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THE CHALLENGES OF 2011 & 2012

Dear Members,

Whew! What a year it has been. As we gear up for another busy year ahead, it's a good time to take a look back at some of the major issues and challenges that we faced in 2011.

On the legislative front, we've been struggling with Congress all year to try to get a meaningful postal reform bill passed that does not interfere with collective bargaining. If you've been keeping up with the news through prior issues of *The Mail Handler* magazines, in our monthly bulletins, or in the numerous on-line articles and blogs, you are aware of the many different (and sometime dangerous) postal "reform" proposals that have been floating around Capitol Hill. Stay tuned; it's not even close to being settled.

We kicked off bargaining at the end of August, while the ink wasn't even dry yet on two postal service "white papers" that asked Congress to void the no-layoff provisions for all bargaining unit employees, and requested authority for the Postal Service to withdraw from the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and the federal retirement programs. Despite these ill-advised actions by the Postmaster General, we worked hard over the course of the past few months to try to achieve a new National Agreement that could be presented to the membership for a refer-



JOHN F. HEGARTY, National President

endum vote. (As this issue goes to press, we have extended that process beyond the November 20 deadline, and are hoping that we can reach a reasonable settlement.)

During 2011 we were also dealing with continued downsizing of the Mail Handler craft through attrition, and with the closings/consolidations of postal facilities across the country. To make matters worse, the Postal Service announced plans in September 2011 to study almost 300 large Postal Plants for possible closure or consolidation, and to propose regulations that would relax the overnight service standards to coincide with those closings/consolidations. We are fighting these plans in a number of different ways, including in the halls of Congress, and plant by plant by working closely with the Local Unions. This foolhardy plan could be the end of the Postal Service as we know it. By cutting service permanently in reaction to what could be a temporary downturn in volume, the Service could be plunging itself into a death spiral of more lost volume and more cuts in service.