

THE PERPETUAL CYCLE OF PROGRESS

Timothy M. Dwyer, National Secretary-Treasurer



It often seems as if there is no time to rest, as victories are scarce, and the finish line keeps moving. That is because the perpetual cycle of our work is never done. We just finished updating and distributing the fourth version of our Contract Interpretation Manual (CIMv.4) and finalized distribution of the current National Agreement, and it is already time to begin preparations for the next round of bargaining. We just survived our first year under a “unified” federal government, with Republican control of the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the White House, and it is time to prepare for the 2018 mid-term elections. The Mail Handlers Benefit Plan just wrapped up open season, and we have begun the process of reviewing benefits for the 2019 Plan year. The perpetual threat from the USPS to close or consolidate facilities first moved from September 2017 to February 2018, and now it is moving again to May 2018. To survive, we must prepare, train, fight, and stand-united.

To that end, at the upcoming SAMLU meeting in April, the National Office will be distributing thumb drives that contain the updated Contract Interpretation Manual. The parties continue to honor the mutual agreement to jointly develop and implement a Contract Interpretation Manual. This fourth version update sets forth the parties’ mutual understanding regarding the proper interpretation and/or application of the provisions of this Agreement. The CIMv.4 is 479 pages. This updated resource manual links CIM users to 412 identified sources including Step 4 settlements, National Arbitration decisions, pre-arbitration settlements, Memorandums of Understanding, ELM cites, Memorandums of Interpretation, Postal Bulletins, internal policy letters, Code of Federal Regulations language, and various postal handbooks and manuals. All in, the resource linked CIM v.4 contains nearly 3,000 pages.

Because of the size of the manual, it was not cost effective to print in hard copy. Not to mention the fact that a 3000-page manual is not user friendly. The pdf file is large and takes considerable time to download on slower connections. For these reasons, and to accommodate the many requests received from the field, each Union steward will receive a thumb drive loaded with the resource files described in this article. Local President are encouraged to make sure that the

National Office has a current list of representatives for each Local Union. The CIM v.4, with and without linked sources, also is posted on the NPMHU website under the *Member Resources* tab at www.npmhu.org.

The National Office also will include on the thumb drive, in addition to CIMv.4, the newly revised Steward Training Manual, the updated Article 12 Training Manual, and a Step 4 Resource Manual that will organize and present about 400 Step 4 decisions. Most of these documents are completely searchable. Electronic distribution of these resources will enable the Local Unions to print manuals if and when needed.

Our transition to the use of electronic media, where possible, has enabled the NPMHU to save time and money at the National and Local level. Many Locals expressed concerns about the method in which communications, manuals and related hardcopy material is transmitted from the National Office. For example, we learned that very often, the National Office would pay to print, package, and mail documents to a Local Union, only to have the document scanned, saved electronically, and discarded at the user level. To eliminate this wasteful exercise, we are generally transitioning to electronic files. For example, many Locals have elected to receive bi-weekly dues check-off reports electronically. Another example is the NPMHU’s semi-annual Reports of the Contract Administration Department Reports. It is not uncommon for these CAD Reports to exceed 300 pages and weigh several pounds. Local Presidents and SAMLU attendees have commented on the burden of hauling this extra weight home in their luggage, noting the preferred functionality and convenience of an electronic file. Please remember that current and archived CAD Reports dating back to 1994 are available behind the Member Resources link on the National website. The National Office also is exploring the option of reducing Convention reports and related documents to electronic (pdf) format for distribution to and use by Convention delegates. A preliminary analysis seems to show that, if we transition to electronic documents for the National Convention, we would save enough money in printing and transport to provide each delegate with a tablet or e-reader for purposes of accessing the relied upon e-documents. We are in communication with other labor

organizations to evaluate their experiences with electronic documents throughout conventions.

Given the vast amount of written and printed communications, and to embrace technology with considerations to time, money, and the environment, the National Office will continue to utilize electronic documents where feasible and where consistent with the needs of our membership, our representatives, and our Local Unions.

As we prepare for future battles, one cannot help but look at the political landscape and cyclical opportunities that exist. The Union's future can be influenced by the swipe of the pen, especially when that pen is in the hands of unfriendly politicians, and it can take years to recovery from a piece of bad legislation. The NPMHU must remain active and continue to fight to elect Union friendly Members of Congress, and we must extend these efforts to the state and municipality level. Much analysis has occurred over the results of the 2016 elections. Some say the supporters of

It is not uncommon for many House seats to swing against the party that controls the White House in mid-term elections. In the 2010 mid-term elections, following a Democratic White House victory, Republicans regained control of the House by picking up a net total of 63 seats. There is a 2018 mid-term opportunity at our doorstep, but to seize control, we must remain active. The tide began to swing this past year, on November 8, 2017. Union-supported Democrats won the Governor's races in New Jersey and Virginia and enjoyed countless down-ballot victories. Let's keep the momentum going.

Finally, I will wrap up with a comment about the Postal Service's decision to exercise the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA). Each eligible member must make his or her own decision based on individual circumstances. This early-out offer is perfect for someone that was retiring anyway. But there is a reason why the USPS rolled out the VERA without consultation with the Union. The offer is absent of

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worker-friendly candidates simply did not get out the vote. Others opine that the Republican sweep occurred because there was no great choice on the ballot. In the 2016 elections, only 55% of eligible voters cast ballots, compared to 60% in 2012, 63.7% in 2008 and 62.2% in 2004. I remain optimistic that the 2016 results were a wake-up call. Millions of women sent a message of unity to the White House by participating in the 2017 Women's March. The event occurred in every major city in America the day after President Trump's 2017 inauguration, and the Women's March was recently repeated on January 21, 2018. If the 2016 results angered you, or if you are troubled by the divisive tone coming out of the White House, I am calling on you to get involved and perform the most basic civic duty: register to vote; encourage your spouse, family members and friends to register to vote; vote in each and every election; and remain fully engaged in the issues.

any substantive value or incentive. In the January Update, we reported that 5,579 Mail Handlers would receive VERA offers. It turns out that 7,788 members actually were eligible and received annuity estimates. The fact that less than 85 Mail Handlers accepted the offer in advance of the first of three separation deadlines speaks volumes. The Union will share these results and future developments as the information becomes available.

In Solidarity,



Timothy M. Dwyer
National Secretary-Treasurer