NALC, USPS formally open bargaining talks

The leaders of the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service formally opened negotiations for a new collective-bargaining agreement on Feb. 22, the 16th such event since collective bargaining rights were achieved with the establishment of USPS in 1971.

In his opening statement, NALC President Brian L. Renfroe told Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, “In this round of collective bargaining, letter carriers have the chance to be recognized, and rewarded, for being the backbone of this beloved American institution—the United States Postal Service. Letter carriers are the first face of the Postal Service. We are the ones customers see delivering to their homes and businesses. They know us and rely on us for dependable, consistent service. We are indispensable and directly carry out the Postal Service’s mission.”

Joining Renfroe for the event—held in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the U.S. Postal Service Headquarters in Washington, DC—were the other members of the NALC Executive Council as well as letter carrier and professional staff from Headquarters and legal counsel. USPS executives and postal headquarters employees joined DeJoy at the Ash Wednesday morning meeting.

Postal Service Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino, who serves as the chief human resources officer, kicked off the welcome of NALC to the bargaining table. “There is one certainty that has existed in each and every round of bargaining that I have participated in, and that is that the parties will eventually come to a mutual agreement,” Tulino said. “This round of bargaining will be no different, but I am confident that we can and we will find mutually acceptable solutions to the challenges we will face in this round of bargaining.”

Tulino, who will lead the negotiations for the Postal Service, said, “As we continue the process of becoming the delivery provider of choice for the American public, it is essential that we continue the path to modernize our work practices and work rules, be more precise in our operational execution, and provide a work environment that enables our employees to provide the best-in-class service—and that includes the safety and security of all of our city letter carriers.”

He added that USPS’s “future success” will depend on “decisions we make relative to maintaining an affordable and efficient workforce, and adaptable model capable of responding to a constantly changing business environment where we compete for business every day.” Tulino credited letter carriers’ ability to adapt through the last three turbulent years.

“Deploying that same ingenuity and adaptability to this round of bargaining will go a long way to us achieving a negotiated agreement,” he continued. “As we begin the process of bargaining, I pledge my commitment to working with you, Brian, and your entire team to achieve a negotiated agreement that will make the Postal Service stronger than ever with the future of the organization and its people as our main objective.”

DeJoy singled out Renfroe and Tulino, saying, “I have the confidence that they will work together to deliver to us what we all want and need, a successful path forward in our working relationship as we continue to transform the Postal Service into an organization that will enjoy a vibrant existence far into the future.”

The present collective-bargaining agreement is set to expire at midnight on May 20, if the parties fail to reach an agreement by then. Federal law establishes a system of mediation and binding arbitration to resolve disputes; the law forbids strikes by postal workers. The parties have organized bargaining committees and have begun negotiations.

Future updates on bargaining will be in the NALC Bulletin, in The Postal Record, on the NALC Member App and on NALC’s social media accounts.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe’s opening remarks for the 2023 collective-bargaining session

Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Postmaster General DeJoy and Deputy Postmaster General Tulino, for hosting this opening ceremony for NALC’s 16th round of collective bargaining with the Postal Service. I am honored to be here today representing the nation’s city letter carriers for the first time as NALC president. We are eager to work in good faith to reach a new contract. As we look forward to the negotiations ahead, I see opportunities for both sides of this table.

We meet at a crucial time for the city letter carrier craft. Almost three years ago, the world as we knew it started shutting down due to the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus. While millions of Americans worked from home and sheltered in place across the county, our work became a lifeline for millions of homes and businesses.

Letter carriers seamlessly kept the economy and our communities running by delivering essential goods and medications, school supplies, stimulus checks, at-home COVID tests, and everything else that the American people need and rely on to stay healthy and safe. They were able to do their jobs in a way that prioritized their health and safety, and that of their customers, and ultimately delivered the nation’s mail.

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Following President Renfroe, Postmaster General DeJoy thanked NALC for its participation in recent negotiations. Postal Service executives and postal headquarters employees joined DeJoy at the Ash Wednesday morning meeting.

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