Officers and representatives from nearly every NPMHU Local Union gathered in Chicago, Illinois in late August to participate in the Semi-Annual Meeting of the Local Unions. Also in attendance at this event were members of the National Executive Board, all NPMHU National Office department heads, and personnel from the National and Regional Contract Administration Department.

National President John Hegarty delivered his comprehensive report to the assembly, which focused primarily on two key issues: pending postal reform legislation, and implementation of the Fishgold Arbitration Award. As part of his legislative comments, Hegarty provided a lengthy and detailed review of postal issues affecting the various versions of pending legislation to include: overfunding of the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS); pre-funding obligations of the Retiree Health Benefits Fund; the preservation of USPS service standards, six-day delivery, and the integrity of the mail processing network; and the preservation of collective bargaining rights, proposed changes in the governance structure of the Postal Service, and the NPMHU’s support for proposals that would allow the Postal Service to offer additional postal services or various types of non-postal services.

Following his Legislative comments, President Hegarty shifted focused to a variety of topics, including a lengthy review of various items related to the implementation of the 2011 National Agreement, as provided for in the February 2013 Fishgold Arbitration Award, including: printing and distribution to the NPMHU membership of the 2011 National Agreement; progress on conversion of PTF Mail Handlers to full-time regular status during the prescribed 180-day transition period; the removal of exceptions to the 5% installation cap on employment of casual employees; status of Mail Handler Assistant (MHA) hiring, and the tracking and enforcement mechanisms related to installation and district hiring limitations; a review of the joint NPMHU and USPS Q&A document related to the Fishgold Arbitration Award; a discussion regarding Step 3 appeals processing matters outlined in Article 15 of the award; a review of subcontracting matters being considered by the Article 32 Task Force; a review of the timetable for Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) negotiations; and plans for development of version 4 of the Contract Interpretation Manual (CIM). Hegarty also provided an update on USPS efforts and timetables to implement closures and consolidations of many of its mail processing facilities; a review of the USPS financial situation; and a status report on Congressional activity relative to possible legislation in the new 113th Congress.

Following discussion of the issues presented by President Hegarty, National Secretary-Treasurer Gardner provided a detailed presentation and entertained questions and comments on a variety of topics, including the NPMHU financial statements for the quarter ending June 30, 2013; an updated presentation and analysis related to Mail Handler complement, regular and associate membership trends, and revenue projections and allocation among our Union’s affiliated organizations; a review and discussion of issues related to the NPMHU Revenue Sharing Program; a presentation regarding cost-of-living allowance (COLA) adjustments,
and the effect of those adjustments on the Mail Handler wage scales; a review of logistics surrounding the planned nationwide membership organizing campaign; and a report on scheduled NPMHU national meetings.

The attendees also heard a report from NPMHU Legislative and Political Director Bob Losi on various legislative and political efforts. Additionally, SAMLU attendees were very pleased to welcome Congressman Danny Davis (D-IL) to this meeting of the Local Unions. Congressman Davis addressed the assembly and shared his views on pending postal reform legislation, and the importance of protecting the rights and benefits of Mail Handlers and all postal employees in any final legislative changes.

The attendees heard a comprehensive report and discussion from Coventry/Aetna’s Director of National Accounts Brad Corban and Vice President of National Accounts Al DiLeo on the status of the Mail Handlers Benefit Plan (MHBP). That report
covered various topics, including a discussion of the recent acquisition of Coventry Health Care by Aetna, and benefits and synergies resulting from that merger of operations. The report also detailed key strategies being pursued during the upcoming FEHBP open season marketing period. Mail Handlers Benefit Plan (MHBPP) Executive Director Michael Hora followed up with a comprehensive review of the details, logistics, and timeline regarding the 2013 MHBPP Partial Reimbursement Program.

Contract Administration Department Manager T.J. Branch then provided a full report and entertained questions and comments from various attendees on the activities of the Contract Administration Department since the last meeting of the Local Unions. The remainder of Brother Branch’s presentation was based on the written report that was circulated at the meeting (and which is being distributed on CD to all NPMHU Officers and Stewards) and included the following topics: Contract Administration Department Staff Appointments; The 2011 National Agreement; Fishgold Arbitration Award Q&A; Reports on Mail Handler Assistants; Calculation of Overtime Pay for MHAs; MOU on One-Time Purge of Letters of Warning; Selection of Regional and Expedited Arbitrators; Local Memorandum of Understanding/Impasse Procedures; Cases Pending National Arbitration; RI-399 Jurisdictional Disputes; DOMA – Same-Sex Marriage Policy Changes; Department of Labor – OWCP Data Suspension; Staffing Scheduler; Shared Services; Article 12 Task Force; Modified Arbitration Process (MAP); OSHA/USPS Electrical Work Plan Settlement Agreement; Expansion of the Pilot Test of the Sales Retention Team; Pilot Test of the Secure Destruction Program; Lean Mail Processing Project; Outsourcing of the Dispatch and Routing Tag – Terminal Handling System (Portland, OR); Pilot Test of Outsourcing at NDCs; Quality of Work Life (QWL); Contract Interpretation Manual (CIM); Network Optimization; Consolidating/Closing of Postal Plants; and Step 4 Appeals.

Finally, Northeastern Regional Vice President, Local 300 President and National Trainer Paul Hogrogian and
Congressman Davis spoke to the importance of protecting the rights and benefits of Mail Handlers and all postal employees in any final legislative changes.
National CAD Representative Tim Dwyer then took the podium to lead discussions on two important issues, the first being activities of the NPMHU/USPS Article 12 Task Force, followed by an update on activities related to implementation of the Fishgold Arbitration Award. Brothers Hogrogian and Dwyer gave an in-depth presentation on the Fishgold Award and recently signed Question & Answer Agreement, after which they entertained a plethora of questions and comments from the attendees.

The meeting was well-received and successful, and resulted in a lively exchange of opinions and ideas as to how best represent all Mail Handlers during these difficult and challenging times.
Local 300 Treasurer Kevin Tabarus, Local 322 President Michael McIntyre and CT SEBM Don Utz.

Local 307 Recording Secretary Keylea Fuqua and Local 307 Chief Steward Ursula Patterson.

Local 303 & 311 Treasurers (l to r) Van Cunningham and Darren Atterbury.

Local 306 delegation welcomes attendees with warm Chicago hospitality.

Attendees participate in training session.

(l to r) Local 304 Treasurer Gary Stern, Local 304 President Clyde Patterson and Eastern Region Vice President and Local 305 President Kevin Fletcher.