

# STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

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**F**or members and representatives of this great Union there is always some required action or reaction to the machinations of agents of the United States Postal Service. Managers from the highest echelons in DC to the most inexperienced relief supervisor in your local processing facility just can't help but cross the contractual or in some cases, legal line. This is the stark reality of our workplace and it reveals itself to the newest among us without hesitation. Sometimes within the very first shift of

imagination can conjure, the Postal Service will continue on its historic path of change. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's 10-year plan and all of its moving parts of network reconfiguration, new and improved mail processing equipment, "maxing the trailer cube", and operational consolidation for good or ill are firmly underway. And whether we like this plan or not we are all along for the ride. We have recently been informed that for the time being at least, the PMG has, perhaps as a result of the pressure from Capitol Hill

there are fifty-nine active mail processing facility reviews confirming or considering the movement of mail from one facility to another. (If you are at all curious, every active review can be accessed at [about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/mpfr/welcome](https://about.usps.com/what/strategic-plans/mpfr/welcome).)

This, as confirmed by Mr. DeJoy in his May 20th letter to Senator Gary Peters of Michigan, is only part of his transformational equation. In his six-page document to the Senator, the PMG found it necessary to "clarify" what he meant by "pause". In this clarification the PMG identified thirteen Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RP&DCs) and twenty Local Processing Centers (LPCs) in various stages of completion that would not be paused. Remember, the final count will include sixty RP&DCs and approximately one hundred and ninety LPCs. The PMG made it clear that activities associated with bringing the thirteen RP&DCs and the twenty LPCs on line will continue. The third leg of the PMGs DFA plan involves the Sorting and Delivery Center (S&DC), fifty-five of which have already been deployed with another twenty-eight to be operational by September 30th of this year.

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employment. In either case this reality is always eventually revealed. We have discussed this previously of course, but now there is so much more happening in new and uniquely unpleasant ways.

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and possibly other factors, pumped the brakes on part of the Delivering for America (DFA) plan. The PMG has agreed to "pause the movement of processing operations associated with the Mail Processing Facility Reviews" until after January 1, 2025. As we write,



What does all this mean for mail handlers you might ask? In no small way, the answer to this important question has always been “it depends on us”.

As representatives and members of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, we do have choices in the way we react to these historic and in many instances life-changing events. We can choose to be simple passengers by taking what the Postal Service feeds us and just letting the chips fall where they might. Or, we can engage both the employer and our representatives at the national and local levels and proactively have a say in the outcome. Brothers and Sisters, it should come as no surprise that our National Office has taken the lead on this and chosen the latter approach. Brother Hogrogian has marshalled the knowledge and the experience of our contract administration department and the authority of the National Office and taken on what are undoubtedly the most historic challenges we have ever faced. Paul has done so while at the very same time partnering with those Local Union leaders who are living through the direct effects that the ten-year implementation has had on the members on

the front lines facing these extraordinary changes. This Union is not simply along for the ride, a ride that, without intervention, could become more and more of the very rocky variety. Instead, our National Office, standing shoulder to shoulder with their Local Union partners, is on the front foot engaging the employer and minimizing, to the fullest extent possible, the dislocation and inconvenience to the members of the bargaining unit. This entirely PMG inspired process is brand new territory for everyone involved and could easily go catastrophically sideways in a hurry if not for the very steady hand at the top the Mail Handlers Union. New and creative agreements have been forged lessening the pain whilst creating additional career mail handler jobs.

This last point is immensely consequential and deserves more attention Brothers and Sisters. The revolutionary reconfiguration of the United States Postal Service is no small thing. The question for this Union is not whether we agree or disagree with these massive changes as that ship has already sailed. This is happening regardless. The real questions for me are what can we do to protect, or at the very least

minimize, the distress of those we represent who might be affected, and big picture, what opportunities exist for us to still advance the interests of this great Union even under such national duress. In my humble opinion and while there is much work ahead, the National Office has answered these questions resoundingly. They have matched the moment measure for measure. We have strengthened the Mail Handler hold over the mail processing environment by securing thousands of future jobs within the state-of-the-art operations envisioned by the Postal Service. However, we are not naïve, for example we are still just thirteen RP&DCs into the PMGs plan with forty-seven to go. So, let's be clear, there is no denying that this historic change to the Postal Service will come with some discomfort. Members of all four of the collective bargaining units will feel some degree of pain. There will be critics along this path, but I am convinced that this Union will continue to meet these historic moments and come through the other side, and I believe we will be stronger, better positioned, and more united than ever before.