



# NATIONAL POSTAL MAIL HANDLERS UNION

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## 2019 Contract Update #6

### Contract Expiration Approaches

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

With two weeks remaining before the current National Agreement expires at midnight on September 20, 2019, your bargaining team has been hard at work. In spite of management's sluggish pace—the Postal Service announced their first proposals only last week—we have continued to hash out the history and evidence behind each of our proposals in Main Table and Subcommittee meetings. Those proposals that were submitted to us from the field by our membership have been especially helpful in making our needs known.

During the most recent Main Table meetings, management reviewed all of the proposals submitted so far, one by one. As our proposals were submitted in segments, this was the NPMHU's first time to get an overall look at what management is thinking. Some topics were officially designated 'economic' issues in this meeting, so we will know more about their considerations and potential offers soon. As several of our highest negotiation priorities, like Night Shift Differential and Overtime, fall into this deferred economic discussion category, we are working to learn more.

Meanwhile, the USPS canceled its formal presentation on the current state of Postal Service finances, which originally was scheduled for August 30, 2019. Instead, the Union were presented with a written presentation and we are awaiting additional relevant documents that, management claims, will give the Union a better understanding of the current financial outlook.

Both the Union and USPS proposals that have been discussed at length during Main Table bargaining will be further reviewed within the various subcommittees. The proposals that are talked about most extensively are typically the ones that are more likely to be adopted in some form, as these are continuously considered and refined throughout the bargaining process. On the other hand, those proposals which have not sparked lengthy discussions, but rather feelings of fear or even ridicule, are less likely to find their way into any

agreement. But that doesn't mean these less-discussed proposals are over and done with, unless and until they are withdrawn by the party that initially proposed them. Finally, even relatively minor or cosmetic changes to the National Agreement, including the updating of dates and alterations to Article and Section headings, will take some time to process, even if they eventually will be written fairly quickly.

#### **The Tentative Agreement Process**

On the topic of tentative agreements—the first hints toward possible "TAs," as they are known—a limited number of references to TAs have begun to appear in ongoing conversations at the bargaining table. Tentative agreements follow the presentation and discussion of proposals, but also must be initialed by both parties and are dependent upon agreement on all terms in the new National Agreement.

In previous Contract Updates, we have taken a closer look at the general workings of the bargaining process. Tentative Agreements are the semi-final phase of that process. As the name suggests, however, these *tentative* agreements are only final and binding when they are inserted into and become part of an overall settlement on all terms of the next National Agreement. The final collection of TAs, signed by both parties, will then be dependent on ratification by the NPMHU membership. If the eligible membership does not vote to ratify the negotiated settlement agreement, these agreed-upon TAs will become null and void.

**Looking Forward:** The remainder of this month leading up to contract expiration will include more frequent meetings, with the final submission of documents obtained from the NPMHU's records and archives, the Regional Offices, and the Local Unions aimed at strengthening our case for each proposal. During the current contract's final week, the negotiating teams will be available to meet around the clock at a hotel in downtown Washington, DC. Team members' schedules will be cleared to focus entirely on bargaining; it is hoped that such concentration of effort will create an abundance of TAs during that time.

The next Contract Update will focus on the state of USPS finances, and what it means for this year's round of negotiations—and beyond.

Continue to watch your bulletin boards and the National website for the latest information.

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