

Membership Recruitment Bonus Program

By Larry Zirkle – VARLCA Vice President

As part of our membership initiative this year, the state board voted at the Fall board meeting to implement a Recruitment Bonus Program for the 2006 – 2007 fiscal year.

The program will begin January 1, 2007 and end June 30, 2007. This program will then be evaluated to determine its effectiveness on our membership numbers.

This program will be open for all VARLCA members to participate except elected state officers.

Here's how it works:

- Recruit a nonmember regular carrier and get \$25.
 - Recruit a nonmember PTF or RCA and get \$15.
 - New member must complete Form 1187 – Authorization for Deduction of Dues.
 - Newly recruited RCA members must be on the union membership rolls for six months after the initial recruitment before the bonus will be paid.
 - Form 1187 must be submitted directly to VARLCA Secretary/Treasurer Marion Neighbours.
 - Form 1187 must have an attached note with the name, address and employment office of the recruiter. *Do not write the recruiter's name on the dues withholding form.*
 - There is no limitation on the number of new members an individual may recruit.
 - This could be better than a Christmas club account!
 - Growing our membership numbers helps to maintain lower dues for all members.
-

Persuasive Points to Present

Collective Bargaining:

- Without it, we would all be making casual wages (\$10 - \$14 hr.)
- Without it, no benefits package; reduced leave earning, health insurance premiums could be \$1000 more per year than the current proposal.
- Without it, no Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs). Currently we get two per year – just the last one was \$812 rolled into your annual salary. Last year's COLAs added to the general wage increase equates to over 3% increases for the year.

Information Available:

- Award winning state newspaper
- National Magazine published monthly – special editions as needed
- Union meetings
- Mail count meetings/seminars
- Retirement information
- OWCP information
- National and state websites
- Knowledgeable state officers and stewards

NON-MEMBERS CONTRACT?

For those of you who are not members of our UNION, I want you to read what the USPS offered as their last and best economic proposal in 2002 before our UNION told them NO and we went to arbitration..

Here is the outline of the USPS proposal:

****The term of the agreement shall be 4 years (Nov.21, 2000 - Nov. 20, 2004)**

****SALARIES AND WAGES**

****In November 2000, each non-probationary career employee covered by this agreement will receive a one-time lump-sum cash payment of \$500.**

****In November 2001, ditto.**

****In November 2002, ditto again.**

****In November 2003, ditto again.**

****There shall be NO cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) provided during the term of the new Agreement.**

****ANNUAL LEAVE FOR NEW HIRE EMPLOYEES**

****Annual leave for new hire employees shall be earned at the following rates:**

Less than 5 years	-3 hrs. per pay period	-10 days
5 yrs. but less than 10	-4 hrs. per pay period	-13 days
10 yrs. but less than 20	-5 hrs. per pay period	-16 days
20 yrs. and above	-6 hrs. per pay period	-20 days

****SICK LEAVE FOR NEW HIRE EMPLOYEES**

****Sick leave for new hire employees shall be earned at the rate of 2 hours per pay period. (6 1/2 days a year)**

****EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE**

****There shall be no change to the EMA.**

There you have it! The best offer from the USPS. For those of you who don't know, here is what we would be giving up, IF IT WERE NOT FOR OUR UNION!

COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS: We got these twice a year, a base salary increase based on the Consumer Price Index. A salary increase is a permanent thing; it continues being a part of your salary year after year. A one-time lump-sum payment of \$500 amounts to about \$350 after taxes. Over the term of a 4 year contract that would put about \$1400 in your pocket, BUT it would NOT increase your salary on a permanent basis. These lump-sum payments were for CAREER employees only, once again leaving the RCA's out. BUT OUR UNION SAID NO.

Now let's look at ANNUAL LEAVE. For those who don't know, our annual leave schedule worked like this:

Less than 3 years	-4 hrs. per pay period	-13 days
3 yrs. but less than 15	-6 hrs. per pay period	-20 days
15 yrs. and over	-8 hrs. per pay period	-26 days

Compare this to what the USPS proposed. Again, RCA's would be the big losers here. BUT OUR UNION SAID NO.

