



BARGAINING A NATIONAL AGREEMENT

Teresa Harmon, Manager, CAD

With our 2019 National Agreement scheduled to expire later this year, the National Office has begun preparing for the upcoming round of bargaining. Since many of you may not be familiar with the actual bargaining process, I have decided to write this article on how this process works.

The framework for collective bargaining between the U.S. Postal Service and the NPMHU is governed by the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA) of 1970. Bargaining begins when one party to the contract serves a written notice to the other of its intent to modify the current agreement. Under Article 39 of our National Agreement, this notice must be served “not less than 90 or more than 120 days before the expiration date of the Agreement.” Our National Agreement is set to expire on September 20, 2022.

However, the Union’s preparation process begins many months before official bargaining starts. It begins with an official call for submission of bargaining proposals from all mail handlers and all Local Unions around the country. President Hogrogian issued this official call on September 14, 2021 and requested the submission of all proposals by January 28, 2022. This resulted in over 800 proposals being sent into the National Office as suggestions for changes in the National Agreement.

Once proposals from the field are received, they are reviewed by the Field Negotiating Committee which is comprised of the National President, the National Secretary-Treasurer, the five Regional Vice Presidents on the National Executive Board, 16 Local Presidents, the National CAD staff and the Union’s legal team. During the first week of February, they reviewed each of the proposals that had been submitted and had in-depth discussion on which of these should be proposed by the NPMHU in the upcoming round of bargaining.

From this time until bargaining officially begins, the National Negotiating Team will meet numerous times to prepare our proposals that will be submitted to the Postal Service, including continuing research on the issues, gathering documentation to support why a change is needed, etc. These internal meetings will continue throughout the bargaining process.

Bargaining will officially begin on June 10, 2022. Although not formally decided yet, negotiations likely will consist of Main Table meetings and Subcommittee meetings. The Main Table meetings are on-the-record meetings during which the parties exchange their official proposals. Both parties will bring submissions to the table. Main Table meetings continue during the course of the negotiation period, with discussions focused on explaining why the proposal is needed, answering any questions raised by the other party, exchanging any documentation that supports the need for the change, and developing counter proposals. In contrast, Subcommittee meetings are not considered on the record. These meetings focus on particular portions of the National Agreement, and allow representatives of the parties to address the pros and cons of specific proposals, with open debate on the issues. In the 2019 negotiations, the parties established Subcommittees for Article 7 (Employee Classifications), 8 (Overtime), 11 (Holidays), 12 (Principles of Seniority, Posting and Reassignments), 32 (Subcontracting), Mail Handler Assistants, Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Intent (MOUs and LOIs).

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If the bargaining results in a tentative agreement between the parties, that agreement is subject to a ratification vote by the NPMHU membership. As required by the NPMHU National Constitution, the vote would be by secret mail ballot.

If the parties fail to reach a tentative agreement, either by the parties being unable to agree or an agreement not being ratified by the membership, the PRA contains an outline of

the procedure that must be followed for binding and final interest arbitration, unless the parties have mutually agreed to a dispute resolution procedure themselves. This PRA procedure contains several steps. First, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) would establish a three-person fact finding panel. Two of the members would be selected by the parties from a list of 15 names given to them by the FMCS. The third person would be selected by the other two, or if they cannot agree, by the Director of the FMCS. The fact-finding panel would have 45 days in which to investigate the bargaining dispute and issue a report of its findings.

If an agreement still cannot be reached by the parties after the fact finding, the PRA requires the establishment

of an arbitration board within 90 days of the contract expiration. This board normally consists of three members — one appointed by the Union, one appointed by the Postal Services, and a third neutral member. The neutral member is appointed either by agreement of the two other members or, if they cannot agree, by the Director of the FMCS.

After the arbitration board is selected, it holds hearings in which both parties are given the chance to present testimony and evidence. The board is required to make a decision within 45 days after its appointment. This arbitration decision is binding on both parties.

Once bargaining starts, the National Office will be sending out regular updates on the progress of negotiations.



VIRTUAL FEDERAL BENEFITS TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE ON OPM'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recently added 13 training videos to their YouTube channel, that were recorded during the 2021 Virtual Federal Benefits Training Event. These videos include:

- Thrift Savings Plan TSP Updates and Overview 2021
- Service Credit and Voluntary Contributions 2021
- Social Security Understanding Retirement Benefits 2021
- Retirement Application Processing 2021
- Understanding High Deductible Health Plans 2021
- Retirement Application Processing 2021
- Military Deposits under CSRS FERS 2021
- Leading DEIA from Where You 2021
- Federal Employees' Dental and Vision Insurance Program
- Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance FEGLI 2021
- Family Matters Federal Employees Health Benefits FEHB Edition 2021
- Essentials of a Worksite Wellness Program 2021
- Court Ordered Benefits 2021

OPM's YouTube Channel includes a comprehensive library of videos covering a plethora of topics relevant to Federal and Postal Employees including Retirement Services, Health and Insurance and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) to highlight a few. Most notably, OPM's Retirement Services library currently encompasses 62 videos, most of which are more than 60 minutes in length. Whether your question relates to the Thrift Savings Plan, Flexible Spending Accounts, FEDVIP and FEGLI, CSRS & FERS retirement planning or a Veteran's decision to initiate Military Deposits to acquire retirement credit for credible military time served, most topics are addressed in detail. To access these videos, search: Office of Personnel Management at youtube.com Please be aware of these resources as you navigate your career with the United States Postal Service.