



# MAIL HANDLER UPDATE

NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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## BARGAINING 2016: HEADED DOWN THE HOMESTRETCH

**B**argaining over the terms of the 2016 National Agreement between the NPMHU and the Postal Service is entering its final stages. Progress has been made on a variety of fronts, but there is still an enormous amount of work facing both parties. With the current National Agreement expiring in less than two weeks' time – at midnight on May 20, 2016 – both sides are pressing hard to reconcile their differences and reach common ground.

Over two months ago, the parties drafted ground rules for this round of bargaining. These rules have been adhered to very closely. Perhaps the most important rule – the deadline to submit non-economic, work-rule proposals – was May 6, 2016. As a result, the first week of May has been filled with last minute proposals from both sides.

The reason for this deadline is simple: the final weeks of bargaining will be dedicated to discussing and debating the hundreds of proposals that have been submitted. Both sides have a stake in whether these proposals, or counterproposals based on these proposals, see the light of day and become tentative agreements. Only then do they have a chance of making it into the final contract. Over the course of these final weeks, there are sure to be more tentative agreements and fruitful discussions. Already, a few tentative agreements have

been initialed by both parties, with the recognition that they only will become binding upon final agreement on the whole contract.

While the discussions between the parties over the past two months have been productive, this sense of urgency should inspire more progress. More intensive subcommittee sessions are on the horizon, as is a final round-the-clock week of negotiations at one of Washington, DC's nearby hotels.

The final weeks also will bring the key economic issues to the forefront, including proposals for general wage increases, cost-of-living adjustments or COLAs, and related financial issues.

If the parties reach agreement, by May 20 or at some point thereafter, the tentative National Agreement will be subject to ratification by the membership. Should the parties fail to reach an agreement, they will enter impasse resolution procedures and eventual interest arbitration. At that point, all proposals presented at the main table can be revived and reconsidered.

In part because of this process, the Postal Service has presented a series of conceptual proposals that would most accurately be described as draconian. In fact, the Union also has submitted certain proposals that are aimed at potential

interest arbitration. The bargainers on both sides of the table understand that these proposals are markers or place-holders, representing the most extreme work rules that serve as a starting point for further discussions and might lead to a series of subsequent compromises.

It bears noting that it is not in the interest of either party to enter arbitration, in which the eventual outcome is determined by a third party. As established under the Postal Reorganization Act, dispute resolution through interest arbitration is to be used as a last resort.

The entire leadership of the NPMHU will have the chance to offer its input on next steps on Tuesday, May 24, when all Local Presidents will convene in Washington to discuss this round of bargaining. During that meeting, President Hogrogian and the National Negotiations Team will report on whatever progress has been made in negotiations, and will discuss the prospects of reaching a tentative agreement.

As more developments in bargaining occur, they will be reported, so all mail handlers should stay tuned by watching and reading their bulletin boards for the latest contract updates.

## NATIONAL CONVENTION PLANNING CONTINUES

**N**ot since 2000 has the NPMHU been faced with National negotiations and its quadrennial National Convention during the same calendar year, but 2016 presents such a confluence of events. With the 2016 National Convention around the corner – in Chicago, IL during the last week of August – preparations are kicking into high gear. To begin, the Credentials Committee will be meeting in late May to evaluate the standing and eligibility of the 287 delegates elected by Local Unions across the country.

As previously announced, the National Union is accepting proposed constitutional amendments to be reviewed by the NPMHU Constitution Committee. In addition, members are encouraged to submit resolutions, to be reviewed either by the

Resolutions Committee or by both the Legislative Committee and the Resolutions Committee. The deadline to submit such amendments and resolutions is June 23, 2016.



The address for submitting any proposed amendments or resolutions is at the NPMHU, c/o the 2016 National Convention, 1101 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036.

The NPMHU is featuring a dedicated website that will provide news and information relative to the upcoming National Convention.

The site launched in early May and can be viewed at <http://convention.npmhu.org/>. Please monitor the website and read the Union publications, to stay up to date on all Convention business.



**Please Post!!**

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