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# North Dakota

## Rural Letter Carriers' Association

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## Outstanding Member of the Year

Jerome Fossum, Oakes, received the Outstanding Member Of The Year award for 2010. The award was presented by the North Dakota Rural Letter Carriers Association (N.D.R.L.C.A.) during the annual state convention that was held over the weekend in the Fargo Doublewood Inn. The presentation was made Saturday June 5th with his family members there to surprise him as he received the award.

The award is for his outstanding service and exemplary contribution to the N.D. Rural Letters Carriers Association while serving as the First District Committeeman and President of the Southeast Four Unit. Jerome spent 4 years in the Navy, then was a small farmer in Newburg, ND, when he started his rural mail carrying as a sub for 8 years. He accepted his first full time job in Crosby, ND in 1988 and moved to Oakes in March of 1991 where he has been since. Fossum has spent 22 years as a full time carrier and has over 30 years of government service, as well as serving on the state board of the N.D.R.L.C.A. for the past 4 years.

(by Wade Fossum NewsDakota.com, photo by Phylis Fossum)

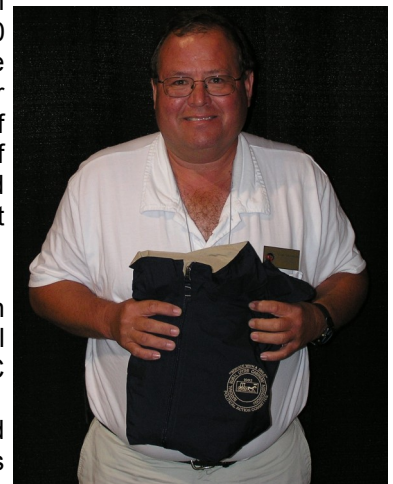


## ND Receives Recognition Ida Volesky

Dorene Haugen, Secretary/Treasurer, received top awards in membership in four different areas at the National Convention. North Dakota is in the Category I division which is for 1-500 routes. North Dakota had the highest % of total active membership with 166.21%; Highest % of total regular membership with 96.21%; Highest % of total relief membership with 70%; and the greatest increase in % of active members at 75.92%. Congratulations Dorene and Thank you to our membership for their continued support of the union.

Gary Thompson, PAC chairman for North Dakota, received Honorable Mention for the National PAC Awards for a high percentage of increase in PAC dollars raised in 2009 – 2010 . Way to Go Gary!

Thank you to all the membership who supported PAC last year. Gary will be looking for your donations again this year.



Gary Thommpson

# President Ida Volesky

Hello fellow carriers;

Wow, the summer has just flown by. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the members of our state board. They have given much to this association and continue to serve selflessly. Congratulations to our State Officers elected at the convention. Ida Volesky, President; Gary Thompson, Vice President; Dorene Haugen, Secretary/Treasurer; Jerry Axtman, District II Committeeman; with Mary Wertz, District III Committeeman, & Jerry Fossum, District I Committeeman. Appointed Officers are: Bob Defoe, State Steward, Dorene Haugen, Assistant State Steward, Gerald Franklin, Champlain, Dustin Allen, Editor.

Congratulations to Rhonda Wyum and Vicki Berglaund and the Cass Trail unit for a very well planned state convention. Your organizational skills were very much appreciated. Also, Thank You to all the members who served on the state committees. We appreciate how each of you donate your time and talent by serving on these committees. Some of the committees take a lot of time and you miss some of the convention. It was really a pleasure to have Susan Knapp, Executive Committeeman, speak at our convention. She was very helpful and shared much information with us. Our District Manager, Clem Felchie, spoke Saturday morning on the status of the Postal Service and graciously answered questions from the floor. One of the state constitution changes passed was 'Candidates for National Delegate may at their option have an article not to exceed 150 words placed in the North Dakota Rural Letter Carriers Official News Publication. May 1 through June 1 it may be placed on the NDRLCA. Org web site.' For a complete copy of the State Constitution see our website, @ [www.ndrlca.org](http://www.ndrlca.org). We had a very successful audit of the units by the state board. Thank you to all the secretaries who do a great job. A copy of the audit and a records requirement sheet were mailed back to each unit. Hopefully this information will help for future record keeping.

The Resolution we submitted for a Biannual Convention was voted down by the national delegates. This was disappointing. Thank you to Dorene Haugen for putting the resolution together and submitting all the paperwork. The National Steward System was also voted down by the delegation. The vote was very close, so hopefully next year it will pass. The delegation did vote a wage increase that went into effect in September. This was needed to cover the financial deficit the association was operating at. A complete account of the national convention will be printed in the National Magazine.

This past week the Postal Regulatory Commission denied the Postal Service their request for a rate increase. This is was disappointing because we are in the thick of negotiations for a new contract with the Postal Service. Now more than ever we need to pay attention to the legislation being introduced in Congress. Postmaster General Potter issued a statement that outlines 6 issues the Postal Service wants changed through legislation. They are: 1) Enable the Postal Service to alter frequency of delivery consistent with use of the mail; 2) Allow the Postal Service to close unprofitable Post Offices; 3) Restructure the Postal Service's obligation under the 2006 law to pre-fund retiree health benefits, an obligation not applicable to any other private or government entity; 4) permit the Postal Service to create and offer products and services beyond mail; 5) Assure that arbitrators consider the financial health of the Postal Service when agreement cannot be reached with our labor unions; and 6) resolve over funding of the Postal Service pension systems.

