



NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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2019 Contract Update #4

NPMHU Continues to Submit Non-Economic Proposals

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You are reading the fourth Contract Update produced and distributed by the NPMHU during the course of 2019 negotiations. These updates, along with the Union's website, magazine and monthly bulletins, will keep mail handlers informed about the issues raised during this round of bargaining.

The NPMHU and the U.S. Postal Service have now been engaged in collective bargaining for almost a full month. Here is a summary of what has transpired during this time, and an update on how negotiations are proceeding.

At this writing, the NPMHU has introduced the vast majority of its noneconomic bargaining proposals. This past week, for example, the Union presented more than thirty pages of proposals falling within the scope of Article 12 governing seniority, posting, and reassignments and Article 15 governing the grievance-arbitration procedure for handling disputes between the parties. Earlier, the Union had submitted all of its noneconomic proposals for Articles 1 through 14, and soon the Union will hand over its suggestions for Articles 16 through 39. Even after these submissions are complete, that does not mean that the NPMHU will not be creating more proposals and counterproposals before bargaining is complete, both as adjustments to prior proposals and reactions to USPS-generated amendments for the National Agreement.

As is common, the Postal Service is delaying introduction of its own proposals, which normally are smaller in number but larger in impact. These likely will not be shared until August, although USPS counterproposals to the Union's proposals may come earlier. (The term "counterproposal" is used to describe any proposal brought forward by the Postal Service that is in direct response to an earlier NPMHU proposal. Likewise, a new proposal from the Union in response to a management proposal also is referred to as a counterproposal.)

The parties also have created a host of subcommittees. Each party's appointees to each subcommittee has been set, and the schedule for meetings of each subcommittee also is being drafted. To this point, the parties have agreed on subcommittees to deal with Article 2, Article 7 (employee classifications), Article 8 (overtime), Article 12, Article 15, Mail Handler Assistant issues, Article 32 (subcontracting), and MOUs and LOIs.

The key to success for many of these subcommittees will be for the Union, through its Local Unions or through the Regional or National Contract Administration Department, to develop facts and arguments from our firsthand knowledge of whatever flaws exist in current contract language, in implementation of the current contract language, or in the real-life situations and impact that the National Agreement has on the mail handler workforce. The National Office thanks the Locals and the various CAD representatives for their expected and now-routine cooperation in putting together these facts and arguments.

Looking Forward: Financial Presentations

With the nearing submission of a complete package of non-economic proposals into the official record of bargaining, the parties will thereafter turn their attention to the major financial issues. The Postal Service is planning to provide the NPMHU with its official, on-the-record financial presentation toward the end of August. If past rounds of bargaining are any indication, the data to be presented will center on the Postal Service's dire predictions about its financial viability, with a particular emphasis on the continuing decline in mail volume and the continuing need to control or reduce labor costs. Potential legislative or regulatory action to eliminate the economic burden of the pre-funding mandate for the Retiree Health Benefits Fund, to authorize larger-than-inflation rate increases, or to remove other restrictions on the USPS business model will likely go unmentioned by the Postal Service, even though both parties fully recognize that such changes are needed if the Postal Service is going to be able to deal with its long-term financial challenges. It also is likely that the USPS will be discussing its oft-mentioned but seldom-seen Ten-Year Plan, which the Postal Service has been forced to put together by certain Members of Congress. That Plan is scheduled for public release in the near future, and may cause a disruption to the usual flow of national negotiations.

Future issues of these Contract Updates will report on the information that is exchanged during the various subcommittee meetings, as well as during the Main Table discussions of finances and other policy issues facing the parties.

As always, continue to watch your bulletin boards and the National website for the latest information.

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