

AVOIDING UNINTENDED MULTIPLE UNION DUES WITHHOLDING

Michael J. Hora, National Secretary-Treasurer



Nearly twenty years ago, on December 4, 2003, the four major Unions representing postal employees entered into an understanding known as the “Reciprocal Agreement” between and among the representatives of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), the National Rural letter Carriers Association (NLRCA), and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. The Reciprocal Agreement was reached after decades of confusion resulting from members of one bargaining unit transferring to another bargaining unit, joining the Union of the gaining bargaining unit and finding themselves suddenly paying dues to both Unions. This problem caused unwanted results for the member and the Unions. The “Reciprocal Agreement” was created with the intent to resolve these issues once and for all.

Unfortunately, most members of bargaining units have never even heard of this agreement, and many representatives of the bargaining units, including most Officers and Stewards, have little familiarity with the “Reciprocal Agreement” and how to apply it. Compounding this issue is the constant movement, both voluntarily and involuntarily, from one bargaining unit to another within the Postal Service. On average, the number of active applications for transfer on the Postal Service’s eReassign page easily eclipses 20,000 lines. This represents a significant percentage of postal employees seeking to transfer at any given time.

Even though not all such applications are seeking a job in a different craft, this still represents a considerable number of people seeking to change their work locations and, often, their craft. This number is buttressed by other employees being involuntarily moved from one craft to another. “Excessing” has been a reality in the Postal Service for decades, but in the past decade, the Postal Service has ramped up the number of impacted employees in all crafts. Many times, employees arrive in a new building and/or a new craft and are immediately approached by a well-meaning Shop Steward who asks the newly arrived employee to join their new Union. This equally well-meaning employee fills out the Form 1187 (Authorization for Deduction of Dues) and hands it to his or her new Shop Steward, who then submits it to the USPS Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) and just like that, the new employee is now paying “double dues.” The employee may not even notice they are paying double dues for a few pay periods, but when they do, who do they blame? The Union, of course!

In an attempt to reduce the unintended consequences just described, the Unions entered into the Reciprocal Agreement that deals specifically with one singular issue: eliminating “double dues” payments in situations where a Union Member leaves a position with one bargaining unit for a different bargaining unit and joins the gaining Union. This is a very specific agreement between and among the four Unions. There are specific instructions within

the “Reciprocal Agreement” for each specific Union that explains — step-by-step — how to process a Standard Form 1187 (Authorization for Deduction of Dues) for an employee who already belongs to another Union and thus how to keep that employee from suffering from “double dues.” A copy of the “Reciprocal Agreement” is available in the Stewards Resources section of our website or through request to the National Office. So, what exactly does the “Reciprocal Agreement” say? For an employee from another craft who is a member of their former bargaining unit’s Union, joining the NPMHU (and avoiding double dues) is pretty simple, and it goes like this:

- Employee fills out a Standard Form 1187 (Authorization for Deduction of Dues).
- The Union Representative who signs up the employee writes on the top of the signed 1187, “DO NOT PROCESS UNTIL APWU [or NALC or NLRCA] DUES DEDUCTION IS TERMINATED.” The Union Representative maintains the 1187 locally until the former Union’s dues deductions stop (see below).
- The Local Union sends a letter to the National Secretary-Treasurer along with a copy of the subject 1187 and requests assistance with termination of the subject employee’s prior bargaining unit’s dues deduction.
- The National Secretary-Treasurer makes a written request to

cancel dues deductions to the losing Union organization.

- The National Secretary-Treasurer contacts the Local Union when verification of the cancellation of dues is received.
- The Local parties should then transmit the SF 1187 of the new member to HRSSC for processing.

There is another problem, as well. Some of the well-meaning representatives of our Union and others unwittingly attempt to allow people out of their respective Union for any variety of reasons, such as when the member is suffering financial hardship, or the member has transferred to another craft (but doesn't want to join the gaining Union).

The National Office gets a lot of inquiries from Local Unions and Local representatives looking to cancel an employee's dues for reasons other than those that fall under the purview of the "Reciprocal Agreement." Some folks just want to stop paying dues. Some folks leave the Mail Handler craft but

do not join the Union in their new bargaining unit. These situations are covered by the terms and conditions of the USPS Employee and Labor Relations Manual, Section 925.122, and not the "Reciprocal Agreement."

Another common question surrounds one's dues authorization when separated for various reasons such as lack of work. This situation is governed by ELM 925.21. The Postal Service will discontinue dues withholding upon separation of any employee enrolled in the dues withholding program, although the process is modified for non-career employees. Dues withholding is discontinued for a non-career employee at the end of a term of employment. However, the SF 1187 stays in effect for 180 days. If the employee is rehired within 180 days, the dues deduction restarts automatically, unless the employee submits a cancellation as specified in ELM 925.122d. After a separation of 180 days, a rehired employee must complete another SF 1187 in order to activate dues withholding.

Lastly, a word about the upcoming dues increase. Consistent with Article

XIV, Section 3 of the NPMHU National Constitution, the National Office will soon be implementing a regular membership dues increase in the amount of two dollars (\$2.00) per pay period — of which the Local Union will receive one-dollar (\$1.00) per pay period.

This dues increase includes the regular and special one-time dues increase authorized by Article XIV, Section 3 of the NPMHU National Constitution and is scheduled to become effective in PP25-2022 — to be reflected in paychecks issued on December 9, 2022.

Our commitment to the NPMHU requires that all Mail Handlers belong to the Union that fights for their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, without exclusion and without exception. Thank you for your continued support.

In Unity,



Michael J. Hora
National Secretary-Treasurer

