we are in crisis"! That is exactly why we have EAP; to begin with, the program is for us! The program is for the letter carriers and all other crafts. I switched topics and asked The PM, "Did you even reach out to check on the employee to see how that person was doing"? The PM responded and said, "I called the Postal Inspectors".

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2025 Scholarship Recipients

Chairperson - Christine Strasser, Director of Education



President Richard O'Connell, Jr. and the entire Executive Board of The New Jersey State Association of Letter Carriers proudly congratulates the recipients of the 2025 Richard P. O'Connell, Sr. and the Tony Massa Scholarships. I am proud to announce the two recipients of this year's scholarships.

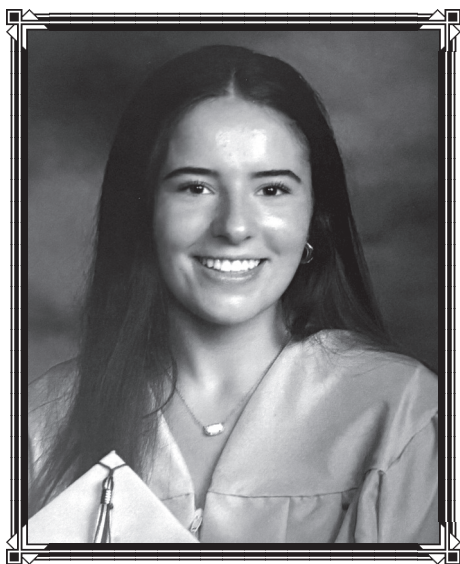
Ashutosh Mittal is the recipient of the Richard P. O'Connell, Sr. Scholarship. Ashutosh is the son of Branch 268 Princeton letter carrier Sitij K. Mittal. Ashutosh had a grade point average of 4.0. Ashutosh will be attending Perdue University, where he will be majoring in Artificial Intelligence. Ashutosh excelled academically throughout middle and high school, completing numerous AP and advanced courses in Computer Science and Mathematics. He was actively involved in extracurricular activities including technology clubs and the Youth Code Foundation. Ashutosh developed several tech projects including mobile apps and a predictive writing assistant. He performed in theater for eight years. Ashutosh is a passionate photographer and video editor. He also enjoys songwriting and has volunteered at cultural festivals to stay connected with his heritage.

Lisa Clearwater is the recipient of the Tony Massa Scholarship. Lisa is the daughter of New Jersey Merged Branch 38 letter carrier George Clearwater. Lisa had a grade point average of 3.96. Lisa graduated thirty-eighth out of three hundred and eight from Brick Township Memorial

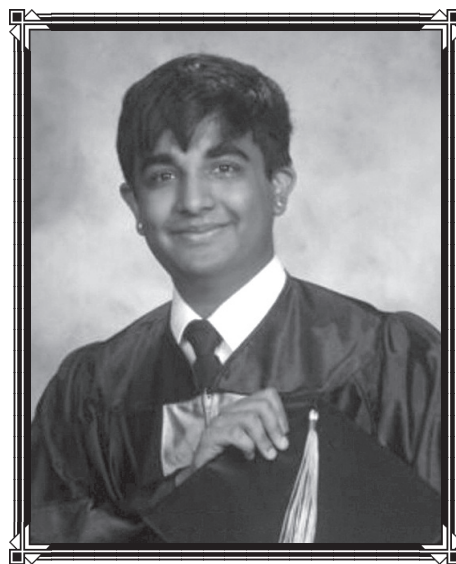
High School. Lisa will be attending The College of New Jersey, majoring in pre dental with a minor in nutrition. Besides her academic qualifications, Lisa was on the distinguished Honor Roll all four years of high school. She was president of the Italian Honor Society, the captain of the girls' varsity tennis team, and was co-founder of the Health and Wellness Club.

We all wish Ashutosh and Lisa the best of luck in their college endeavors. Both recipients were selected from a very qualified list of applicants entering their freshmen year of college in the fall. The applicants submitted SAT scores, class rank, honors, clubs, achievements, and an essay to compete for the scholarships. The professor who reviewed and made the final determination of the scholarship winners noted that, "As always, these student applications have been outstanding. It is encouraging to read about the outstanding work accomplished by these students inside as well as outside the classroom."