Let's compare SICK LEAVE. We currently earn 4 hrs. per pay period for a total of 13 days annually. The postal service wants to cut this in half. Once again, RCA's would be the big losers here! BUT OUR UNION SAID NO!

So for all you non-members, you have here in black and white what the USPS thinks of you. They want to cut your wages and your benefits. We all need to support the UNION. It is the only defense we have against wage cuts and loss of benefits.

And I can guarantee you it will be an ongoing battle and an uphill fight to keep what we have now and try to improve our circumstances. All rural craft employees need to be united in this quest! We need your help. You, the non-members, are bound by law to abide by the same labor agreement as union members are. Wouldn't you like to have a say in your future? Join us today, and help fight for your tomorrow!

By: Debbie Atwell www.varlca.org

NRLCA—

Why It Pays to Belong

- The National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) has an effective legislative program in the Congress to promote and protect the interests of rural carriers.
- NRLCA holds exclusive recognition to represent the rural carrier craft with the U.S. Postal Service (USPS).
- NRLCA negotiates all Labor Agreements for the rural carrier craft with the USPS, including salaries.
- Only NRLCA members have the right to vote on acceptance or rejection of Labor Agreements.
- Only NRLCA can represent members of the rural carrier craft in the grievance procedure, including providing protection in disciplinary actions.
- Only NRLCA members can be elected as a local steward.
- Only NRLCA members are entitled to vote in local steward elections.
- Only NRLCA members can access the NRLCA national web site.
- Only NRLCA members can attend union sponsored mail count workshops.
- NRLCA has an excellent Health Insurance program:

The Rural Carrier Benefit Plan for regular and retired members, and for qualified leave replacements;

- NRLCA offers an attractive Life Insurance program for its members.
- NRLCA also offers the Rural Carrier Auto Insurance Plan and the Homeowners' Insurance Plan.
- NRLCA provides a monthly publication, *The National Rural Letter Carrier*, to keep its members informed on postal and legislative matters of vital interest.
- NRLCA provides information and fellowship for its members at County, District, State and National meetings where all members may participate in a democratic process of developing Association policy.
- NRLCA offers the opportunity for members to participate in the QWL/EI process.

What Unions Do

Unions guarantee rewards for hard work and initiative.

- Workers with unions earn an average 25 percent more than do workers without a union.
- Seventy-three percent of union members in the private industry get health benefits on the job, compared with about half of workers without unions.
- Seventy percent of union members in medium and large private companies are covered by defined-benefit pensions that guarantee a benefit, compared with only 16 percent of workers without a union.

Unions help remedy discrimination in the workplace.

- Union contracts raise earnings by 30 percent for working women and African Americans and 45 percent for Latinos.
- Union contracts help make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally on the job.

Unions raise living standards for the whole community.

- For decades, union membership paved the way to a strong and growing middle class. As union membership declined, the gap between the wealthy and everyone else grew.
- Better wages and benefits through unions mean that more families can make it on their own in the community—and the wage and benefit floor is lifted for everyone.
- Studies show that states where many of the workers have a union are also states with lower poverty rates, better schools and less crime.

Unions make America work better.

- Unions raise professional standards. Union workers have a say in decisions that affect the quality of the products they make and the services they deliver. Unions train more workers each year than any organization outside the U.S. military.
- Studies show that by lowering turnover rates and giving workers a voice in how work is done, unions raise productivity by 19 to 24 percent in manufacturing, 17 to 38 percent in construction and up to 16 percent in hospitals.
- Unions help make sure our nation prioritizes working people's issues—they hold corporations accountable, make workplaces safe, protect Social Security and retirement, fight for quality health care and make sure working people have time to spend with their families. If unions weren't out there fighting for these issues, who would be?

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, *Employment and Earnings, January 2002*; U.S. Census Bureau, *Income of Households by State in 2000*; O'Leary, Kathleen and Scott Morgan, *State Rankings 2002*; Belman, Dale, "Unions, the Quality of Labor Relations, and Firm Performance," in *Unions and Economic Competitiveness*. Lawrence Mishel and Paula B. Voos, eds.

Myths and Facts About Unions

Myth: Unions are outside, special-interest groups.

