



National Postal Mail  
Handlers Union

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National Postal Mail Handlers Union

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

# FIGHTING FOR A FAIR CONTRACT AND SENSIBLE POSTAL REFORM LEGISLATION

Dear Members,

**O**ur current National Agreement expires on May 20, 2016. Preparations for National negotiations have been ongoing for the past several months. A bargaining strategy session where National Officers, CAD Representatives and Local Presidents from around the nation discussed and debated concepts and priorities was held during the recent Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions (SAMLU) in Boston, MA. Mail Handlers and representatives from throughout the country submitted contract proposals, which covered issues of vital importance to our members. The Field Negotiating Committee, comprised of NEB, CAD, and Local Union representatives, met in October to review, analyze, discuss, and debate the approximately 700 submitted proposals received from the field. The NEB and CAD representatives have held many meetings to discuss specific proposals and strategies. Preparations have now been completed, and we are now ready for action.

Negotiations formally kicked off on February 25, 2016 in the Ben Franklin room at USPS Headquarters. During that session, the NPMHU and USPS introduced their respective bargaining teams and read their opening statements. Bargaining then began in earnest with main table meetings and various subcommittee meetings being conducted. Subcommittees include MHAs, Subcontracting, Safety, Article 12 (reassignments), Article 10 (leave), Article 8 (hours of work/overtime) and Article 11 (holidays).

Our priorities in bargaining include:

- 1. Obtaining a fair and just general wage increase**
- 2. Continuing our current Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs)**



PAUL V. HOGROGIAN, National President

- 3. Maintaining the No Lay Off clause**
- 4. Improving the rights and benefits for our MHAs**
- 5. Returning subcontracted work to the Mail Handler Craft and stopping future subcontracting**
- 6. Minimizing the dislocation and inconvenience to Mail Handlers subject to involuntary reassignments**
- 7. Fighting any USPS proposals to create any new lower wage scale or reduce benefits for future career employees**

We realize that times are tough and that the USPS is experiencing some economic difficulties. We expect this round of bargaining to be extremely difficult. However your negotiating team is up to the challenge. We fully intend to make every effort to reach a negotiated agreement with the Postal Service. If a negotiated agreement is reached, it will be sent to the membership for ratification. If agreement cannot be reached, the parties will enter into a binding arbitration process. The membership will be kept informed during this entire process through updates and bulletins.

Over the next several months we will work tirelessly to achieve a contract that is fair and just. We ask that you support us and work with us to achieve that goal.

**As I have previously reported**, the Postmaster General announced last year that the Postal Service has suspended all pending closures and consolidations until at least April 2016. Although there is nothing official to report, I am cautiously optimistic that this moratorium may be extended. The moratorium notwithstanding, the NPMHU con-



tinues to address closing and consolidation issues through its Contract Administration Department and through the Article 12 Task Force.

The presidents of the four National Postal Unions have been meeting on a regular basis with the Postmaster General and her senior staff and with representatives of the mailing industry to form a coalition on a possible consensus postal reform bill. Any such bill would include a solution to the ill-conceived requirement that the Postal Service pre-fund future retirees' health benefits. It is virtually impossible, given all the competing interests, for the coalition to reach agreement on all aspects of a comprehensive postal reform bill. However, all parties in the coalition have reached consensus on the following concepts:

- Integration into Medicare of all eligible postal retirees (65 years of age and older) and future postal retirees, and investment of some of the retiree health benefit fund into a TSP L-40 type of account
- Recalculation of USPS liability under the CSRS and FERS retirement systems using postal specific assumptions regarding demographics and wage growth with any surplus being returned to the Postal Service
- Making the exigent rate increase permanent and prohibiting the USPS from raising market dominant rates until January 2018
- Allowing the Postal Service to provide non-postal services to State and Local governments and allowing the mailing of beer, wine, and distilled spirits under specific conditions

The challenge is now getting this consensus bill passed in a Congress that has not shown that it can reach agreement on many issues.

The NPMHU will continue to work with its allies throughout the postal community to achieve meaningful postal reform that will best serve the collective interests of NPMHU members, the USPS, and the customers who rely on postal products and services.

The struggle over the Small Parcel Sorter System (SPSS) continues. As I previously reported, the USPS had originally awarded all work on the SPSS to the Mail Handler craft, but then reneged on that determination and instead awarded the "facing

functions" to the clerk craft. This reversal defies all principles of good faith bargaining, and represents an improper change – either unilaterally imposed or bilaterally settled – in assignments. The NPMHU continues to fight this injustice in the RI-399 process, the NLRB and in federal court. The NPMHU will do everything within its power through any available forum to challenge this reversal.

The recently negotiated "Vacancy MOU" continues to pay dividends. Hundreds of MHAs from installations throughout the nation have already been converted to Full-Time Regular Career status as a result of this MOU. Over 4,000 MHAs have been converted to Full-Time Regular career status since the advent of the MHA category. The National Office has recently signed an addendum to the MOU to establish strict ratios of 3 MHA conversions (in installations of 100 or more man years) or 5 MHA conversions (in offices with less than 100 man years) for every non-priority transfer accepted. This addendum will provide even more opportunities for MHAs to be converted to Full-Time career status.

I remain confident that, through the work of our Contract Administration Department and our legal representatives, we can successfully meet any and all challenges that lie before us. The continuing support of all Mail Handlers is very much appreciated.

Fraternally,

**Paul V. Hogrogian**  
National President

“OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS WE WILL WORK TIRELESSLY TO ACHIEVE A CONTRACT THAT IS FAIR AND JUST.”