



## Report of the President

Robert "Bob" Richardson



To the members of the Massachusetts Rural Letter Carriers' Association, welcome to fall!! It is hard to believe that just a short time ago, I was writing to you regarding staying hydrated, trying to stay cool, etc. Now I write to you asking you to start the preparation for the winter months and that very ugly four-letter word, "SNOW". This is not just about you putting on extra layers, checking to see if last years clothes still fit, are the boots still waterproof, but making sure your LLV or Metris is ready. Let's start off with the tires. If your vehicle has bald tires or has severe wear, now is the time to request a new set be put on your vehicle. What about your wiper blades? Are they working properly? Is the rubber strip (the blade) in good condition? Is the retaining clip present so the blade does not fall off? Although minor parts, this can become a major issue if not caught in time. Does your vehicle have at least one snow brush or ice scrapper? Ask your postmaster to look into some of these items before it's too late. I personally like to have two snow brushes, one up front beside me and the other in the rear of the LLV to brush off any snow that falls onto the door ledge.

As I sit here writing this article, a few important dates have passed. First, we have returned from the 2025 National Convention that was held in Orlando, Florida. The delegates worked through some 300+ resolutions, and voted in our new National Board. There were only two positions that were contested, that being the position of the President and the position of Director of Steward Operations. Both of these positions were won by the incumbent. All of the other positions for the National Board were uncontested. We did say goodbye to Jeanette Dwyer, an individual who has served our association for a number of years, and in many positions. We also welcomed Natasha Patterson from Florida to the position of Executive Committeewoman who now has taken over the Atlantic Region and is our new NRO. I'm sure she will fit right in and hit the ground running. Best wishes Natasha!! In all my years serving as a delegate, this was the quickest election process that I have witnessed.

While at the convention, I have taken on another task. I will be the lead person for promoting National General Insurance (an AllState Company) here in the state of Massachusetts. As of this time, National General only does vehicle insurance here in Massachusetts, but I will keep people updated. (Continued page 3)

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## Future Dates to Remember

- October 1st- National Coffee Day
- October 13- Columbus Day/  
Indigenous peoples day
- October 31- Halloween
- November
- November 11– Veterans Day
- November 27– Thanksgiving
- December 14–22 Hanukkah
- December 24– Christmas Eve
- December 25– Christmas Day
- December 31– New Years Eve

MARLCA EDITOR

*Sue Carvalho*  
*backroads.marlca@gmail.com*

**BRJ WINTER DEADLINE**  
**November 22, 2025**

*Address Change:*  
*You can log on to*  
*<http://liteblue.usps.gov>*

The Backroads Journal is a publication of the MARLCA. Opinions and views expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect or represent those of the Editor or the State Officers of the MARLCA.

# October

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	\$ 11
12	13 Columbus Day	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	\$ 25
26	27	28	29	30	31 Halloween	

# November

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	\$ 8
9	10	11 Veterans Day	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	\$ 22
23	24	25	26	27 Thanksgiving	28	29

# December

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	1	2	3	4	5	\$ 6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Hanukkah	15	16	17	18	19	\$ 20
21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas	26	27
28	29	30	31 New Years Eve			



## Report of the President

Robert "Bob" Richardson



What we are asking the membership to do is just call National General at 888-325-7727 and ask for a quote. No strings attached, no commitment, just ask for a quote. I will provide the membership with more information at the District and State Meetings. My final topic for this article is the Mini Mail Survey. It has just ended and now we sit and wait for the numbers. While we are waiting, please do not just sit idle. "Learn from the past and apply it to the future". I encourage each of you to do your DPM / LTM MONTHLY!! This is time credited towards your route's evaluation. Check out the National Web Site for RRECS updates, tutorials and videos. There are many tools out there for us to use, please use them. "Knowledge is power", you would be surprised how many of us have been taken advantage of because we thought our postmaster or supervisor was nice. To this day, they still come up with their own rules. Play by OUR rules, not theirs!! I look forward to seeing everyone at the Fall State Booster Meeting in November. Stay Safe & Make Smart Decisions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert G. Richardson



**President Robert "Bob" Richardson  
Carrying our state flag during  
The Parade of States at the  
National Convention in  
Orlando, FL.**