Fact: Workers are the union. A union is simply a democratic organization of working people standing up for their rights on the job and in society. Unions also bring people together in the community to stand up for issues that matter to all working people.

Myth: Unions mean more conflict in the workplace.

Fact: Unions can make the workplace a more harmonious place to work. A union contract allows the company and workers to sit down as equals and discuss problems as they come up. Without a union, workers' lives are often in more turmoil because they have to deal with more favoritism and less economic security.

Myth: Unions force workers out on strike often.

Fact: Workers vote whether or not to strike in most unions. Ninety-seven percent of contract negotiations are settled without a strike. No one ever wants a strike.

Myth: Companies close due to unions.

Fact: Companies close for economic reasons—and the vast majority of companies that close are nonunion. Some companies, however, like to keep this myth alive. Half of employers illegally threaten workers who form a union by saying the plant will close, though only 1 percent of newly organized plants do close, according to Cornell scholar Kate Bronfenrenner. Studies have shown that, in fact, unions help decrease employee turnover and can increase efficiency.

Myth: Unions just want workers' dues.

Fact: Money that workers pay in dues goes back into running the organization—unions are not for-profit organizations. The improvements workers win in pay, benefits and fair treatment through their unions are far greater than the cost of dues. Dues levels are set by each union through a democratic process.

Myth: Most union bosses are corrupt.

Fact: It's a tragic situation when a trusted leader betrays the membership in any kind of organization. However, for every high-profile story that is in the media about a corrupt union leader, there are tens of thousands of regular, honest leaders who are never profiled. During a union organizing campaign, the employer drags out stories of corruption, never telling the whole story. It's all part of its campaign of deception.

Myth: Unions are quickly shrinking.

Fact: Actually, the number of union members has stayed steady for the past 50 years, but the workforce itself has grown. Sixteen million working men and women in the United States are union members. Since 1995, unions began to reach out more, and there's been a slight growth in the percentage of the workforce—about 13 percent of the workforce—that has a union. But unions recognize that even more outreach is needed.

Myth: Unions used to be effective, but they're not anymore.

Fact: Unions are still by far the best way for working people to win economic security and have a voice on the job. The numbers tell the story: Union members make 25 percent more in wages than workers who don't have a union. Women and African American workers with a union make 30 percent more, and that union difference rises to 45 percent for Latino workers. Union members are much more likely to have a defined-benefit pension plan and health care than workers without unions. Unions also curb discrimination on the job, keep the workplace safe and give workers a much-needed voice.

Myth: Unions are political organizations that elect Democrats.

Fact: Unions do a lot more than politics. Most of unions' work involves fighting for good contracts, helping workers improve their lives and standing up for all working families. Through their unions, workers support candidates who support working families' issues and who work for good laws. Unions' political work is not about electing Democrats or Republicans—it's about electing people who stand up for working people.

Basic Legal Rights of Rank and File Union Members

Union Democracy makes unions stronger. The key to union democracy is an educated and active membership. This summary describes your rights under a Federal Law: the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA).

1. The Right to Equal Participation in Your Union

You have the right as a member of the union to participate equally in union affairs. You have the right to:

- attend and participate in union meetings,
- vote by secret ballot in local union officer elections, and other important election rights,
- equal access to union publications in election campaigns,
- if voting on contracts is in your union constitution, you have the right to know what you are voting on,
- due process if you are disciplined by the union.

NOTE: It is illegal for the union or the employer to retaliate against you, or threaten you, for exercising your rights under the LMRDA.

2. The Right to Essential Information

As a union member, you have the right to certain types of information:

- Copies of annual financial reports, including the LM-2 forms, available from the Office of Labor Management Standards--OLMS,
- Copies of union contracts and side agreements that affect your job,
- Copies of the union constitution and bylaws.

NOTE: You are free to publish the information in the reports and documents described above.

3. The Right to Free Speech in Your Union

Your right to free speech in the union is very broad. You are free to:

- criticize union policies, officers, staff, or candidates,
- discuss union policies and issues,
- write about, sing about, draw cartoons about union representatives,
- complain, protest, demand and advocate.