Senator Thomas Carper (D-DE), has introduced S. 3831. This bill will require OPM to recalculate the over funding problem with the CSRS pension. The legislation allows the Board of Governors to determine the surplus and how much can be used for the pre-funding of the retiree health benefits. However the bill also includes the language to remove the mandated 6 day delivery and arbitrators to consider the financial status of the Postal Service. We want legislation to correct the pre-funding requirements, but not the 5-day delivery or the influence over the arbitrator's decision. Our legislative team in Washington, D.C. is watching this closely. They will inform us of any action they want us to take. Now more than ever, we need to support our team with PAC dollars. Our team is working hard to get legislation passed that helps the financial status of the Postal Service but does not hurt our members. Watch the National Website and please consider giving to PAC. Your PAC dollars has built our Union to one of the Top 10 PAC Organizations and we have developed a good network of contacts in Washington. Contact Gary Thompson or myself for more information on how to give to PAC.

## NDRLCA Officers:

President: Ida Volesky 418 4th St Wyndmere, ND 58081 701-439-2554 <a href="mailto:jivolesky22@hotmail.com">jivolesky22@hotmail.com</a>	Vice President: Gary Thompson 403 W 6th St Grafton, ND 58237 701-520-1396 <a href="mailto:glteepollys@yahoo.com">glteepollys@yahoo.com</a>	State Steward: Bob Defoe 15332 106th St NE Pembina, ND 58271 701-201-0718 <a href="mailto:NDstatesteward@gmail.com">NDstatesteward@gmail.com</a>	Secretary/Treasurer & Assistant State Steward Dorene Haugen 1707 Bonn Blvd Bismarck, ND 58504 701-220-5278 <a href="mailto:dbhaugen@bis.midco.net">dbhaugen@bis.midco.net</a>
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# Health Insurance Open Season Ida Volesky

The time to change or sign up for the Federal Employees Health Benefit plans, including the Rural Carrier Benefit Plans is **November 8 through December 13**. The Rural Carrier Health Insurer is Coventry Health Care. I changed carriers last year to the Rural Carrier Benefit Plan and have been very pleased. The premium was less and I received the same if not better coverage. This year the premiums are increasing on all our health insurance policies, so it is worth your time to check out your options. Another benefit that some of you may want to take advantage of is the addition of family members to your policy. The Health Care bill increased the age limit from 22 to 26. All this information is available on the National Website, or call me if you have any questions.

## Change of Address Dorene Haugen

The ND RLCA uses the same address that you have on file with the USPS.

Therefore, if you need to change your address, you have three options:

Use PS Form 1216, Employee's Current Mailing Address. Send it to: HRSSC, Benefits/Compensation, PO Box 970400, Greensboro, NC 27497-0400.

Call the HRSSC at 877-477-3273, option 5. Validate your identity with your Employees ID number or USPS Pin, then option 9 to speak to a service representative who will assist you.

For carriers with PC access: Log on to LiteBlue using your EID and USPS Pin. Click on the Change of Address/Phone/Emergency Contact link under Employee Resources. Your current information will be displayed. To update your information, click the edit button, and you're on your way. Follow the prompts to review, Confirm, and save your changes. That's it, you're done!

## New Members, Retirements & Deaths

### **New Members:**

Frank Schumm  
Lynn Ward  
John Baird  
Lori Gronvold  
Josh Hefta  
Jill Bergemann  
Joe Brendel  
Michael Mellmer  
Leslie Petryszyn  
Chad Johnson  
Bob Barnes  
Reid Kukowski  
Chris Parnow  
Philip Barton  
Elroy Opp  
Scott Larson

### **Post Office:**

Walcott  
Binford  
Buxton  
Willow City  
Forest River  
Oakes  
New Salem  
Scranton  
Turtle Lake  
Gwinner  
Hebron  
Antler  
Hettinger  
Grand Forks  
Bismarck  
Minto

### **New Members:**

Janell Gnirk  
Janel Hoff  
Dawn Hinshaw  
Lauren Swantko  
Aaron Frieze  
Arleen Frohlich  
Randall Gienger  
Susan Knopp  
Joseph Reinke

### **Retired:**

Donald Feist  
George Miller  
Kenneth Fyre  
Robert Bergman  
John Scott Schafer  
Micheal Rost

### **Post Office:**

Sterling  
Bowman  
New Town  
Minot  
Bismarck  
Bismarck  
Bismarck  
Bismarck  
Lisbon

