



## OPENING STATEMENT OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT HOGROGIAN AT NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS – JUNE 25, 2025

**O**n behalf of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the 55,000 Mail Handlers that our Union represents, we are pleased to be here in the Benjamin Franklin Room to open the 2025 negotiations with the Postal Service. Although we expect a difficult round of bargaining, the NPMHU is committed to making every reasonable effort to reach an agreement that is good for our members, good for the Postal Service, and good for the American mailing public.

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The Postal Service certainly is facing continuing challenges. Some of those challenges are caused by economic conditions, others by a decline in mail volumes, and still others by operational changes.

When the parties negotiated in 2011, 2016, 2019 and 2022, the Postal Service was seeking substantial reductions in labor costs from bargaining unit employees represented by the Mail Handlers Union, including substantial numbers of non-career employees earning less money and having fewer benefits than career employees. Some of those proposals actually were achieved by the Postal Service during those negotiations, especially from the 2013 Fishgold interest arbitration award. Based on these fundamental changes in our workforce, the Postal Service has reduced its overall labor costs for mail handling activities, and many of those reductions, including a revised wage scale for future career employees, are now scheduled to continue well into the

foreseeable future. But this revised wage scale has resulted in several unintended consequences as a result of several unexpectedly large Cost of Living Adjustments during COVID and the proportional COLA provision of our contract that was a result of the Fishgold award. The current wage scales are badly broken. They have created major inequities in pay and barely provide a living wage for employees at the lower steps of the scale.

The employees at the lower steps of the wage scale make significantly less than their counterparts in the private sector. The clearest and most recent example of this is the UPS/Teamsters bargaining agreement.

In short, the current wage scales as set forth in the National Agreement make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recruit and retain new employees in the Mail Handler craft. In fact, Mail Handler wages have eroded to the level that the Postal Service has informed us that it has had to subcontract Mail Handler work so that it could pay workers higher wages to facilitate recruitment. At the low rates set in the National Agreement, the Postal Service claimed that it could not attract enough candidates. What is clear is that the Mail Handlers Union and the Postal Service have a shared interest in creating a fair wage scale that allows the Postal Service both to hire new employees and retain employees who will devote their careers to this public service.

The national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the return of the American economy to a pattern of normal growth, should mean a return to more normalized collective bargaining. This should be a time for the parties to agree on a period of relatively stable labor relations, without the massive disruptions and dislocations that may be caused by unnecessary subcontracting or privatization.

The Mail Handlers Union remains deeply committed to the negotiating process. Certainly, the NPMHU will continue to work with the Postal Service to address extraordinary circumstances. Mail Handlers were essential workers who reported to work every day during the pandemic, risking their own health and the health of their families. The NPMHU has worked with the former and current Postmasters General to ensure that the Network Redesign outlined in the Delivering for America plan is being implemented properly. Through several Memoranda of Understanding, the Mail Handlers Union provided the Postal Service with the additional staffing it needed during the roll out of the DFA. The NPMHU worked with the Postal Service to provide hundreds of millions of COVID test kits to the American public. The NPMHU also worked with the Postal Service to ensure that our nation's elections were conducted efficiently and fairly.

We will continue to be a partner with the Postal Service to move the institution forward. But we also expect the Postal Service to work with the NPMHU to negotiate a contract that rewards Mail Handlers for the hard work and dedication that we have exhibited during the past difficult years. We expect, and will demand, that the Postal Service engage in good faith bargaining on all issues that are properly the subject of mutual bargaining.

Today obviously is neither the time nor the place for discussing specific proposals. Not only are formal negotiations just beginning, but the Mail Handlers Union does not believe it is productive to negotiate in public, in the newspapers, or in the halls of Congress.

Nonetheless, the goals of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union in this year's round of bargaining can be stated simply. We seek a negotiated agreement that corrects a wage scale that is badly broken and that is keeping the Postal Service from hiring and retaining the employees that it needs; we seek an agreement that protects our jobs and improves our standard of living; we seek a negotiated contract that improves the status of all Mail Handlers, including both employees who have devoted their work lives to the Postal Service or our newest members who are the future of the Postal Service; we seek a contract that minimizes the dislocation of Mail Handlers whose careers may be involuntarily disrupted by subcontracting, excessing or downsizing; and we seek to stop future subcontracting and the continued return of currently outsourced work to the Mail Handler craft.

In short, we seek practical solutions to the problems faced by Mail Handlers, so that, working together, we can ensure that the Postal Service and all its Mail Handler employees can continue to provide the American public with the service that they have come to expect.

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In closing, let me state that the National Postal Mail Handlers Union seeks to obtain a fair and just settlement with the Postal Service. We understand that these negotiations will be difficult. But if management makes reasonable proposals and counterproposals at the bargaining table, we certainly will recommend ratification to our membership. We also hope for and expect the same attitude from postal management – that reasonable proposals from the Union will be met with acceptance. If both parties are able to adopt this approach to bargaining, I remain optimistic that we will be able to reach a negotiated settlement.

Thank you very much.