NOTE: You can not be disciplined for free speech. However, if you advocate leaving the union, or

changing unions, your speech may not be protected.

4. The Right to Free Assembly

Like your rights to free speech, your rights to organize with your coworkers to make changes in your union are very broad. You can:

- organize a committee or a caucus,
- meet without official union permission or participation,
- write and distribute leaflets, newsletters, etc.
- run candidates for office,
- take collective action to influence the union (pickets, buttons, etc.).

NOTE: Be careful not to represent yourselves or your group as official union representatives if you are not.

Enforcing your Rights

Some parts of the LMRDA are enforced by the Department of Labor (Elections, Financial Reporting, Right to Information). Other rights you enforce through a lawsuit in Federal Court (free speech, free assembly, union discipline cases). Some rights can be enforced through State Court, also.

You may be required to “exhaust internal union procedures” before taking your case to the Department of Labor or Federal Court. This means you must first file an internal union protest or complaint, according to the procedures in your union bylaws/constitution—even if you believe that this is a waste of time. If, after four months (three months for election complaints), the internal charges have not been resolved, or you want to challenge the result, you may take your complaint outside of the union. If you do not exhaust the internal procedures, the union can not discipline you, but the court or Department of Labor may dismiss your complaint.

Because the legal procedures are complex and have strict time limits, it is important to get advice. You may need a lawyer. Contact AUD:

Association for Union Democracy
500 State Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-855-6650, www.uniondemocracy.com

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Instructions for Form 1187

Complete the top section:

Social security number
Designation – check appropriate box
Name
Address
Postal installation and related information

Be sure to sign and date in Section A.

Do not write anything in Section B or Section C. These sections will be completed by the appropriate State and National designee respectively.

After filling in your section and signing the form, mail to:

Marion C. Neighbours
VARLCA Secretary/Treasurer
P O Box 54
Windsor, VA 23487-0054

Current dues structure for VA as listed on www.nrlca.org:

Regular Carrier Yearly	Regular Carrier <i>Pay Period</i> <i>Withholding</i>	Part-Time Flexible Carrier Yearly	Part-Time Flexible Carrier <i>Pay Period</i> <i>Withholding</i>
\$403.00	\$15.50	\$294.00	\$11.31
Relief Carrier Yearly	Relief Carrier <i>Pay Period</i> <i>Withholding</i>	Retired Carrier Yearly	Retired Carrier <i>Monthly Withholding</i>
\$135.00	\$5.19	\$76.00	\$6.33

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
AUTHORIZATION FOR DEDUCTION OF DUES**

Revised
NRLCA Form 1187
2006

□□□ □□ □□□□

(SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER)

OR

□□□□□□□□

(USPS EMPLOYEE ID NUMBER)

RURAL CARRIER
CLASSIFICATION

Regular PTF Relief

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

LAST NAME

□□□□□□□□

FIRST NAME

□

MI

MAILING ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

POSTAL INSTALLATION WHERE EMPLOYED

ZIP CODE OF INSTALLATION

INSTALLATION FINANCE NO.

SECTION A - AUTHORIZATION BY EMPLOYEE

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

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

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

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

SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE

DATE

PHONE

SECTION B - FOR USE BY STATE EMPLOYEE ASSOCIATION

R - NATIONAL RURAL LETTER CARRIERS' ASSOCIATION

SIGNATURE OF ACCEPTING UNION OFFICIAL

DATE

I hereby certify that the dues of this organization for the above named member, for the applicable designation, are currently established at \$ _____ per pay period.

LOC. #	STATE
DATE	REMIT #

STATE SECRETARY

SECTION C - FOR USE BY THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Date of Delivery to Employer (For National Office use)

ANNIVERSARY DATE TO BE USED
AT USPS PERSONNEL OFFICE



[Empty box for date of delivery]

Employee submits all copies to state secretary.

Important!

**Be Sure To Include
Postal Installation ZIP
CODE Where Indicated.**

Original - NRLCA
Copy 2 - NRLCA
Copy 3 - State Copy

Original - NRLCA

50012

Submit Original and Copy 2 to NRLCA Membership Department, State Retain Copy 3.

