



# NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

John F. Hegarty – National President     Mark A. Gardner – Secretary-Treasurer

## 2011 Contract Update #1

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**THIS IS THE FIRST OF MANY CONTRACT UPDATES TO BE DISTRIBUTED BY THE NPMHU DURING THE COURSE OF 2011 NEGOTIATIONS. THE GOAL IS FOR THESE UPDATES, ALONG WITH OTHER MEANS OF COMMUNICATION, TO KEEP MAIL HANDLERS INFORMED AND INVOLVED DURING THIS ROUND OF BARGAINING.**

Bargaining between the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the U.S. Postal Service began on August 30, 2011. The Postal Service is simultaneously bargaining a new contract with the NALC, and will soon be entering interest arbitration with the NRLCA.

Collective bargaining within the Postal Service started more than forty years ago. Before 1970, Congress set wages and benefits for postal employees, but with the passage of the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, Congress established collective bargaining for all mail handlers and other postal employees.

Throughout the 1970s, the four major postal unions negotiated jointly, but they began to negotiate separately in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of jurisdictional and representation disputes. The NPMHU bargained separately for the first time in 1981, resolving contracts in arbitration in 1981 and 1984, and negotiating a final contract in 1987.

In the 1990 round of bargaining, three of the major unions – the APWU and the NALC (negotiating jointly as the Joint Bargaining Committee) and the NPMHU – bargained against the Postal Service. The NPMHU and USPS representatives agreed to a three-year contract that maintained the COLA provision and full job security, but otherwise included only lump-sum payments instead of general wage increases. The interest arbitrator imposed that contract while deciding a separate issue. The JBC also went to interest arbitration, and the arbitrator awarded annual wage increases, thereby deviating from the contract previously obtained by the NPMHU.

In light of this history, the primary objective of the NPMHU in the 1993 and 1994 rounds of bargaining was the restoration of the historic pay

relationships between mail handlers and other postal employees. In 1993, the NPMHU reached a one-year extension to the 1990 National Agreement, providing for a general wage increase and a continuation of COLA. In 1994, after failing to agree to a contract, the NPMHU and USPS again went to arbitration. When that arbitration was finally completed in April 1996, the NPMHU had obtained two general wage increases over the four-year term of the 1994 National Agreement, as well as continuation of the historical COLA provision. The arbitrator refused, however, to restore mail handler wages to their previous relationship with the other crafts.

In 1998, the NPMHU and the USPS were able to reach a bargained agreement, including two general wage increases and four COLA adjustments over the course of two years. In 2000, the NPMHU and the Postal Service again were able to reach a bargained agreement. Over the four years covered by the original 2000 National Agreement, mail handlers received four general wage increases and five COLA adjustments. That agreement subsequently was extended until 2006, with the extension providing two more general wage increases and four more COLA adjustments, as well as continuing the no-layoff protection and other benefits contained in the 2000 National Agreement. Finally, in 2006, the parties continued the historical practices, reaching a five-year agreement with continuing wage increases and cost-of-living adjustments. The end result, as of today, is that mail handlers now have restored, if not exceeded, the historical pay relationships first developed more than forty years ago.

The history of bargaining continues to influence current events, and will play an important role in the current negotiations over the terms of the 2011 National Agreement. With full knowledge of that history, the NPMHU will be working hard to obtain a fair and equitable contract for 2011 and beyond, meaning a contract that is both protective and constructive for all mail handlers.

Please continue to watch your bulletin boards for the latest information during the coming weeks and months.

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