### **Post Office:**

LaMoure  
Lakota  
Portland  
Bottineau  
Bismarck  
Harwood

### **Deaths:**

August Heyne  
1000 W Century Ave Apt 319  
Bismarck ND 58503

Lowell M Crawford  
2905 Elk Dr Apt 201  
Minot ND 58701

Wendy S Koons  
10851 26th Ave NW  
Antler ND 58711-9703

Clarion Kubas  
1760 10th Ave W  
Dickinson ND 58601

Joe Rogelstad  
4659 County Highway 5  
Harvey ND 58341-8437

### **District I Committeeman:**

Jerry Fossum  
104 S 8th St  
Oakes, ND 58474  
701-742-3338  
[pfossum@hotmail.com](mailto:pfossum@hotmail.com)

### **District II Committeeman:**

Jerry Axtman  
3142 34th Ave NE  
Harvey, ND 58341  
701-324-2948  
[axtmanjdj@gondtc.com](mailto:axtmanjdj@gondtc.com)

### **District III Committeeman:**

Mary Wertz  
PO Box 64  
Coleharbor, ND 58531  
701-442-3270  
[tnn@westriv.com](mailto:tnn@westriv.com)

### **Chaplain:**

Gerald Franklin  
2421 32nd St NE  
Martin, ND 58758  
701-693-2357  
[rubyandgerald@hotmail.com](mailto:rubyandgerald@hotmail.com)

# GMAC Insurance Jerry Axtman

Is your insurance company charging you for protection you already have under the Tort Claims Act? Why pay for coverage you don't need?

Is your insurance company charging you a higher commercial use rate and not the discounted "route" rate that you deserve?

Is your insurance company charging you extra premiums for coverage you don't need under the Tort Claims Act?

Only the RLC vehicle insurance plan gives you the discounts you need and deserve, because only the RLC vehicle insurance plan was designed especially for Rural Carriers.

Put two vehicles on one policy and save up to 20% on top of other savings (for any make or brand). Like rural letter carriers, RV owners have special insurance needs, GMAC Insurance is America's #1 RV Insurance Specialist. GMAC guarantee's that you'll be satisfied in a claim—or your deductible is waived up to \$250!

GMAC Insurance strives to be competitive in all states, specifically for RLC members. To request a quote to determine possible premium savings call 1-888-325-7727.

# Vice President Gary Thompson

Greeting fellow ND Rural Carriers. Thanks again for allowing me to serve as your Vice-President.

It was great to see so many of you in Fargo for the state convention. Thanks to the Cass-trail unit for hosting it. Thanks in advance to Frontier Five for hosting next year in Dickinson.

At the state convention we were able to get a lot of information from our National Rep. Susan Knapp (re-elected to 4 year term at national). Our District Manager, Clem Felchle, was present. I will give him a plus. He can talk and talk. But get a straight answer? At least he came to give management views.

Thanks you all that gave to PAC and/or wrote our Congress members over rural issues this past year. Your letters and donations helped to get 5-day delivery stopped. Remember Congress is in charge of regulating the Post Office, through the Postal Regulatory Commission. Our Congress people will listen if they hear from us on postal issues.

At the national convention not much seemed to happen. But ground work was laid for the future of a National Steward system. It only failed by 60 votes. A little more tweaking of the rules should get it passed next year. (Little more state input on the stewards). This would save the state a lot of money and time. Over 60 per cent of our budget is steward time and/or training. Can't be helped. It is easier for some managers to go to grievances than to make a proper decision. Or be told be higher up's: try this and see if it works. "mail counts"

We had a constitutional change at national to change national conventions to bi-yearly. While this did not pass Jerry Fossum presented the states arguments in fine form. As such there is a large group that wants yearly conventions.

So to cover that cost there was a dues increase voted on and approved.

CONTRACT: They are in negotiations as this comes out. All I know is what told at national and on line. Post Office wants to save money on our backs. So my guess is that our contract will depend on a arbitrator in the future. That's why we need congress on our side to change a bad ruling.

Mileage reduced Oct 9th to .635 per mile. (Gas here up 10 cents since)

Open season is Nov. 8 to Dec 13. Remember health care was changed. Look at your plan and check others. (RCA's there is a Union health plan for you also. Check on-line or call-write me I'll send you a copy of the plan.) Cost for our portion of insurance will go up Jan. 1st.

So fellow carriers we face an interesting year. We are still in what I believe is the best job in the world. But with that said! If your PM,OIC, or supervisor starts telling you something or making you do something that's different. Contact your steward, state steward, or board member for clarification. It doesn't hurt and could save you money or stop a illegal practice. They do shot off the hip at district to save a penny.