## Sec-Treasurer's Two Cents

### Lorraine Pacheco



3:33 PM  
09/17/25  
Cash Basis

#### MaRLCA Statement of Financial Position As of September 17, 2025

	Sep 17, 25	Sep 17, 24
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
APCU CD's		
1200080 - CD #80	13,136.45	12,619.12
CD #70	32,523.02	31,173.51
CD #75	26,628.62	25,481.08
CD #77	26,418.14	25,249.23
CD #79	33,857.81	32,318.71
Total APCU CD's	132,564.04	126,841.65
APCU Checking Account	15,399.90	11,633.20
APCU Savings Account	135,769.14	159,961.85
Total Checking/Savings	283,733.08	298,436.70
Other Current Assets	-41.91	0.00
Total Current Assets	283,691.17	298,436.70
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>283,691.17</b>	<b>298,436.70</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Other Current Liabilities	607.00	743.13
Total Current Liabilities	607.00	743.13
Total Liabilities	607.00	743.13
Equity		
Net Assets	303,059.32	329,764.58
Net Income	-19,975.15	-32,071.01
Total Equity	283,084.17	297,693.57
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>283,691.17</b>	<b>298,436.70</b>



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## Sec-Treasurer's Two Cents

### Lorraine Pacheco

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Now that both the national convention and district meetings are over it's time to focus on the Fall Booster meeting. This year the meeting will be held on November 2nd at the Best Western Royal Plaza in Marlboro. Meeting notices will be mailed to everyone in mid-October. It would be great to see some new faces in the audience. I'm still sending 1187's out weekly and academy instructors are doing their best to recruit new RCAs in the academy. The RAFT program is still in effect. Any member that recruits a Regular carrier or PTF will receive fifty dollars (\$50) from the national office. You will receive fifteen (\$15) for each RCA. To receive the incentive all you have to do is write your name and EIN on the 1187. Please send them to PO Box 159, Rehoboth, Ma 02769.

The 2026 Eastern States conference will be held at Holiday Inn North in Virginia Beach, Va, March 20-22, 2026. Anyone that is considering attending should make reservations asap. Please call 1-757-428-1711 and request the "Eastern States Conference room block. The notice will be out shortly in the national magazine. If you have any issues reserving a room please let me know. The state will cover your registration fee.

The 2026 PSHB open season will run from November 10, 2025, through December 8, 2025. Now is the time to review your current plans coverage and ask yourself if it met your needs and expectations this year. Did you have coverage issues? Were your deductibles, copayments excessive this year? Did you have to travel out of the area to see a provider or have procedures performed? In the next few weeks, OPM should be releasing the 2026 plans. Take the time to research each one and make changes to your current Health, Dental, and Flexible Spending Account. If there's anything I can help with, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

If I don't know the answer, I will find it for you.

**Lorraine Pacheco**





## Art Courcy

### NRLCA District Representative



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### Grievance Basics

Every employee (not just stewards) should understand the process for resolving disputes that occur in the workplace. The responsibility for ensuring that management conforms to all rules and regulations set forth in the National Agreement and relevant postal manuals rests with every carrier, not just stewards. However, some disputes may only be resolved through the grievance process.

#### What is a grievance?

- A grievance is defined as a dispute, difference, disagreement, or complaint between the parties related to wages, hours, and conditions of employment.
- A grievance shall include, but is not limited to, the complaint of the employee or of the Union, which involves the interpretation, application, or compliance with the provisions of the agreement.
- A simple disagreement can be a grievance.
- A possible grievance exists as long as there is a disagreement.
- A grievance exists if there has been a violation of any of the following five areas of worker's rights:
  - Violation of the contract, including handbooks, manuals, arbitrations, Step 4 settlements, etc.
  - Violation of past practice
  - Violation of fair treatment (disparate treatment)
  - Violation of applicable Federal, State, or local laws
  - Violation of management's rules or responsibilities

**Grievance initiation starts with you having a discussion with your manager.** You have the responsibility of filing your own grievance. (continued on page 7)

## Step 1 Discussion:

Article 15 Section 3. Step 1: a states in part “Any employee who feels aggrieved must discuss the grievance with the employee’s immediate supervisor within fourteen (14) c days of the date on which the employee or the Union has learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of its cause.” Article 15 Section 3. Step 1:b states in part “For other than disciplinary actions the Union may also initiate a grievance at Step 1 in accordance with the above ...” For a grievance to be considered timely the issue MUST be discussed with the immediate supervisor within 14 calendar days of the date on which the employee or the Union has learned or may reasonably have been expected to have learned of its cause.

