



# NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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## **2016 Contract Update #3**

### **Bargaining Subcommittees in Full Swing**

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**You are reading the third Contract Update produced and distributed by the NPMHU during the course of 2016 negotiations. These updates, along with the Union’s magazine and monthly bulletins, will keep mail handlers throughout the country informed and involved in the issues raised during this round of bargaining.**

The NPMHU and the Postal Service have now been engaged in collective bargaining for approximately one month. Here is a summary of what has happened during that time, and an update as how negotiations are proceeding.

During the month of March, the Union has been meeting with management representatives an average of three days per week. Some of the meetings were on the record (also known as “main table”) and some have been off the record, in the form of more informal but focused subcommittees. The meetings are expected to occur even more frequently as bargaining moves forward.

As addressed previously, the main table sessions are centered on the official introduction of proposals from both sides. Under the governing ground rules for negotiations, no proposal can be considered if it has not been presented to both sides in this formal setting. As of this point in the negotiations, the NPMHU has submitted almost 100 written proposals. Some already have been amended to address concerns raised at the main table or during subcommittee meetings. The Postal Service has made less than 10 proposals. And almost every time the parties meet, they exchange counterproposals – sometimes orally and sometimes in writing.

The parties also have formed several subcommittees, which meet in their own sessions. These meetings are off the record and focus on particular portions of the National Agreement, considering any related proposals as a group. Six subcommittees have so far been formed, including separate subcommittees on Articles 7 (Employee Classifications), 8 (Hours of Work), and 12 (Principles of Seniority, Posting, and Reassignments), as well as subcommittees on Subcontracting (Article 32), Mail Handler Assistants, and Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Intent (MOUs and LOIs).

Each of these subcommittees meets on an informal, off-the-record basis, the purpose of which is to hash out each proposal, with representatives from both parties knowing that they are able to speak freely. The privacy of the off-the-record sessions allows for a more open discourse between the parties. Both the Union and the Postal Service are able to articulate their positions frankly and to ask their questions directly.

The subcommittee sessions have been running smoothly, but there is much more work to be done before there can be any sense of progress. So far, with most of the written proposals coming from the Union, most of the discussions have focused on NPMHU submissions. The Postal Service is only starting to draft its own specific proposals and counterproposals. Once those are presented, the parties can begin the hard work toward reaching some tentative agreements.

Watch your bulletin boards for more bargaining information throughout the coming weeks.

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