***Board Meeting***  
***March 14th, 2011 8am CDT***

***Gladstone Inn & Suites***  
***111 2nd St NE, Jamestown ND***  
***701-252-0700***

I recently read an email from Clem Felchle featuring a letter from PMG Potter in response to the decision of the postal rate commission to not approve a rate increase. The PMG discussed 5 day delivery, the prefunding of retiree health benefits, allowing the post offices to sell other services and items, and the bill introduced to congress which included a provision that arbitrators would consider the postal services' financial situation when ruling on bargaining unit contracts. Another item he seemed very proud of was how the postal service had cut costs by reducing the workforce by 100,000 employees. What a thing to be proud of! Now don't get me wrong, I know there are offices and facilities out there that are overstaffed or could reduce their work hours or workforce. How about headquarters or area and districts? Do we really need so many managers? Do you know of any other company that has managers managing managers that manage other managers? But as usual they went about it with a knee jerk, cookie cutter approach. The 'doing more with less' method. What this does is burn people out, and makes cheats and liars out of decent, honest, hardworking employees. I know you have seen this happen. I know I have. In my travels and conversations with people I hear this often. Postmasters, PMR's, OIC's working off the clock, coming in early, staying late and not logging the hours or using overtime, if they qualify, and working through their noon lunch time. Why? So they can get caught up on their work. They have been given more forms, more logs, and more reports to do. Plus emails and computer time. All done after some 'expert' from somewhere said the hours could be cut because this job should take only this many hours. What you eventually end up with is tired, cranky, stressed out people. And who do they take their frustration and crankiness out on? Fellow employees, in most cases carriers. What this ends up doing is making an office go from one where things ran smoothly and people treated each other with dignity and respect, to one with issues. One result of this has the carriers doing jobs to 'help' out by doing work not associated with carrier duties, either voluntarily or ordered to do so.

We all know change is coming. Human nature is to resist change. How many of you know of a small town office that serves a dozen and a half boxes? And has no businesses in it. Most people living there already go to a neighboring town for school, to work, and shop now. Why not close these offices and change them to route delivery. This doesn't have to be done only by attrition. Excess employees can be assigned to neighboring towns. There is a shortage of clerks and pmr's out there now. This is one change we should embrace.

Another topic PMG Potter discussed was customer service. Now those of you that have read my past articles for years, and heard my reports at conventions and meetings know how I feel about this subject. But this one got me thinking again and remembering other management people talking or writing about it. By the time I made the drive home from work, five miles away, my blood was a little hot and my mind was whirling. I jotted down a few 'thoughts' and typed a few lines. I have since reread them and fortunately edited and cleaned them up some. Just some. As my article title asks 'what cost service?' it brings me to ask the question. Is service, which is our product we sell, worth something? What is that worth? Is it worth 2 tenths of a mile, 4 tenths? How about refusing a new delivery, whether an extension or on the existing line of travel? How about not hiring rca's in an office where there is a vacancy? How about refusing a dismount of 25 feet to pick up parcels from an ebay customer? Remember the stand up talks on rural reach? Is that just talk too like customer service? Area vice president Sylvester Black writes about customer service in his UPDATE articles every issue. Our district manager Clem Felchle has sent talks out concerning service. It seems they all talk a good game. But are they talking out of both sides of their mouth? Why do they condone the practices of PM and MPOO's that allow boxes to be moved, some which have been in place for 30, 40, or more years, to save those few tenths I referred to earlier? Or refuse deliveries to new customers wanting delivery on a route. Are they 'saving' money for the service? Are they being sincere in their views on customer service? In these cases the customers get a free box because they were refused delivery on the route. Federal law requires everyone is allowed one form of free mail delivery. The only thing these antics are doing is casting a dim light on the postal service and causing people to look at us like huge business bullies. Being a service industry and doing everything they can to cut service seems to me to be a perfect way to lose our customers even quicker and hasten the demise of the postal service. When service is our product and we stop providing it that can only bring about the beginning of the end of this company. To me the talk about cutting out service to our customers one day a week doesn't add up to good service. Why has McDonalds, Burger King, and the other major fast food guys gone to late night openings? Or opening early and serving breakfasts? That is what customers were asking for. So they changed their business and times to accommodate the customers. If faced with the same situation, what do you think the postal service would do? Oh wait, they already did it. The customers wanted the windows open at noon so they could stop during lunch break. They wanted them opened later so they could stop after work. So what was the response from the postal service? They closed offices that were open noon hours and closed earlier in the afternoon. Good business sense! Now what has this forced these customers to do? They can't get to the office to get stamps to mail their letters and bills, so hey why not go to online bill pay or direct payment from checking at the bank. Good idea. How much does the postal service get from this decision? Let's see, more good service and satisfied customers. What cost service???

If any carriers are seeing issues out there that were brought up in this article, please call me or one of the other stewards. We have to deal with these issues when they occur.

# Assistant State Steward Dorene Haugen

In my annually report at the state convention I said I would be stepping down as the assistant state steward, well that was short lived. I have reconsidered and decided I needed to stay on. I love helping you the member and I would miss it. Also Geographical I'm located in a good location.

October 22, 2010 is the last day of the guarantee period. If your route is eligible for the high option and you meet the requirements discuss this with your Postmaster. At this same time if you want to change your relief day this is when you can do that.

A new **Relief Day Work List** is established twice each guarantee period. October 9, 2010. Each new list shall supersede the previous list. All regular carriers, regardless of route classification, can place their name on the list **only** if they want to work their relief day. The second opportunity to sign the RDWL will be two weeks prior to the first full pay period in May (April 23, 2011).

# Secretary/Treasurer Dorene Haugen

I am now in my 9<sup>th</sup> year as your state Secretary/Treasurer, it's hard to believe. Writing these newsletters is still my least favorite thing to do next to recording minutes.