A grievance is not filed by simply dropping a PS Form 8191 Joint Step 1 Grievance



## USPS-NRLCA Joint Step 1 Grievance Form

1a. Grievant's Name (Last, first, middle initial)		1b. Grievant's EIN (Employee Identification Number)
1c. Grievant's Title, Designation Code, and Route No.		1d. Telephone No. (Include area code)
1e. Grievant's Mailing Address		
2a. Post Office	2b. Branch/Station	2c. Telephone No. (Include area code)
3a. Date of Incident	3b. Date of Step 1 Discussion with Supervisor (Filing date)	3c. Was Grievance Timely? (Explain)
4. Issue (Complaint)		

Form on a manager’s desk. The step 1 discussion must take place between the carrier and manager. If an agreement is not reached through this discussion, then the first 4 lines on the 8191 should be completed. Again, only the first 4 lines should be completed. After the step 1 discussion is completed and the 8191 is annotated you should notify your assigned steward immediately. Your steward then would process the grievance from that point. It is imperative that the steward be made aware of the grievance as soon as possible as they have strict timelines that must be followed in order for the grievance to remain timely.

Keep in contact with your steward. You should also prepare to provide a signed and dated written statement for your steward depicting the details of your issue. We need all of the details that you can provide so that the Union can best prepare a case for the step 1 meeting. Once the steward has received and reviewed all requested relevant information, they will prepare for the step 1 meeting. The step 1 meeting is between the Union steward and manager at the local unit. Your steward should keep you informed throughout the grievance process. Remember that you have a very active responsibility in the initiating of your grievance.



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## Matt Barrett

### NRLCA Assistant District Representative

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#### **Don't end your End of Shift time early!**

Since the implementation of RRECS approximately three years ago activity scans have become an every-day task for rural carriers. The activity scans you make on a daily basis will impact your salary. Understanding when to make activity scans is vital to the accuracy of each route's evaluation. One of the most common errors with activity scans are the two scans associated with end of shift duties, "RETURN2DU" and "CLOCKOUT". On too many occasions I see carriers making obvious errors regarding end-of-shift duties. Each route is credited with this end of shift time as actual time. Just ten minutes of end-of-shift time daily could credit your route with one hour per week. That hour could be a significant difference in your salary and route classification.

As soon as you return to the office and perform a four point parking procedure you must make the "RETURN2DU" scan. Any activity such as returning empty equipment, receiving clearance, returning mail to its designated location, DPM/LTM, edit books, case labels, etc., are completed under end of shift time. There are approximately thirty one different activities that apply to this end of shift time, including using the restroom. Until you have completed all of these activities and you are ready to walk out the door are you to make the "CLOCKOUT" scan. Carriers should not be completing all these activities within one minute. Routinely carriers are completing the "RETURN2DU" and "CLOCKOUT" within at the same time.

The most common mistakes I have observed are carriers making is using the "PMCASING" scan. "PMCASING" is used to stop the clock on your end of shift duties. When a carrier completes this scan, the clock is stopped on the end of shift duties, and the route is no longer receiving credit. The "PMCASING" scan is only to be made under the authority of management. Normally this scan is only done for three reason and that is to case or organize mail intended for delivery the next day, to complete a second trip, or when performing additional duties on another route. Prior to making this scan ALL end of shift duties must be completed. The only exception to making the "RETURN2DU" and "CLOCKOUT" scans are when a route is being split for the day. When the route is being spilt the carriers performing additional duties on the route will not complete these "RETURN2DU" and "CLOCKOUT" scans. The route will be credited with its daily average. I suggest all carriers visit [NRLCA.org](http://NRLCA.org) and review the RRECS Resources tab and educate themselves about what specific activities are end of shift duties or contact your assigned steward for any questions.

