



# NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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## 2011 Contract Update #9

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### Contract Talks Continue as Deadline Approaches

Today is Friday, November 18, 2011, and representatives of the NPMHU and the Postal Service continue to negotiate over the possible terms and conditions to be included in the 2011 National Agreement. With the current contract set to expire at midnight on Sunday, November 20, 2011, the parties have moved into a downtown Washington, DC hotel to work throughout the weekend in their ongoing efforts to reach a tentative bargaining agreement.

Several subcommittees that have been meeting since early September are finalizing reports for review and approval by the chief negotiators at the main bargaining table. The most active subcommittees have been focused on Articles 15, governing the grievance-arbitration procedure, and Article 12, governing seniority and reassignments.

In the Article 15 subcommittee, the parties have been focusing on efforts to resolve more cases more quickly – either through withdrawal or settlement – so that any disagreements between the parties that must be determined in arbitration will be decided as promptly as possible.

In the Article 12 subcommittee, the parties have been making adjustments to the seniority and reassignment rules that govern if and when mail handlers may have to be moved from one installation to another. With the recent USPS announcement that management is studying possible closings and consolidations at more than 200 mail processing facilities around the country, these issues are likely to become increasingly important during the coming months and years.

Other subcommittees have been dealing with a handful of other proposals, covering topics related to leave, disclosure of information, and overtime.

Meanwhile, as is traditional in the final days of National negotiations, the main table

participants and off-the-record discussions are now focusing on the key financial and operational issues. As previously reported, the Postal Service has made the subjects of affordability and flexibility the touchstone of this year's bargaining, and in return the NPMHU has been focusing on maintaining the job security and improving the financial standing of the 45,000 mail handlers represented by the NPMHU.

Complicating bargaining are several large and significant issues that, at least in part, are not within the exclusive or joint control of the Union and the Postal Service. In particular, ongoing discussions in Congress about the FERS overfunding and the mandated payments to the Retiree Health Benefits Fund have a direct impact on various bargaining topics, including virtually all pay and health benefit issues. Likewise, the so-called Congressional "Super-Committee" that continues to meet on deficit reduction issues also could have a direct impact on issues affecting the pay or benefits of postal employees, including all mail handlers. And finally, members of Congress and the Postal Regulatory Commission also have taken various positions on issues such as six-day delivery, closing of postal retail outlets, and consolidation of mail processing facilities, and these subjects also affect the National negotiations.

In short, the bargaining process has become immensely complicated. Both parties have devoted the time and resources needed to resolve their disputes, but only time will tell whether an overall and comprehensive deal can be reached.

Please be sure to check the NPMHU website and your bulletin boards for the latest information. An up-to-date report will definitely be published by early Monday morning, after the midnight deadline on November 20, 2011.

### PLEASE POST!!

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