We are constantly bombarded with how bad the postal service is doing by our PMG Potter. How we need to cut back to 5 day delivery, mail is down, and so on. What you never hear Potter say is how they are hiring and paying more at the top level. Now why? Since there are fewer employees that actually work the mail, and less mail, why would we need more desk jockeys at the top, enjoying the good life with more pay? Here is the latest statistics, time to hear the truth.

## **USPS HQ Staff Has Increased 38% Since 2000** Postal/Mag.com

### **Changes from end of fiscal year 2009 through PP05 2010**

<b>USPS Headquarters</b>	<b>+3.7%</b>
<b>USPS Field (Mgmt)</b>	<b>+1.3%</b>
<b>USPS Postmasters-Supervisors-Managers</b>	<b>-2.02%</b>
<b>USPS Craft Employees</b>	<b>-3.79%</b>

The facts are simply INCREDIBLE! If the statistics from 2000 through 2009 were not enough to cause outrage, this new information should. The numbers of the Highest PAID Postal Employees have actually increased. The employees who actually perform the work on the moving the mail, maintaining the facilities and equipment in support of moving the mail has decreased. Everyone reading this should contact their members of congress and give them these figures.

Talk about too many upper management, the Bismarck PO had to do some route adjustments. The supervisor went into the computer and moved **one** mailbox from one route to another route (1 ½ mile savings). Which he did only to be told you cannot do this move, it must go through the AMS and then sent on to who knows who were, to be approved. This took 3 upper mangers from the district in Sioux Falls before Local management got the o.k. to do it. They need to justify their job.

This has been a very frustrating year with the implantation of a new data base for our membership. I'm on the National Training Development and Compliance Committee so I was one of the testers of the data base which was a great help for me. It is not user friendly; the old data base had fewer steps to get the final product. The old data base I could get the newspaper label's to the printer in 3 clicks, the new one is 17 clicks. It is still a work in progress. Membership is going down nationwide and that holds true here in ND. As of today we have 698 members 63 non member.

ND did receive 5 membership awards at the National Convention this year. This year that just didn't happen it took a lot of extra work.

The Board has decided they wanted the state financial books to be audited. We have retained the accounting firm of Capital Accounting, P.C. The report will be in the May newsletter on the findings of the audit.

# PAC Gary Thompson

Thank you who supported PAC in 2010. Your contributions moved North Dakota to the top 10 list per capita. Way to go. Thanks for getting our Congress members attention. (I will be mailing out the remainder of the pins to recognize those of you that gave. So sorry this late. Had addressing problem).

2011 started out with a bang at Spokane. We are number 14 as of September. Thank you delegates for getting us off to a great start. Thanks to those of you who have given at the local meeting held so far.

No matter what happens in November we need to talk to Congress. The way you do this is with PAC. Your PAC money helps the legislative group get the attention of the members of Congress or their staff so we can present the real world view of what is going on with the Post Office. Not managements only.

Without PAC...already 5 day delivery plus any other reductions they work on in Potters office.

We are a equal rights association. You support "US" we support you. The split is about 60/40 (dem/rep). You support rural craft...we support you.

This coming year will be interesting. Congress is going to change. Good. Bad. Don't know. Do know that in order to both educate new members and remind old members PAC gets us in the door.

You can donate at unit meetings (State board member), mail to PAC Chair, auto withdrawl (paperwork in national magazine), or in person at the State Convention.

Thanks again for your support. One or two hours of pay per year to save your job. Cheap. You insure your car, house, boat, spouse.

PAC is Insurance for your future.

# Legislative Report Gary Thompson

As with the May legislative visit to Washington, both myself and President Ida attended the legislative meeting in Spokane.

Thanks to all of you that contacted our representatives over the 5-day delivery proposal put out by PMG Potter. Our representatives ended up supporting inclusion of mandated 6-day delivery into law. For another year.

"Do not Mail" legislation continues to pop-up around the country. The groups that favor it has lost all attempts at the state level. So now they are attempting to influence city/county governments to pass "Do not Mail" laws. This is to be used at the state level to show that there is interest in do not mail (which is like do not call). If your area councils try this let the board know so it can be passed on. One crack in the system could see mail volume drop even lower. Which is lower wages for us.

Many of the issues brought up in Spokane to bring to the membership died during the week of Sept. 30th. First HR 5746 was voted down in committee. This would have restructured a 50-75 billion dollar overpayment CFRS to pay off the mandated Postal payments to prefund the retiree health plan. Saving the post office billions. Without this payment the post office would have been in the black two out of three years.

This was followed by the House voting to accept the temporary government budget of the Senate. They then voted to get out of town.

The Senate version did not contain a postponement of the \$5.5 billion due to be paid by the PO to the retiree health plan. So now the post office has to pay the full amount. Last year Congress postponed the payment.

Then the Postal Regulatory Commission (set up by Congress) denied Potter's request for a rate increase.

SO...where we at: Never Never Land.

Nothing will probably get done until next year. Congress, as is, will only have a month to get anything done. Don't think we will be high on any list that comes out. So it will be 2011 before things start moving again. With a new makeup in Congress. Many of which will be there for the first time. They will have to be educated on the Post Office and Rural Letter issues.

