



## NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

Teresa Harmon, Manager, CAD

**W**ith our National Agreement expiring later this year, the National Office has begun preparing for the upcoming round of bargaining. Since many of you are not familiar with the actual bargaining process, I have decided to write this month's article on how this process works.

The framework for collective bargaining between the U.S. Postal Service and the NPMHU is governed by the Postal Reorganization Act (PRA) of 1970. Bargaining begins when one party to the contract serves a written notice to the other of its intent to modify the current agreement. Under Article 39 of our National Agreement, this notice must be served "not less than 90 or more than 120 days before the expiration date of the Agreement". Our National Agreement is set to expire on September 20, 2025.

However, the preparation process begins many months before official bargaining starts. The first step is an official call for submission of bargaining proposals from all mail handlers and all Local Unions around the country. President Hogrogian issued this official call on September 9, 2024, which requested the submission of all proposals by January 31, 2025. In response, a total of 458 proposals were submitted to the National Office as suggestions for changes in the National Agreement.

Once proposals from the field are received, they are reviewed by the Field Negotiating Committee which is comprised of the National President, National Treasurer/Secretary, National Executive Board members, 14 Local Presidents, CAD staff and the Union's legal team. During the first week of February, they reviewed each of the proposals that had been submitted and had in depth discussion on which of these should be proposed by the NPMHU in the upcoming round of bargaining.

From this time until bargaining officially begins, the National Negotiating Team will meet numerous times to finalize the preparations of the proposals that will be submitted to the Postal Service as well as researching the issues, gathering documentation to support why a change is needed, etc. These internal meetings will continue throughout the bargaining process.

Bargaining will officially begin on June 25, 2025. Negotiations will consist of Main Table meetings and Subcommittee meetings. The Main Table meetings are on-the-record meetings during which the parties exchange their official proposals. Both parties will bring submissions to the table. Main Table meetings continue during the course of the negotiation period with discussions to explain why the proposal is needed,

answer any questions for the other party, the exchange of any documentation that supports the need for the change as well as counter proposals. Subcommittee meetings are not considered on the record. These meetings focus on particular portions of the National Agreement and provide an opportunity for the parties to engage in deeper discussions of the proposals. In the 2022 negotiations, there

were subcommittees for Article 7 (Employee Classifications), 8 (Overtime), 11 (Holidays), 12 (Principles of Seniority, posting and Reassignments), 32 (Subcontracting), MHAs and Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Intent (MOUs and LOIs).

If the bargaining results in a tentative agreement between the parties, that agreement is subject to a ratification vote by the NPMHU membership. As required by the NPMHU National Constitution, the vote would be by secret mail ballot.

If the parties fail to reach a tentative agreement, either because the parties did not reach agreement or because any agreement was not ratified by the membership, the PRA has a dictated procedure that must be followed unless

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the parties have mutually agreed to a dispute resolution procedure themselves.

The PRA procedure contains several steps. First, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) would establish a three-person fact finding panel. Two of the members would be selected by the parties from a list of 15 names given to them by the FMCS. The third person would be selected by the other two, or if they cannot agree, by the Director of the FMCS. The fact-finding panel would have 45 days in which to investigate the bargaining dispute and issue a report of its findings.

If an agreement still cannot be reached by the parties after the fact finding, the PRA requires the establishment of

an arbitration board within 90 days of the contract expiration. This board normally consists of three members — one appointed by the Union, one appointed by the Postal Services and a third neutral member. The neutral member is appointed either by agreement of the two other members or, if they cannot agree, by the Director of the FMCS.

After the arbitration board is selected, it holds hearings in which both parties are given the chance to present testimony and evidence. The board is required to make a decision within 45 days after its appointment. This arbitration decision is binding on both parties.

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