

THE COVID CRISIS IS FAR FROM OVER

Paul V. Hogrogian, National President



Dear Members: The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating effect on the Postal Service and all postal employees. Mail Handlers and postal workers from around the country continue to courageously perform essential federal service under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

When I reported to you on September 1, 2020, there were 1,695 postal workers who had tested positive and another 481 employees who had been presumed to be positive for a total of 2,176 infected employees. The number of postal employees in quarantine was 3,513. Since then, there has been a major spike in these COVID numbers. As of today, the numbers reflect that approximately 8,600 postal employees are infected, with another 7,700 in quarantine. This represents an increase of 186% over this 2-month period. These numbers are comparable and even higher than those we have experienced during any previous time during this pandemic. The number of COVID-related deaths of postal employees is at least 110.

Although a vaccine should be available sometime next year, the COVID crisis is far from over. We cannot allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security. We must remain vigilant and continue to protect ourselves and our co-workers. We must continue to follow the protocols put in place, especially those concerning social distancing and the wearing of face coverings and masks.

Please contact your Union representatives if your facility is not following any of these protocols (Face Coverings, Supplies, Social Distancing, Stand-Up Talks, Cleanings, etc.).

NPMHU representatives at the National, Regional and Local levels continue to meet on a regular basis with their counterparts in postal management to discuss the Postal Service's response to the outbreak of the virus and to ensure that the proper protocols are in place during ever-changing circumstances. The NPMHU, as well as the APWU, NALC, and NRLCA, continue to have discussions with senior Postal Management to implement a "temperature taking" process in postal installations. Details such as procedures when an employee exceeds that threshold, return to work protocols, and privacy concerns are still being finalized. Discussions are also taking place regarding which installations will implement "temperature taking" procedures. Finalizing these details has become more complicated than expected but we anticipate reaching an agreement in the near future.

Discussions with the Postal Service are also taking place regarding making COVID-19 testing available for postal employees at postal facilities. The NPMHU believes that this would be a positive step in ensuring that Mail Handlers and all postal workers are protected from the COVID-19 pandemic. More details will be provided as these discussions progress.

The NPMHU is also demanding that Mail Handlers and all postal workers

be given priority access to the vaccine once it becomes available. Mail Handlers have been designated as employees providing essential services of the federal government. Mail Handlers have been heroically reporting to work every day, putting their own health at risk, to perform these essential federal services. Fairness dictates that Mail Handlers, as essential workers, be protected and be given such priority access to the vaccine.

The NPMHU reached agreement with the Postal Service to further extend the following Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and policy statements until March 26, 2021:

1. Sick Leave for Dependent Care (Child Care)
2. Liberal Leave Policy
3. MHA Leave
4. Temporary MHA Exception Period
5. Temporary Extension on Step 3 and Arbitration Appeals

The MOU on the Temporary MHA Exception Period contains a provision that protects the rights of those Mail Handlers who have signed the Overtime Desired List. "The MHAs will not be used to the detriment of Mail Handlers on the Overtime Desired List." This generally means that in those installations where temporary MHAs are hired in excess of the contractual MHA cap, the Overtime Desired List(s) should be maximized (12 hours per day/7 days per week).

All of America owes all postal workers a debt of gratitude for preserving and protecting their democratic right to vote.

The Liberal Leave Letter provides that "Leave taken for COVID-19 related reasons ... may not be cited in discipline for failing to maintain an assigned schedule under ELM 511.43."

The NPMHU also reached agreement with the Postal Service on two other Memoranda of Understanding regarding Annual Leave for Leave Year 2021. The Annual Leave Exchange Option MOU has been modified allowing Mail Handlers to sell back a maximum of eighty hours (up from forty) of annual leave prior to Leave Year 2021. The Annual Leave Carryover limit for Leave Year 2021 has been increased to 520 hours (up from 440). The 520-hour Annual Leave limit will also apply to terminal leave for all Mail Handlers who retire between January 2, 2021 and December 31, 2021.

The NPMHU and USPS also agreed to another MOU which extended reappointment opportunities for those MHAs who were hired between March 26, 2020 and December 31, 2020 and were separated for lack of work. These MHAs now have priority reappointment status provided that the need for reappointment arises within twenty-four (24) months of separation.

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During the recent election period, the NPMHU joined with LIUNA, the AFL-CIO and the entire labor movement working to elect worker-friendly, union-friendly candidates to the offices of President and Vice President of the United States, as well as worker-friendly, union-friendly candidates

to the House and Senate. To that end, the National Executive Board authorized release staff (matched by the corresponding Local Union) to work on the Presidential and select Senate campaigns. Mail Handler release staff worked on campaigns in Michigan (President/Senate), Wisconsin (President), Pennsylvania (President), Arizona (President/Senate), Nevada (President), Colorado (President/Senate), and Florida (President). We were successful in most of these campaigns, not the least of which resulted in the election of the NPMHU-endorsed candidates Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as President and Vice President of the United States. On behalf of National Secretary-Treasurer Mike Hora and the entire National Executive Board, I want to thank all Mail handlers who worked on these campaigns. I also want to recognize the extraordinary efforts of our Legislative and Political Director Katie Maddocks, who coordinated all the NPMHU election related activities.

During this election period, the Postal Service processed and delivered 135 million ballots (to and from voters), 610 million pieces of election mail, as well as an additional 4 billion pieces of political mail. The Postal Service delivered 97.9% of ballots within 3 days and 99.7% of ballots within 5 days.

Election task forces were established at the national and installation levels. Mail Handlers were represented and played active roles on these committees. These committees identified and corrected problems in the processing and delivery of ballots. Mail Handler

representatives played a key role in ensuring that all ballots were processed in a safe, secure and timely manner. I want to express my sincere gratitude to all Mail Handlers who served as "Election Ambassadors" and thank you for a job well done.

I also want to express how extremely proud I am of all Mail Handlers and other postal workers on their dedication in performing the patriotic duty of processing election ballots. They went above and beyond to make sure that all ballots placed into their trust were expeditiously processed safely and securely during a pandemic, despite being under intense media and congressional scrutiny and having their honesty and integrity called into question by the incumbent president. All of America owes all postal workers a debt of gratitude for preserving and protecting their democratic right to vote.

I remain confident that through the work of our Contract Administration Department and our legal representatives, and through the hard work of our Regional, Local, and Branch representatives, we can successfully meet any and all challenges that lie before us.

In these and other endeavors, the continuing support of all Mail Handlers is very much appreciated.

Fraternally,



Paul V. Hogrogian

National President