For this we have a good legislative team in Paul Swartz and Kevin Talley. They are assisted by Ken Parmelle who has been pushing rural issues since the 70's postal reform act. (that is 1970 not 1870's). They will try to educate the members of Congress in the new year. But they will need help.

Follow the national and state web-sites and papers for updates. If we ask you to write our Congress members please do so. It will make us more visible to our Congress members. No matter what we will have at least one new one in January. Letters from the people that vote for them mean a lot. PAC does help.

We live in interesting times. So. "Don't worry, it's a great day to be a rural carrier!"

## District I Committeeman Jerry Fossum

Greetings from the SE corner of our great state. What a beautiful fall we're having as compared to last year. Looking back to our state convention I want to thank all the unit secretaries for their cooperation with the state board as we conducted audits. It was something long overdue and was a learning experience for us all. When you read this our state treasure books will have been audited, or in the process of being done and we will be one more step closer to satisfying guide lines set down by the National Association. It was a great privilege to meet and work with Susan Knapp from our National office during our convention and also send our congratulations on her re-election at the Nat'l Conv. in Spokane.

I was in total disbelief and surprised beyond words when I was presented the NDRLCA carrier of the year award. Then to top it all off, everything had been lined up so that my family was there to share that special time with me. Thank you to the committee and those responsible for my nomination as it is truly an award of which I am proud of.

The summer progressed uneventfully until I was informed of changed plans that allowed me to attend the Nat'l conv. In Spokane. I decide to take a ride on Amtrak and enjoyed some scenery. Even tho it was a long ride, there were friends from ND & Minn to admire the landscape and the beauty of Glacier park.

The busiest day of the conv. I left my motel room at 6:30 am and called it a day at 11:00 pm after the last retirement seminar. I sat in on the seminars sponsored by GMAC insurance and also the state editors seminars. It was a real eye opener to find it being conducted by our Nat'l office counsel Michael Gann and after it was over I understood more of the technical and legal do's and don't or can and can't's that can be included in any newsletter.

Hours of discussions centered on 2 of the hotter topics of the convention and those concerned going to a Nat'l steward system and that of going to a biennial convention. Having initiated this resolution to our unit and have it pass our state convention, I was able to address the delegation and urge the resolution to pass. Regrettably I felt there was still misunderstanding of the steward system proposed and it failed. Unfortunately there are, in my humble opinion, that still come to conventions to see and party with old friends at the expense of the NRLAC and its continuing balance sheet decline. This resolution also failed.

My highlight of course was receiving my carrier of the year plaque and watch from our President Don Cantriel. All in all as far as business matters coming before the 1100 plus delegates, I left feeling disappointed by the final results. Now of course our National board is in negotiations for our new contract. PMG Potter has basically 2 years of promoting his 5 day delivery plan explaining the dire straits the Postal Service is in so any negotiations are going to be more difficult than before. Our Nat'l board was very adamant in their resolve so we can only hope they serve us well.

I will be seeing some of you at unit meetings this fall or next spring and the rest of you'll I'll will be looking forward to seeing at the State conv. Until then, remember school is in session so watch for children, farm machinery and the other drivers. Drive safe and God bless.

## District II Committeeman Jerry Axtman

Greetings from the Central Plains,

I hope all of you are doing well that summer is over and we now have a Indian summer. I wasn't able to attend the National Convention at Spokane. The day before I was to leave our family had an unexpected medical illness.

The North Dakota State Convention in June at Fargo was a great success, thank you to all involved in its planning. Its always good to see familiar faces, retirees, and a few new first timers at the convention. In talking to carriers two questions seemed to come up. What can we do to improve our unit meetings with better attendance and not always the same ones holding offices. The other question was on the unit audits.

First of all concerning the audits. They have never been done. IRS has been doing some spot checking in neighboring states. Some findings haven't been the best. Plus it reflects back to your NDRLCA, which is responsible for the units. Doesn't it feel good now for the unit secretaries to know you have balanced books?

In improving unit meetings, those that are holding the same offices and not enough members showing interest. They are asking to combine with adjoining units. Maybe units be made into Districts. This might spark more interest in those that never attend.

You always learn something at unit meetings and especially at the State Convention. Our National speaker, Susan Knapp, was very informative with what's going on with USPS and NRLCA. She would get my vote anytime to come back to our booster meetings or state convention.

# District III Committeeman Mary Wertz

## The Rural Carriers' Provident Guild

What... The Guild is a Fraternal NON-PROFIT Death Benefit Department

Who... Open to all Regular, Substitute, RCR, RCA, and PTF Rural Carriers and their spouses, who are under 56 years of age.

Dues... Your choice of benefit classes, ranging from \$10 to \$50. The available classes depend on your age at the time of application.

Available if you are	Annual Dues Class	Maximum Benefit	Minimum Benefit 30% Max.	Immediate Relief Payment 30% Max.
Under 56	\$10	\$1,000	\$300	\$300
Under 50	\$15	\$1,500	\$450	\$450
Under 45	\$20	\$2,000	\$600	\$600
Under 40	\$30	\$3,000	\$900	\$900
Under 35	\$40	\$4,000	\$1,200	\$1,200
	\$50	\$5,000	\$1,500	\$1,500

You can secure an application from any Provident Guild Officer, State Association officer, or Auxiliary Officer for details.

