

NPMHU TO BEGIN NATIONAL BARGAINING WITH USPS

Paul V. Hogrogian, National President



Dear Members:
The collective bargaining agreement between the NPMHU and the USPS is set to expire on September 20, 2022. Negotiations officially opened on June 10th. The entire National Executive Board as well as the National CAD staff attended the opening session. During this opening session the NPMHU and the USPS presented their opening statements setting the stage for this year's bargaining process. Videos of these opening statements can be viewed on our web site (www.NPMHU.org).

The NPMHU bargaining team is led by the National President and includes National Secretary-Treasurer Mike Hora, Manager of Contract Administration Teresa Harmon, Executive Assistant to the National Officers Neil Ryan, National CAD Representatives Tom Ruther and Eugene Horton, and our legal team from the NPMHU's General Counsel's office. The USPS team is led by the Deputy Postmaster General and Chief Human Resources Officer Doug Tulino, Acting Vice President of Labor Relations Tom Blum, and Chief Spokesperson Patrick Devine.

Our priorities in bargaining include:

1. A fair and just general wage increase
2. A continuation of our current Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs)
3. Fixing the badly broken wage scale which hinders the recruitment and retention of new Mail Handler employees.
4. Keeping the No Lay Off clause
5. Improving the wages, rights and benefits for our MHAs
6. Increasing MHA conversions to career status
7. Returning subcontracted work to the Mail Handler Craft and stopping future subcontracts
8. Minimizing the dislocation and inconvenience to Mail Handlers subject to involuntary reassignments
9. Addressing the issue of MHAs serving as 204Bs.

Preparations for this round of bargaining began early last year. A bargaining strategy session was held on the third day

of our Semi-Annual Meeting of Local Unions (SAMLU) held in Washington, DC on November 15-17, 2021. Mail Handler representatives from throughout the country discussed the priorities for these negotiations. Our Field Negotiating Committee met in Washington, DC for five days from February 7 to 11, 2022, to thoroughly review, analyze, discuss, debate, and evaluate the over 800 proposals that were received from the field and to formulate proposals of its own. The Committee provided its recommendations, which were sent to the National Bargaining Team for their analysis and consideration. The National Bargaining Team then formulated formal contract proposals to be submitted to the Postal Service.

This is not a particularly opportune time during which to bargain. The Postal Service's financial situation and the continuing decline in mail volume (especially First-Class Mail) lead us to believe that these negotiations will be extremely difficult. It is time for the Postal Service to stand up and justly compensate all Mail Handlers for the hard work and dedication that they have demonstrated throughout the two years of the pandemic. Talk is cheap, now is the time for action.

The NPMHU bargaining team is up to the task at hand and will work tirelessly to achieve a fair contract for all Mail Handlers. Meanwhile, the NPMHU will routinely and frequently keep the membership informed of the progress of these negotiations.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had an adverse effect on the Postal Service and all postal employees since March of 2020. Mail Handlers and postal workers from around the country courageously performed essential federal service under the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, often putting their own health at risk.

The NPMHU has spent the last two years dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports issued by the USPS in late January and early February 2022 showed an all-time high of over 18,600 infected postal employees. However, recent reports released in March show that the COVID numbers are decreasing substantially. The latest reports reflect

that there are approximately 2,000 postal employees who are infected with another approximately 200 in quarantine.

During the last two years, the NPMHU and the USPS negotiated a series of MOUs to address COVID-19 and the impact that it had on all postal employees. These MOUs included the following:

- [SLDC-Childcare](#)
- [Additional MHA Leave](#)
- [Temporary MHA Exception Periods](#)
- [Transfer MOU-COVID-19](#)
- [Step 3/Arbitration Extensions](#)
- [A Liberal Leave Policy was also in effect regarding COVID-19 related absences. The Postal Service agreed that COVID-19 related absences would be considered “scheduled” and could not be used as a basis for discipline.](#)

These MOUs and the Liberal Leave Policy were first negotiated in March 2020 and were extended ten times (in May/July/September/December of 2020, in March/June/September/December of 2021, and in February/March of 2022) and expired on May 6, 2022. The NPMHU and the USPS have mutually agreed not to extend the COVID-19 MOUs, and the Postal Service has unilaterally decided not to extend the Liberal Leave Policy.

The USPS also has decided to cease operations of its COVID Command Center effective May 9, 2022. The Postal Service initially notified the NPMHU that it would stop the recording and reporting of COVID-19 cases. The NPMHU and other postal unions argued that this decision was premature in that COVID-19 numbers and hospitalizations are slowly rising as of early May 2022, and there are many medical experts predicting a summer surge of COVID infections. The Postal Service subsequently modified its policy and issued the following clarification:

“Although the COVID Command Team is being disbanded, as issues arise the appropriate stakeholder leadership will be engaged.

The Return to Work Protocols and our Close Contact Tracing activities will continue for as long as necessary.

All new cases of COVID 19 and Close Contact Quarantine will continue to be monitored and tracked in our HERO COVID 19 Tracker.

We can produce the report on a weekly basis.”

The NPMHU will continue to monitor the situation and take any action that may be necessary.

The four major postal unions, senior postal officials, and many of the major mailers have been working together on a comprehensive postal reform bill for over a decade. The

bi-partisan Postal Reform Act was introduced in Congress earlier this year. The bill was overwhelmingly passed in a vote by the House in February 2022 by a vote of 341-92, with 120 Republicans voting in favor. The Senate also voted on the bill in early March, where it passed by a vote of 79-19, with 29 Republicans voting in favor. On April 6, 2022, President Biden signed the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 into law. I was proud to stand with President Biden, fellow union leaders, and dedicated champions of the Postal Service on this historic day. This is certainly a major victory for the Postal Service, postal employees, and the American public. This bill puts the USPS on a much stronger path towards financial stability. Please refer to Legislative/Political Director Katie Maddock’s article in this magazine for more details on Postal Reform.

On March 28, 2022, the NPMHU and the Postal Service reached agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding that provided for additional Mail Handler staffing by converting an additional 1,202 Mail Handler Assistants (MHAs) to Full-Time Career status. These conversions occurred in 42 installations throughout the country. This MOU along with previous MOUs signed in December 2020 (5,291 conversions), March 2021 (885 conversions), and June 2021 (6,596 conversions) have provided for 13,974 conversions to career status. In addition to the conversion MOUs, the Residual Vacancy MOU continues to pay dividends. The provisions of the Residual Vacancy MOU continue to apply and additional MHAs are being converted in addition to those converted under the conversion MOUs.

- [Total Conversions since the inception of the MHA category: 33,306](#)
- [Total Conversions since the Residual Vacancy MOU: 30,850](#)
- [The NPMHU will continue its efforts to maximize the Full-Time career workforce for Mail Handlers.](#)

I remain confident that through the work of our Contract Administration Department and our legal representatives, and through the hard work of our Regional, Local, and Branch representatives, we can successfully meet all challenges that lie before us.

Fraternally,



Paul V. Hogrogian
National President