



WE WANT YOUR IDEAS

Timothy M. Dwyer, National Secretary-Treasurer

Negotiations for a new contract with the USPS are right around the corner, and the National Office sent out solicitations for bargaining proposals this past month, in September 2018.

This is a straight-forward notification to our entire membership: if you think there is something in the collective bargaining agreement (affectionately known as the National Agreement) that needs to be changed, then send in a proposal! This is your opportunity to make your voice heard by making a recommendation to improve our contract with the Postal Service. Each and every proposal sent into the NPMHU National Union by any member of our Union will be accepted, reviewed, discussed, analyzed, and fought over by our Field Negotiations Committee. The members of that Committee will either select your proposal or some variant of your proposal as a recommended change to the National Agreement that the NPMHU will attempt to acquire through bargaining, or your proposal will be rejected as something we do not want or perhaps cannot realistically attain. But every one of the proposals submitted by one or more members will get a fair shot.

**This process is called
“collective bargaining.”
It is a ‘give and take’ process.**

Before the last round of National negotiations, in 2016, we reviewed hundreds of proposals from our membership and adopted scores of the proposals as the core items to be demanded by the Union in bargaining.

Your Union has sent out proposal forms via our magazine, through notices that should already be posted on your bulletin board, and on the Union website (www.npmhu.org) where we have forms you can print as well as fillable forms you can use on-line. You can even find a blank submission form on page 22 of this publication.

Here’s how it works. You make a proposal to change the existing language of our contract. You quote the old language and then write your recommended language to replace the old language. For example: let’s say you don’t like the Holiday Scheduling language. Let’s say you think we should get paid “double time” for working the holiday if you are forced to work. You do something like this:

- Go to the NPMHU website (you forgot already? It’s www.npmhu.org)
- Go to the Article, “President Hogrogian Issues Official Call for Bargaining Proposals”
- At the bottom of the Article, open “Bargaining Proposal Fillable Form”

OK, you are just about done and can go back to playing pinochle or watching ‘Dancing with the Fools’ or ‘America has NO Talent’ or whatever other important activity you might really have to get done today.

Now, you are looking at a form with our Union logo that says “National Postal Mail Handlers Union 2019 National Negotiations” at the top.

- First Box: write or type in your Local Union number.
- Next fill out the article to be changed. In my example over Holiday pay, the Article would be “11,” the section would be “4,” the paragraph would be “A,” and the page of the contract would be page “37.”
- Next in the big box, the form says, “change to read as follows.”
- So, first you write the existing language, “A. An employee required to work a holiday other than Christmas shall be paid the base hourly straight time rate for each hour worked up to eight hours.”
- Next, you write how you want the language to read, such as “An employee required to work on a holiday other than Christmas shall be **paid double** the base hourly straight time rate for each hour worked up to eight hours **and triple** the base hourly straight time rate for each additional hour worked that exceeds eight hours.”

Almost done. There's just a few more boxes. So now there's another big box that says "Reason for change" at the top. You write in the box, "Holiday Scheduling in my installation is a joke; they mandate everyone for every holiday. Make this change and let's see how bad they really need people to work."

Now you pop in your name, the date of your submission, and push "print" and you have completed your proposal to change the National Agreement! You may also want to change the next paragraph in Article 11.4 to "up the ante" on Christmas work as well. But that should be another proposal.

Anyway, here's the big part: you mail this proposal to the National Office. You probably know how to mail something and where to bring it (hint: your work location might be an option), so that it eventually gets to Washington, DC.

Let's try another one, staying with Article 11 on Holidays. Let's go right to the beginning of Article 11. Your proposal says, "Article 11, Section 1, Paragraph (none) and page 36."

You want to change the following:

- Current language:
"The following ten (10) days shall be considered holidays for full-time...."
- You want to change as follows:
*"The following **eleven (11) days shall be considered holidays for...."***

Maybe we even say that MHAs should get this new Holiday, so that it is an eleventh Holiday for career employees and the seventh for MHAs.

- And the one Holiday you believe should be added is **July 26, 'Ben Franklin Day,' celebrating the day in 1775 that Congress established the United States Post Office as a crucial component of the American communications system.**
- Reason for Change: To honor the creator of the USPS, William Goddard, whose plan was championed by Benjamin Franklin, our first Postmaster General and sixth President of the United States of America, who in the spirit of nepotism and cronyism that is exemplified, entrenched, and embraced each and every day in the modern USPS, had the job as PMG for fifteen months and then handed it off to his son-in-law! (Your NST knows that Ben Franklin was never U.S. President, but wants to make sure you are paying attention.)

OK, I have given you a couple of examples on how to seek a change to existing language of the National Agreement. But what about adding something that is not there? How would you do that? Well my Brothers and Sisters, here is how:

- Go through the same process with a simple exception. You go to the NPMHU website. (You still cannot remember the address of our website? Well, it's www.npmhu.org, and there's a lot of great information on this site!)
- Fill in the box for your Local Union. You want something new, something that's not in our contract. So, you can skip the boxes for "Article", "Section", Paragraph, "page number" and go right to the big box. You type your suggestion in the "Big Box." Maybe you write, "Employees must have at least two years of employment with the USPS to be eligible for a detail assignment as a temporary (204b) supervisor." Under "reason for change," you can explain why an employee should know something about the place they work before they can be placed in charge of Mail Handler craft employees.

But here is the most important thing to remember: this process is called "collective bargaining." It is a 'give and take' process. For everything that the NPMHU, as an organization, seeks in bargaining, the response from the USPS is usually, "What are you going to give us in exchange for this thing you want"? We want more holidays without mandatory work. They want more temporary employees. We want more pay. They want more temporary employees. We want more protections for our duty assignments. They want more temporary employees. Are you seeing a pattern here?

Every "gain" we seek in bargaining is countered by something the USPS sees as a "gain" for them. And if we cannot reach settlement on an agreement, an arbitrator is more than likely going to want the side looking for change to show why the existing language of the agreement is a "problem" that would be fixed by adoption of the new proposed language.

So, when you make your proposal and the box says "reason for change," please describe in as much detail as possible why the change you seek would fix an existing problem.

Collectively speaking, if we all do our part, it is more likely that the NPMHU will succeed in next year's bargaining. So please do your part by sending in and explaining your proposals. We want your ideas.

I remain,
Fraternally,



Timothy M. Dwyer
National Secretary-Treasurer