Matthew Barrett

Assistant District Representative, NRLCA







## Messages from Fellow Union Members

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Happy Fall Everyone, I hope everyone had a great Summer! Hard to believe another Summer has come and gone, seems every year it just gets shorter. I attended The National Convention as a first time Delegate down in Orlando Florida back in August and it definitely gave me a different perspective on how the process of bringing resolutions to the table takes place. I would hear a resolution and think "ok that sounds great", for instance, RCA's getting a guaranteed day off after 13 days of working without one, but then another carrier brought up that some RCA's don't want to have to get a day off because they get only a few hours of work each day, and they need the money.

Many other resolutions as well that you don't think are bad until you hear another individual's perspective on the matter. It really is an eye opener because we all have our own perspectives and how we believe things should be, but in reality it may not be what is best for others. If you only listen to your own thoughts and not willing to listen to others, then we really can't make informed decisions on what is best or judge others who have gotten all the information from all sides and made a decision on what is best. I would recommend to anyone that thinks resolutions to a contract should be a simple task, to run for delegate some time and see and hear how this process takes place. I learned a lot!

You can also put in a resolution to be introduced if you have an idea that you think would be great to add to the Contract. Become a part of the solutions rather than just expecting others to do it for you. There was over 300 resolutions to debate and vote on and though the days were long sitting and listening to the debates to make a proper vote on what is best for the majority, it was educational and very informative on the start of getting resolutions to the Unions Board. I would definitely run for Delegate again and recommend others to as well. The more people that get involved, the better we will be. I Hope to see more people getting involved and being a part of the solutions.

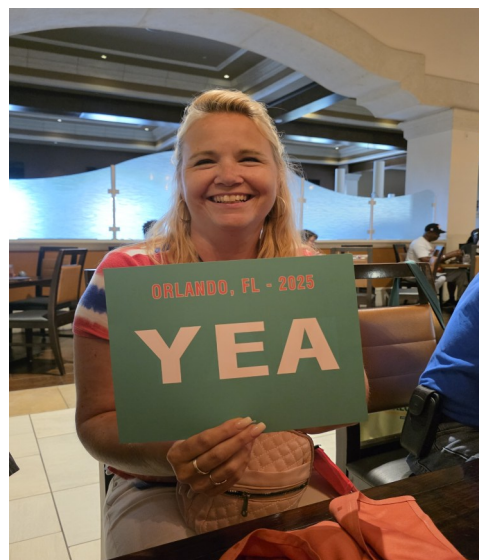
So now that fall is here, it also means we are getting to that time of year where more trips and falls take place. Please take your time and don't slip and fall and hurt yourself! We have the wet leaves that can be just as slippery as ice sometimes and then those winter months right after with heavier volumes making carriers try to hurry a little more and suddenly they slip and fall and are injured for months. Please be careful! Make sure you are aware of your surroundings and where you step, you don't want to be dealing with injuries or vehicle accidents for that matter as well. Stay safe Everyone!

Debra Freitas

District 3 President

**Debra Freitas, first time delegate at The National Convention in Orlando, FL. Showing her voting card. "YEA" or "NAY" .**

**Looks like the convention was a "YEA"**





## Messages from Fellow Union Members

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My name is Julie Garcia, I have been a carrier and union member for over 20 years, a long time reader of Backroads, and today, a first time writer. Like many of you I have become completely disenchanted by the current political state of affairs. Regardless of which side you favor, the realities of working within the Federal Government can be disparaging even in the best of circumstances. It's easy to feel forgotten or powerless, and even easier to get complacent when we have the opportunity to voice our opinion.

If I'm being honest, I was told to join the union all those years ago, not really having an understanding of what they did or the services they could provide. And in those 20 years stayed mostly uninvolved, attending a few seasonal meetings, never expecting to be part of anything more than that. That was, until last June when it was suggested that I be one of the nine people chosen to be on Contract Ratification Committee, and I was on a plane to DC, having no idea what was ahead of me.

