



MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS: 815 16th Street, N.W. • Suite 5100 • Washington, D.C. 20006 • (202) 833-9095



Paul V. Hogrogian
National President

MAIL HANDLERS AND USPS BEGIN NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS



Michael J. Hora
Secretary-Treasurer

STATEMENT BY

PAUL V. HOGROGIAN

NATIONAL PRESIDENT

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

UPON THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS

WITH THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 27, 2019

On behalf of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the 44,000 Mail Handlers that our Union represents, we are pleased to be here in the Benjamin Franklin Room to open 2019 negotiations with the Postal Service. Although we expect a difficult round of bargaining, the NPMHU is committed to making every reasonable effort to reach an agreement that is good for our members, good for the Postal Service, and good for the American mailing public.

The Postal Service certainly is facing continuing challenges, some caused by economic conditions, others by legislative actions (or inactions), and still others by technological changes.

When the parties previously negotiated in 2011 and 2016, the Postal Service was seeking substantial reductions in labor costs from bargaining unit employees represented by the Mail Handlers Union, including substantial numbers of non-career employees earning less money and having fewer benefits than career employees. Some of those proposals actually were achieved by the Postal Service during those negotiations, especially from a 2013 interest arbitration award. Based on these fundamental changes in our workforce, the Postal Service has reduced its overall labor costs for mail handling activities, and many of those reductions, including a revised wage scale for future career employees, are now scheduled to continue into the future. The Postal Service also continues to downsize its complement of mail handlers, with the current number lower than in 2016, and more than 20% lower than 2011.

The return of normal growth in the American economy should mean a return to more normalized collective bargaining. At the same time, a long period of downsizing, which absent legislative reform may have to continue in the coming years, also should be a time for the parties to agree on a

period of relatively stable labor relations, without the massive disruptions and dislocations caused by the unwarranted closing of mail processing facilities, by unnecessary subcontracting or privatization, and by unjustified projects that are created and sponsored by a postal bureaucracy that seeks to explain its own existence.

The Mail Handlers Union remains deeply committed to the negotiating process. Certainly, the NPMHU will continue to work with the Postal Service so that Congress enacts postal reform legislation: to obtain relief from mandatory payments into the Retirees Health Benefit Fund; to allow for more rational investments of the monies already in that Fund; to integrate the postal health care system into Medicare; to expand the mailing and other services that the Postal Service offers to the American public; and to stop the unwise closings and consolidations of mail processing facilities. But it is at the bargaining table where most other issues belong. We expect, and will demand, that the Postal Service engage in good-faith bargaining on all of the issues that are properly the subject of mutual bargaining.

Today obviously is neither the time nor the place for discussing specific proposals. Not only are formal negotiations just beginning, but the Mail Handlers Union does not believe it is productive to negotiate in public, in the newspapers, or in the halls of Congress.

Nonetheless, the goals of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union in this year's round of bargaining can be stated simply. We seek a negotiated agreement that protects our jobs and improves our standard of living; we seek a



Megan Brennan with National President Paul Hogrogian



NPMHU Vice Presidents Harris, Gibson, Sneesby, Sapp and Wilkin with PMG Brennan



negotiated contract that improves the status of all Mail Handlers, be they long-term and dedicated employees who have devoted their work lives to the Postal Service or Mail Handler Assistants, who are our newest members and the Postal Service's future career employees; we seek a contract that minimizes the dislocation and inconvenience to Mail Handlers whose careers may be involuntarily disrupted by excessing or downsizing; and we seek to stop future subcontracting and return currently outsourced work to the Mail Handler craft.

In short, we seek practical solutions to the problems faced by Mail Handlers, so that working together we can ensure that the Postal Service and all of its Mail Handler employees can continue to provide the American public with the service that they have come to expect.

In closing, let me state that the National Postal Mail Handlers Union seeks to obtain a fair and just settlement with the Postal Service. We understand that these negotiations will be difficult. But if management makes reasonable proposals and counterproposals at the bargaining table, we certainly will recommend ratification to our membership. We also hope for and expect the same attitude from postal management—that reasonable proposals from the Union will be met with acceptance. If both parties are able to adopt this approach to bargaining, I remain optimistic that we will be able to reach a negotiated settlement.

Thank you very much.



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