At the beginning of each year, both scholarships are announced in the Garden State Letter Carrier and posted at NJSALC.com. All requests for applications must be sent to the scholarship committee chair. The Chairperson will send scholarship packets to all applicants to complete. Completed packets must be returned to the Chairperson by a determined date. The scholarships are available to the dependent children of members of NALC Branches within the state of New Jersey. The applicant's parent/guardian must be a member in good standing of the NALC for at least one (1) year prior to making application. Applicants must be a high school senior when completing the application. Both scholarship awards are issued in the year of high school graduation only. ☐



Lisa Clearwater



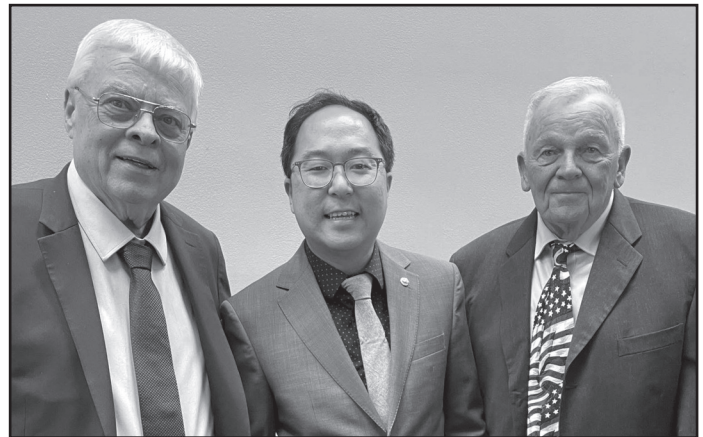
Ashutosh Mittal

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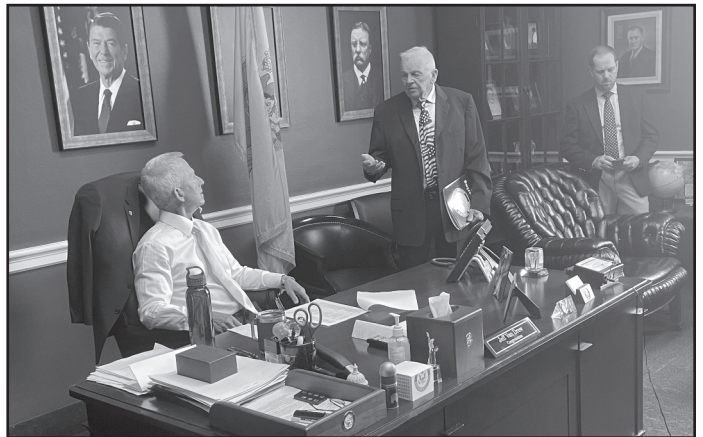
Senator Andy Kim



President O'Connell, Senator Kim and Nelson Gaskill



Congresswoman Nellie Pou and delegates



Congressman Van Drew with Nelson Gaskill

EAP:Ozzie Lecky, Jr.

Continued from Page 5

I said, "Excuse me, that's not what I asked. Did you call the employee to check and see if that person was okay?" The PM said, "No, I didn't". What deeply troubles me is this, at the end of each day when we are done working, we are human beings, and the worker victimized in this horrific situation will never be the same again. As a high level leader in a government agency, there should have been an ounce of care and concern, but nothing was shown. MANAGEMENT DROPPED THE BALL ON THIS!! I turned to The POOM and said, "What could have been done to bring E.A.P. out to The Camden Annex? The city carrier gets shot or stabbed and goes to the hospital? Wait I know, the worker gets killed on the job". The whole thing has left a bad taste in my mouth and truly stinks to high heaven. Oh, it gets even better!

On August 13th, The PM invited a Postal Inspector out to the Annex to discuss the protocol when a letter carrier gets involved in a robbery situation. ARE YOU KIDDING ME? Where in the hell was this discussion on July 11th (the day after the employee was assaulted)? I know the answer, missing in action just like the visit from E.A.P.!! PM, I want to take this time to use a word that you have mentioned before in our Safety Meetings...BULL CRAP. It is BULL CRAP that you never contacted your worker minutes after the crime happened on the job. It is BULL CRAP that you failed to bring in E.A.P. for your employees. It is BULL CRAP that you had a Postal Inspector out (3 weeks later as a consolation prize for the employees). THAT IS HOW MANAGEMENT DROPPED THE BALL ON THIS! ☹️

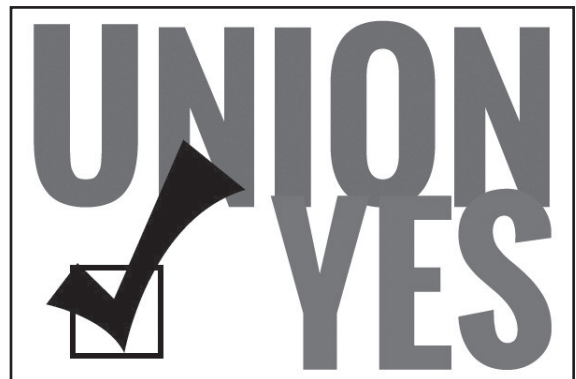


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