Truthfully, I've missed more than my share of voting opportunities with the union, and apparently I am in good company. The typical mail in vote turnout within the craft is about 10-20%, and nationally the numbers aren't any better. And while I'll spare you the horrendously tedious details of our three insanely long days of verifying, opening envelopes, and counting ballots, I will tell you this;

### **Every. Single. Vote. Was. Counted.**

Every person was a verified union member based off their name and address on the return envelope. For those wondering, once that first envelope is verified and removed there is absolutely no way we would ever know who the ballot belonged to rendering it anonymous. Once sorted by state and craft designation (ARC/RCA/RC), every tray was gone through to search for duplicate ballots and members that had separated from the union, but received a ballot due to the timing of system uploads. (Can you say "Needle in a haystack?") We found four. Husbands and wives that wanted to save a stamp and mail in the same envelope were separated and verified. All ballots with clear indications of yes or no were counted. Ballots that were questionable were voted on by the entire committee. Ballots that were intentionally mailed back shredded were reconstructed to verify a clearly cast vote. And every extra "love note" and letter that accompanied the cast ballots were read and acknowledged. Everything was double checked, often triple checked, and integrity was maintained throughout the entire process. In short, every voice that wanted to be, was heard and accounted for. And when it was all said and done, it was probably the most democratic thing I'd ever been a part of. (Continued page 11)

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The beauty of this vote, or any of our local elections, is that there is no electoral college or corporate lobbyists. Every single voice gets heard. When you look at membership through the country, states like Texas, Pennsylvania, and Florida can easily run the show, but because ballot turn out hovers around 15%, there is a tremendous potential for smaller states like ours to be heard if everyone just returned their ballot. This detail becomes crucial for line items that may heavily benefit certain parts of the country, or certain craft members.

So for those of you who voted, thank you. And for those of you who missed it, I hope I've given you a little insight into the process and how important your voice is, so that when the next vote happens you can be heard loud and clear. I'll even give you a stamp.

Julie Garcia

Plymouth, 02360

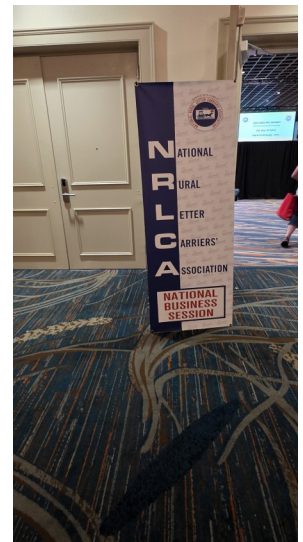


## Did you know...

- George Washington spent his entire campaign budget (50 pounds) on 160 gallons of liquor to serve to potential voters.
- In the United States, the 1965 Voting Rights Act is considered one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in United States history. Its purpose was to secure the voting rights of African Americans under the 15th Amendment.
- It wasn't until the 1890s that secret ballots became commonly used in America.
- On August 18, 1920, the United States Congress passed the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed all American women the right to vote.



## Photos from The National Convention in Orlando, FL. August 2025



## SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

# Suicide Prevention and

## Support through the EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a private, voluntary, and free resource available to all USPS employees and their families. It offers 24/7 access to licensed professionals who can help with personal, emotional, or work-related challenges—including crisis situations and suicide prevention.

### Suicide Prevention: What You Need to Know

Suicide can be prevented. Early intervention and connection can save lives. You are not alone—and you don't have to handle things on your own. If you or someone you know is experiencing signs, it's time to reach out.

#### Common Warning Signs:

- Talking about feeling hopeless or like a burden
- Withdrawing from friends or activities
- Expressing severe emotional pain
- Feeling trapped
- Changes in mood, behavior, or sleep patterns
- Increased substance use

#### We Are All In This Together

Even a small act of care can make a big difference. If you notice someone struggling:

- Talk to them.
- Let them know you care.
- Encourage them to use the EAP.
- Notify a supervisor if safety is a concern.

### How the EAP Can Help

The EAP is a powerful tool for promoting mental wellness and preventing crises—including suicide. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, concerned about a coworker, or simply need someone to talk to, the EAP is here.

- **Immediate crisis support—anytime, day or night.** Trained counselors are available around the clock.
- **Short-term counseling for emotional and mental health concerns.** Free counseling sessions are available.
- **Referral to Long-Term or Specialized Care.** We work with you to ensure you find the right kind of care.
- **Guidance for managers and coworkers.** The EAP can help anyone concerned about a colleague.
- **Wellness tools and resources for ongoing support.** EAP4YOU.com website and mobile app offer self-assessments, articles, toolkits, and videos on suicide prevention, coping skills, and stress management.

