



National Postal Mail Handlers Union

Paul V. Hogrogian
National President

Michael J. Hora
National Secretary-Treasurer

June Harris
Vice President
Central Region

John A. Gibson
Vice President
Eastern Region

David E. Wilkin
Vice President
Northeastern Region

Lawrence B. Sapp
Vice President
Southern Region

Don J. Sneesby
Vice President
Western Region

March 16, 2021

TO: All Local President

FROM: Paul Hogrogian, President *PVH*
Teresa Harmon, Manager CAD *TH*

RE: The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

When President Biden was sworn into office on January 20, 2021, he promised that one of his first actions would be to help push through the next COVID-19 relief package. On March 11, the American Rescue Plan Act (P.L. 117-2) was signed into law. While most attention has been paid to the provisions in the bill that give direct payments to 85% of Americans and to revenue grants for state and local government, there also are important provisions providing emergency leave and compensation to members of the postal workforce.

As many NPMHU members are aware, last year's CARES Act (P.L. 116-136) offered postal employees leave due to COVID-19 related illness; these statutory guarantees expired at the end of 2020, however, leaving employees without this safety net.

The American Rescue Plan revives this protection for all Mail Handlers and other postal employees by providing postal and federal employees with up to 600 hours or 15 weeks of leave, known as the Emergency Federal Employee Leave or EFEL. This leave is available if a postal employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms, has to self-isolate due to COVID-19, seeks medical attention to address symptoms of COVID-19, or has to take care of children or elderly relatives due to lack of schooling or care. Payments are capped at \$35.00 an hour. It should be noted that the U.S. Department of the Treasury has allocated only \$570 million to fund this leave for the entirety of the postal and federal workforces. Once these funds have been exhausted, Congress will have to revisit the need to provide leave again. Also, any payments received under this program will not count toward any retirement annuity and cannot be used to contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan.

Additionally, the American Rescue Plan also provides for workers' compensation for those diagnosed with COVID-19 due to exposure at work. Because the Postal Service has been a vital necessity to customers during the pandemic, NPMHU members and their postal workforce brothers and sisters have routinely put their health at risk while at work. This compensation provision gives those in the USPS workforce the peace of mind that, if they contract the virus, they will be financially compensated through the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

The language of the American Rescue Plan went into effect on March 12, 2021, and this leave and compensation should already be available to NPMHU members and the rest of the postal workforce. The EFEL will continue through September 30, 2021. Until final directives are issued, mail handlers seeking to use EFEL should submit a PS Form 3971 indicating for which of the eight qualifying reasons listed in the chart





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below they must take leave, and employees must affirmatively state that they are unable to work because of the qualifying reason. The eRMS Leave Code or Reason Code for the Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL) is 086-21. If there are other questions or you need help getting access to these benefits, please contact your local union representatives or stewards or the NPMHU Contract Administration Department.

Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL)

Employee Type	eRMS Leave Code/Reason Code	Timekeeping System (RMSS/TACS)	Description	Comments
Rural Carrier	086-21	DACA O - for 1314A use OL block	Pandemic Relief 2021	Used when requested for scenarios 1-8 of EFEL, up to \$2,800.00 per Pay Period
All Other	086-21	086-21	Pandemic Relief 2021	Used when requested for scenarios 1-8 of EFEL, up to \$2,800.00 per Pay Period

UPDATED 3/11/2021

Emergency Federal Employee Leave (EFEL)	
Qualifying Reasons	Leave Eligibility
<p>An employee is entitled to take EFEL related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work because the employee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19. 2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19. 3. is caring for an individual who is subject to such an order as in (1) or has been so advised as in (2). 4. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis. 5. is caring for the employee's son or daughter if the school or place of care of the son or daughter has been closed, requires or makes optional a virtual learning instruction model, requires or makes optional a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning instruction models, or if the child care provider of the son or daughter is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions. 6. is experiencing any other substantially similar condition. 7. is caring for a family member with a mental or physical disability or who is 55 years of age or older and incapable of self-care, without regard to whether another individual other than the employee is available to care for such family member, if the place of care for such family member is closed or the direct care provider is unavailable due to COVID-19. 8. is obtaining immunization (vaccination) related to COVID-19 or is recovering from any injury, disability, illness, or condition related to such immunization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All career and non-career employees, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for EFEL. • Full-time Employees can receive up to 600 hours of paid EFEL, capped at \$2,800 per pay period. • Part-time Employees can receive up to the proportional equivalent of 600 hours, capped at a proportional equivalent of \$2,800 per pay period.