

MANDATORY STEWARD ELECTIONS – JULY 2004

By WAYNE HARRISON

Hear ye, hear ye! To all presently certified local stewards and those interested in becoming a local steward in your office: steward elections will be held in each office in July of this year. (Normally, elections are held in January, but it was decided at last year's national convention to change the elections to July.)

So, to those stewards who are currently serving: your time to function as a local steward was extended to July, 2004. And, current stewards will have to be re-elected in July if they desire to continue in that position. If a different person is elected in an office which has a current steward, the current steward may continue to serve until the newly elected steward is certified.

Let me refresh everyone's mind about steward elections as to what is proper and what is not:

If you are a member of the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA), you can be considered as a candidate for the local steward position in your office.

If you are a member of the NRLCA, you may vote in this election.

Every office with rural delivery is entitled to have a duly elected steward in that office.

Steward election forms will be made available soon in the national magazine. They are also available through the Virginia website www.varlca.org and from your state officers.

Whether you are running for the first time, or for re-election, the same procedure is followed. The election form MUST be posted in the office for a period of 15 days. (It can be posted as early as June 15, but no later than July 15. The voting should not take place until July 1. It must be completed by July 31.)

Any rural craft member of the NRLCA interested in running for election must put his/her name on the election ballot during the 15 days it is posted. Both regular and relief carriers, who are NRLCA members, are eligible to be candidates. During this 15 day posting period, all rural carrier craft NRLCA members in that office will have the opportunity to cast a vote for the person they would like to represent them in their office.

Remember, in order to be considered for the position, or to vote, you must be a member of the NRLCA.

After the 15 day posting period, the election form is taken down and the votes for each candidate on the ballot are counted.

Verify that all names on the ballot are NRLCA members.

If there is more than one person seeking the position, the one with the most votes is the elected steward.

Once the election has been completed and the votes counted, the ballot is mailed to the state steward for processing.

The election will be for a four year term.

In offices where there are up to 49 rural carrier craft employees per post office, station or branch, the office is entitled to one local steward. If there are 50 or more rural craft employees in an office, the office is entitled to two local stewards.

Once you have been elected, you cannot function as local steward until you have attended certification training which will follow after the election. The certification training, this year, will probably be sometime in late August. However, you will be notified in plenty of time about the date, location, etc. So, it is very important that you make every effort to attend the training session to be certified.

Even though certification training is once every four years, we have to attend an enhancement training session each year also. This training is to keep you updated on all changes and procedures that take place.

By the way, I don't know of anyone who has ever flunked out of the certification training class. So, if taking tests worries you, rest assured that we will make sure you know the information and are ready to go before you leave.

Once you have been certified to act as a local steward in your office, a letter will be sent from the state steward to your office notifying management that you are the certified steward in that office and can now function as the same.

You, as the steward, have certain rights in your office. You have the right to investigate and adjust grievances or to investigate a specific problem to determine whether to file a grievance.

You will represent all rural craft employees (except TRCs) in your office.

You have the right to meet with management to discuss and settle issues before they become grievances.

If a grievance has been filed, you have the right to meet with management to attempt to settle the grievance at the lowest possible level.

I won't go any further than that because you will learn all about the position in the training session along with how you are paid for your time.

When we have local stewards in an office representing our folks, there is no expense to the union. If we have to send an area or local steward to represent someone in an office with no local steward, the union has to bear the full cost to include a day of pay (ADOP), mileage, meals and any other expenses associated with the grievance, pre-disciplinary investigation (PDI), etc.

It is to your advantage and to the advantage of this association to have a local steward in your office.

I hope those stewards who have been serving in this position will continue to do so. In offices where we do not have a local steward, I hope you will consider putting your name on the ballot this year.

So folks, we really need a local steward in each of our offices. I ask you, if you have never taken the time to serve in this position, please consider doing so this year. We will work together and get the job done.

For those who have been serving as local stewards, there are no words to adequately thank you for a job well done. I can only say THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

If you have questions about becoming a local steward, contact one who is serving now, or a board member or one of the following state level stewards, Ed Emmert, Bill Bunch, Charles Morningstar, Scott Trice, Mark Farrell or me, Wayne Harrison. We will be more than happy to talk with you and answer any questions you may have.

Local stewards are a great asset to our association. Thank you for being an asset.