Or write:

Diana Hausfeld  
PO Box 105  
Minster, OH 45865-0105  
Phone 419-501-2213  
providentguild@nktelco.net

Your benefits do not decrease as you grow older. The class you choose remains in effect as long as you pay your annual dues. The President and Secretary-Treasurer are bonded in sufficient amount to cover the funds in their hands at any one time.

## Retirement Jerry Axtman

Doesn't that word sound relaxing after year's of service to the Federal Employees System! I hope you thought about it at least five years before you retire. The period before retirement is important because you must have insurance coverage for 5 years before retirement to keep it enforce after retirement. But planning for your successful retirement actually start the day you obtain your route. That's when you start planning in either Civil Service or FERS Retirement System. TSPC (thrift savings plan) is a very important part of your retirement plan, especially FERS employees, who receive matching contributions from the postal service on a percentage of their contribution. Accumulating sufficient retirement assets require time, discipline, and a strategy that does not permit relatively short-term market movements to derail long-term investment plans. You can transfer the funds in C, S, and I funds to protect their performance in downtrends in stock market. They do have a "catch up" contribution for those participants 50 and over.

You may also purchase (VLT) Voluntary Term Life coverage up to 5 times your annual salary or \$100,000, whichever is less, without any medical questions or exams. Dependent insurance is also available.

Retirement is a good time to review how your assets are allocated between your taxable accounts and tax-deferred retirement plans. The investment strategies that worked well while you were saving for retirement can backfire when you start with drawing money. You can end up with a big tax bill if you don't engage in some asset swapping.

You can go on USPS Lite Blue website and access USPS Retirement Seminars online, click on the: My Life" tab under the "My Benefits" heading. The postal service has added a new feature (e-retire) to Lite Blue which will provide employees the option of using self-service to begin the retirement process. You may also need to make a decision on when you can retire based on the annuity. Begin by selecting the desired retirement date to view your annuity estimate for retirement. It does not replace the HRSSC specialists. You will receive a yearly computer-generated annuity estimate. When you've selected a retirement date, contact the OPM at [www.opm.gov/retire/](http://www.opm.gov/retire/) or [www.liteblue.usps.gov](http://www.liteblue.usps.gov) and click on my life or (888-767-6738) we work hard on our jobs. Lets make sure we get all that is coming to us.

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## State Convention June 3-5, 2011

Ramada Grand Dakota Lodge 532 15th St W, Dickinson ND 58601  
701-483-5600 or 1-800-422-0949

I was going to title this article “Youth Movement,” but that doesn’t accurately describe what the article is about. The Union needs involvement from everyone and to get that involvement secured for the future, we need to get the RCAs and the newest regular carriers involved. In some cases that means “youth,” but that doesn’t necessarily mean that youth are the only newer carriers for the service.

Before I became the newsletter editor and webmaster for the NDRLCA, I didn’t really know any of the volunteers who have taken the time to represent me in the affairs of the Union. Now that I want to be one of those representatives, I’d like to make sure that as many people as possible know who is representing you and how you can become involved in helping choose those representatives.

Everything starts small. As a member of the NDRLCA, you pay dues to help support the system that protects you and informs you about the postal service. That is the lowest level of participation in the Union and should not be the last level of participation for the members. Simply paying the dues says “I don’t care what happens until it happens to me.” The Union fights to prevent issues as much as it fights against issues.

The next step up from simply paying dues is attending local unit meetings. This is the step in which I am most interested in getting the membership involved in because this is the level where the most decision making happens. At local unit meetings, which happen twice a year (Spring and Fall), you get to be informed about the issues pertinent specifically to your area, you can bring up new issues that the Union as a whole may not have been previously aware of, you get to choose your representatives at the State Convention, and you get to meet others who might be having the same problems as you. This is the level of participation that shows whether or not you want to be proactive or simply protected.

Mail count training is normally done at the local level. The best resources for learning how to handle specific issues are done at the local level. Making sure your voice is accurately represented at the State Convention (and by extension, the National Convention) is done at the local level. Why wouldn’t you want to be more involved or have more involvement at this issue?

Every single member of the Union is affected by what happens at these local meetings. As a member of the Bismarck office (and its office steward), I am extremely interested in seeing a much larger turn out from my office than was at my last unit meeting. The only attendees from my office at my last meeting were myself and the person I replaced as the office steward. I bring this up because it points towards exactly what I’m afraid will happen: the Union will cease to exist.

Without attending the local unit meetings, or without bringing in new members to participate, only a select few across the entire state will be affecting the work activities of the entire state. The local unit meetings will stop happening, which means no representatives will be sent from those local units to participate in the State Convention, which means that the State Convention will stop happening. If there is no State Convention, then the National Board makes the decisions with little or no input from the local level and the local level gets lost in the shuffle.