**Help is always available. Reach out—for yourself or someone you care about.**



EAP4YOU.com  
800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU)  
TTY: 877-492-7341

*Your Employee Assistance Program is here for you around the clock. Reach out to us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our website offers a wealth of information, tools and resources that you can access any time and feel free to give us a call at 800-327-4968 (800-EAP-4YOU) or TTY: 877-492-7341.*

# Word Search

M N T L E T T E R S D P S P X Z F P F J R X L S H  
 K Z M Z W D R Y W I F L A C C O U N T A B L E S E  
 P H M B B F L I I G E L N F R B G X N E W N O L Q  
 N G C I D N X M U N A O V S B D Y C Y U E H D E Y  
 K X D E I G F L V A T L V G X M P O H B O Z E W O  
 F S N Z S R Y B R T J B P X T A K U C E I D A H K  
 I P Y P M G P Z F U Y U K W H I E P E X W J X R Y  
 O R R V O B Y Y L R T J W V U L A X R P Q Y G E W  
 B S B X U E J K A E S N K Y Q B B Q T R E P V G M  
 E C R G N D V Q T C A S Y R P O K E I E T Y E I O  
 X N U T T Q Q X S O M V G U D X L M F S V H H S J  
 E C R A C J Q T S N P G C L M Y J K I S I Y I T Y  
 G O A P U G E V Z F L B G U S K L L E M T R C E O  
 U K L A J O L Z C I I O M C T L I C D A E S L R H  
 F S L M E X D B W R N X Z D L K U K M I Q E E E Z  
 N C L Z R S J H N M G H B T L U N N A L J P S D T  
 R A V N Y S Z E U A R O H Z V L E K I G P P A M K  
 C N Q J U R F H P T E L X B S H G A L I W N F A Q  
 N N F Y I U V V K I Q D C I V I Q B W D K B E I G  
 Y E Y E L L S Q B O U E H N K Z T B Y Z Z C T L T  
 L R L M K T Y G C N E R P J I Q J G M W J S Y F M  
 A M D F L U W F W L S P F K C X A V N P M Q Q B J  
 O O R R E C S D G L T A Z F Q K C S G A C D Z I S  
 U S N O X U B J X I A T F U E X J Z R Y U C T R C  
 S D D E O J N A R R O W K E Y S Y K C P A R C E L

## SIGNATURE CONFIRMATION

## SAMPLING REQUEST

REGISTERED MAIL	CERTIFIED MAIL	BOX HOLDER	DPS
VEHICLE SAFETY	ACCOUNTABLES	ARROW KEYS	LLV
LETTERS	DISMOUNT	SCANNER	SPR
EXPRESS MAIL	MAIL BOX	RRECS	
FLATS	PARCEL	RURAL	





## Who Ya Gonna Call? Stewards at a glance

### District Representative, MA-RI (*Full Time DR*)

Art Courcy

[Arthur.Courcy@nrlca.org](mailto:Arthur.Courcy@nrlca.org)

508-761-6870

### Part-Time District Representatives:

Dan Cote (Massachusetts)

[Daniel.Cote@nrlca.org](mailto:Daniel.Cote@nrlca.org)

978-237-2625

Matthew Barrett (Massachusetts)

[Matthew.Barrett@nrlca.org](mailto:Matthew.Barrett@nrlca.org)

508-443-7383

UNION PROUD  
UNION STRONG

### Area Stewards:

Ed Knight

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413-896-2662

Thomas Gorman

[Thomas.Gorman@nrlca.org](mailto:Thomas.Gorman@nrlca.org)

774-319-0788



## Backroads Journal

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## Address Service Requested

Presorted  
First Class Mail  
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Permit No. 72

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Member Articles p. 8-11

Photos and EAP—12-13

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robert.richardson@nrlca.org

**Vice-President:** Clifford Morris (978) 877-0157  
cliffordatcheers@gmail.com

**Sec-Treasurer:** Lorraine Pacheco (774) 244-0837  
Lorraine.pacheco@nrlca.org

### **District Presidents:**

D1: Jason Dole

D2: Dianne Daley

D3: Debra Freitas



**800-327-4968**

(800-EAP-4-YOU) TTY: 877-492-7341  
www.EAP4YOU.com

### **Appointed Positions:**

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**Sec-Treasurer:** Steve McCarthy

**PAC Chair:** Brian Miskell

**Editor:**  
Sue Carvalho

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