

## CONTRACT TALKS REACH IMPASSE

Paul V. Hogrogian, National President



**A**s was reported in our last Contract Update, bargaining between the NPMHU and the Postal Service has entered a new stage. After months of negotiations, the NPMHU has declared impasse. While we made progress and reached tentative agreements on important non-economic issues, the Postal Service's economic proposals fall far short of meeting the primary goal that we set out at the beginning of these negotiations — an agreement that fairly compensates Mail Handlers for the important and critical work that we do.

While many issues facing Mail Handlers are unique, our negotiations do not occur in a vacuum. In addition to the issues facing our craft, other important issues that are affecting negotiations are the economic condition of the Postal Service as well as the terms of the National Agreement between the Postal Service and the other Postal unions — namely, the agreement between the Postal Service and the APWU which runs from 2024-2027 and the terms of the agreement between the Postal Service and the NALC which runs from 2023-2026. The APWU agreement was a negotiated agreement, while the terms of the NALC agreement were set through arbitration. Regardless of the way in which those agreements were finalized, both the Postal Service and the NPMHU have been debating the extent to which those agreements serve as a pattern for our negotiations. Also impacting the Postal Service's negotiation position is that the NALC is in negotiations again.

Those negotiations, like ours, have moved from negotiation into the PRA's dispute resolution process.

Declaring impasse is not the end of the negotiation process. Instead, it allows the NPMHU and the Postal Service to turn to the dispute resolution procedures set out in the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA).

One step in the PRA process is mediation. The mediation process allows the parties to turn to the assistance of a third-party neutral as we continue the frank discussions about our differences and to identify possible ideas for narrowing or eliminating those differences. A mediator would not have the power to issue binding settlements or resolutions and cannot therefore compel the parties to reach an agreement. Rather, the mediator serves as a facilitator of discussions, making suggestions to the parties to keep the dialogue and process of negotiations moving forward. The PRA instructs the parties that they are to "cooperate with the mediator in an effort to reach an agreement and shall meet and negotiate in good faith at such times and places that the mediator, in consultation with the parties, shall direct." The mediation is to continue for at least sixty days, unless the parties agree otherwise, either because they have reached a tentative agreement or because they and the mediator believe that an extension of the mediation process would be appropriate.

If mediation proves unsuccessful, and we are otherwise unable to resolve their continuing dispute, the

PRA provides for binding interest arbitration. That arbitration would be conducted under the supervision of a three-member panel, with a neutral arbitrator serving as chair of the panel. The parties would first attempt to select a neutral arbitrator; if no agreement is reached, we would ask the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to produce a list of potential arbitrators, and we would strike names from that list until one remains. Following the presentation of extensive testimony and briefing, the panel will issue a decision setting the terms of the 2025 National Agreement. With history as a guide, an interest arbitration is likely to take several months to schedule and to implement so the terms of the 2025 National Agreement may not be known for some time.

To the extent possible during these periods of confidential communications, the National Office will keep all Mail Handlers informed of developments through the various modes of NPMHU communications, including monthly bulletins and Contract Updates. All members are urged to read these sources of information and the NPMHU website to stay up to date on the latest developments as they occur.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul V. Hogrogian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Paul V. Hogrogian**  
National President