Why not attend a local unit meeting? For those retirees who are still paying dues in the Union, show up at these meetings (its only twice a year) to give your input and share with the rest of us how to better help you in your retirement. For those regular carriers, come to the meetings to let us all know about what is affecting you and how we can help you to get it corrected. If we don’t know about a problem, we can’t fix it and often by the time there is a serious problem involving the postal service, we have a much harder time fixing it. Regular carriers, talk to your RCAs (and relief carriers) and get them involved in going to the unit meetings, too. They are the future of the service and will be helping direct the Union when you are retired. For the relief carriers, if you don’t get involved now then by the time you are interested in getting involved may be too late. We need your help now, before there is a serious problem, not once that problem occurs.

Take the time to come to local unit meetings. They happen twice a year, for a couple of hours a night. Can’t you spare just four hours a year to learn more about the Union, actively choose those who are going to represent you, and learn more about the role the Union can play for you?

The deadline for submitting articles for the Spring newsletter is 4/2/2011.

Anyone interested in sending articles is free to do so. Send to **tricia.allen@bis.midco.net** in a Microsoft Word format (.doc). Revision requests will be returned with a 3 day deadline. Initial articles not received by April 2 will not be included in the Spring newsletter.

# Questions & Answers from the NVRLCA October Newsletter

*Leo Root (Assistant State Steward)*

**QUESTION:** I am an RCA assigned as the primary leave replacement to R-15, which is a K-45. The regular carrier on this route has been called to military duty and he will be stationed in Afghanistan for 6 months to 1 year. Because I am the junior RCA in the office, a more senior RCA is asking the supervisor to allow her to be assigned to my route because she is more senior. Can this happen?

**ANSWER:** It can happen ONLY if you allow it to happen. As the primary RCA on the route, when the regular carrier is away on an extended absence, you have a right to work full time every week up to 45 hours. Management may require you to take a relief day (K day) every week. Also, if you accumulate 45 hours in less than 5 days, management may send you home and use another leave replacement to complete the remainder of the workweek. Your right to work the route full time will continue until the regular carrier returns from his military service. (Article 30.2.O)

**QUESTION:** I am an RCA. Last week I had been assigned to work as the relief carrier on R-22. I reported to work at the scheduled time to work at the scheduled time and began casing up the mail. After I had been there for one and a half hours, I noticed another RCA was working on R-1. I asked the station manager why I was not assigned to R-1, since I am listed on the matrix in the secondary spot and especially since the other RCA is not listed at all for R-1. After checking the contract, the station manager had the two of us swap routes. I finished casing and delivering R-1 and the other RCA did the same on R-22. The next day when the rural supervisor returned to work, he was very upset. He said the station manager should have required us to work the routes he had scheduled, because he can schedule us to work any routes as he pleases. He also said that he would pay me the days pay for R-1 and the other RCA the same on R-22. I asked if he was also going to pay us by the hour for the one and a half hours each of us worked on the wrong routes. He said no. Shouldn't we be paid for the time we worked on the wrong routes, since it was management's error?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Your supervisor does not have the right to schedule RCA's any way he pleases. He must abide by the rules in the contract that address this situation. He violated the contract by scheduling the two of you incorrectly. Your station manager took the correct action by fixing the supervisor's mistake. You both should be paid for the full days as the supervisor stated, but you also must be paid the time you cased the mail on the wrong routes due to the supervisor's error or ignorance. If it becomes necessary, I urge you both to file grievances against management's error and refusal to pay you properly. (Article 30.2.D.1-5, and federal law and regulations)

**QUESTION:** I am the senior RCA in a non-formula office assigned as the primary on K-44. An auxiliary route will soon be created, but it will only have a weekly evaluation of 12 hours per week. I know there is a lot of potential growth on that route that will add many hours to the evaluation over a relatively short time period. I told the rural supervisor that I was considering taking the auxiliary route assignment. Between the hours I get working my primary regular route and the auxiliary hours, it would not be too bad and as the auxiliary route grows in the future, I will make much more money as well as earn annual and sick leave. My supervisor told me that, if I take the auxiliary assignment, I would have to work it 6-days per week and give up my primary regular route assignment. Is that true?

**ANSWER:** No, it is not true. Because you are in a non-formula office, you have a choice. If you accept the offer to be assigned to the auxiliary route, you have a choice of relinquishing your primary assignment and working the auxiliary route 6-days per week or you may retain your primary leave replacement position to work on the auxiliary route on those days when you are properly not assigned to serve the regular route. In fact, there is a form titled *Designation 79 Option Form* (SRG#A124.57) that you should complete and sign, indicating which option you select when you accept the auxiliary route assignment. You should keep a copy of that completed form. (Article 30.2.G.4)

## Autobidding

Effective October 1st

There is a new bidding process for open routes. For more information go to

[www.ndrlca.org/autobidding.htm](http://www.ndrlca.org/autobidding.htm)  
or click on the link found on the "Steward's Corner" page.

NDRLCA  
1707 Bonn Blvd  
Bismarck, ND 58504  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**up to date information can always be found at**  
**[www.ndrlca.org](http://www.ndrlca.org)**

### **2010-2011 State Officers**



Dorene Haugen, Jerry Axtman, Bob Defoe, Ida Volesky, Gary Thompson, Mary Wertz & Jerry Fossum.