

## WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE UNION

Michael J. Hora, National Secretary-Treasurer



It is a mantra that is repeated over and over, *Join the Union, Join the Fight*. Member recruitment is particularly challenging when new-hire orientations are held in a virtual setting. The Postal Service has hired thousands of mail handlers while beefing up for the 2021 peak mailing season. Traditionally, a representative of the NPMHU would be afforded the opportunity to meet face-to-face locally with all newly hired mail handlers during their initial orientation, but we are not in traditional times. The pandemic and social distancing guidelines have created an unfortunate situation that the USPS is using to its advantage. The pandemic has changed the way people shop, travel, work, dine out, congregate, gather, meet, and live life. Remote meetings and gatherings by means of a camera and screen are now a way of life for many. The USPS has adapted as well and is now conducting new hire orientations in a virtual and remote setting. The Union would like to think this is a temporary situation, but we are not optimistic that this decision gets reversed voluntarily. This harmful and unilateral action is being challenged in a National-Level appeal, but we do not have time to sit idly by, waiting for that case to be heard and resolved; we must act now.

The good news is that our membership numbers are increasing. During the last 26 Pay Periods, mail handlers in a pay status reported on biweekly Dues Checkoff reports have increased by 12% and we are at a twelve-year high. The not-so-good news is we have an equally challenging opportunity on the non-member side of the ledger. Yes, the Postal Service 'says' the NPMHU will have access to all new Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs) when reporting, on the first day at their assigned facility, but we know that this is not occurring across the country.

Please take a few minutes to speak with our new MHAs and encourage them to join the National Postal Mail Handlers Union. The benefits of union membership are extraordinary. The 2019 National Agreement provided for 3 general wage increases of 1.1%, 1.0% and 1.8% effective in PP25 of 2019, 2020 & 2021. In an ongoing move to close the gap in MHA wages, the NPMHU negotiated an extra 1% for MHAs in each of the 3 general wage increases. In addition, career mail handlers will receive six cost of living (COLA) increases throughout the life of the current National Agreement with proportional application to mail handlers on Table 2. The union was able to eliminate casual employees, making way for tens of thousands of new mail handler positions. In 2021, the NPMHU will have secured more than 14,000 MHA conversions to full-time regular (FTR) career mail handlers. This would not have been possible without the negotiated elimination of casual employees. In total, the NPMHU has secured over 31,000 MHA conversions to FTR since Arbitrator Fishgold created the new employment category in 2013. Every new employee is hired as an MHA, and this is the path to a career position.

In addition to wage improvements, the NPMHU secured vast improvements in healthcare options and eligibility. Upon one's reappointment to a second year of employment, MHAs can choose coverage under the USPS Noncareer health plan (at \$125 per pay period for self only, or with the Postal Service paying 75% of the total premium for self-plus-one or family coverage) or the MHA will be able to use the same dollar amounts from the Postal Service to obtain coverage from the MHBP Consumer Option or the MHBP Value Plan, which are two of the three plans sponsored in the Federal Employees Health Benefits program by the NPMHU.

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Please remind our new MHAs of other union negotiated benefits such as paid holidays, sick leave, annual leave, and overtime. Casuals did not enjoy holiday pay or leave of any type. Casuals did not receive overtime until they exceeded 40 hours in a workweek. MHAs and other mail handlers receive overtime pay for work performed in excess of eight (8) hours on duty in any one service day or in excess of forty (40) hours on duty in any service week.

In short, the Union has your back. We are there to defend the contract, ensure that employees are treated with dignity and respect, and we continue to fight to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for every single mail handler. The USPS is not freely giving away health insurance, life insurance, and retirement benefits without a fight. When bargaining a contract, everything has a cost. It is imperative that we present a unified front that includes every single mail handler. To do that, we need every mail handler to join the NPMHU. We have put together a short video entitled, *Join the Union, Join the Fight*. It can be viewed from the linked rotator image at [npmhu.org](http://npmhu.org) or on the mobile app. On the national website, you can also learn about other member-only benefits such as the NPMHU Arthur S. Vallone Scholarship program. Applications must be received by March 15, 2022. On page 25 of this publication, you can learn about the Union Plus benefit of free college for union members. This is only one of many benefits offered by virtue of our partnership with Union Plus.

## The USPS is not freely giving away health insurance, life insurance, and retirement benefits without a fight.

We are approaching the end of the current National Agreement, and the cyclical nature of collective bargaining has begun, again. During our recent SAMLU meeting and bargaining strategy session in Washington DC, representatives from across the country expressed their opinion and shared their thoughts about contractual issues important to members. This opportunity is not limited to union leaders. All members are encouraged to submit contract proposals. You can find a submission form on page 31 of this magazine. Please take a minute to ask your MHA co-workers if they have joined the union. Maybe the local union was not afforded an opportunity to meet with them during or after orientation. Remember, mail handlers can download a blank Standard Form 1187 from the national website at [npmhu.org](http://npmhu.org); simply search 1187. Encourage your MHA co-workers to download, print, and complete an 1187,

and then submit it to a local union official. The bi-weekly dues are a small price to pay for the negotiated benefits and protections of a solid Collective Bargaining Agreement.

I also would like to expend a few words on Internet security and best practices. The Postal Service recently notified several thousand employees about suspicious or unusual log-in activity in the PostalEase system, which is the self-service web application that serves as an employee's gateway to many postal financial-related services. This potentially unauthorized access could adversely affect one's PostalEase account. I am pleased to report that after investigation, to prevent further activity, the USPS took swift precautionary measures and placed some employee's PostalEase accounts in a hold status pending a mandatory password reset. While some might view this as an inconvenience, I applaud the Postal Service's move to quickly lock down access and require reauthentication by way of a new password. The NPMHU has learned of several situations in which a craft employee gave login and password details to a third-party vendor for purposes of initiating an allotment or Net to Bank authorization. Please, never share your log-in credentials or other PostalEase information with anyone, under any circumstances. In case you are interested in some other resources that can be used to protect your identity, a good source of information is the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC's website ([www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)) provides useful information regarding identity theft and data protection. You may also call the FTC at 1-877-438-4338 (TTY: 1-866-653-4261). In addition, you may also request a free credit report online at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com).

Lastly, I want to address the one-dollar dues increase that did not happen on December 12, 2021 as planned. We routinely attempt to coordinate any dues increases with the general wage increase. The most recent general wage increase was effective on November 20, 2021 and appeared on paychecks dated December 10, 2021. As a result of delays at the Accounting Service Center, the dues increase was delayed two Pay Periods and will not occur until Pay Period 01 of 2022, which begins on December 18, 2021 and will be reflected on paychecks dated January 7, 2022. There will be a one-time two-dollar adjustment to account for the 28-day delay in application of this one-dollar dues increase. Additional details will be posted on the website and disseminated locally as information becomes available.

In Unity,



**Michael J. Hora**  
National Secretary-Treasurer