



## NALC and USPS continue contract negotiations

NALC and the Postal Service have agreed to continue negotiations on a new collective-bargaining agreement. The current agreement, which was set to expire at 12 o'clock on the evening of Saturday, May 20, will remain in full force until a new negotiated or arbitrated agreement takes effect.

A mandatory 60-day mediation period will follow, as required by statute. NALC will continue to work toward reaching a negotiated agreement with the Postal Service during this 60-day period. Issues that remain in dispute after the mediation period would be addressed through an interest arbitration process, which would result in a final and binding decision on the contents of a new national agreement. The parties would select a neutral arbitrator to chair an arbitration board that would also include one management and one union arbitrator.

Further updates will be provided as the process moves forward.

## House oversight committee holds hearing on the impact of Delivering for America Plan

On May 17, the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability's Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce held a hearing titled "Tracking the Postal Service: An Update on the Delivering for America Plan" to seek updates from Postmaster General Louis DeJoy regarding implementation of the 10-year Delivering for America Plan, including the Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA)—a cornerstone of the plan.

During the hearing, committee members highlighted concerns regarding the financial stability of USPS, mail service reliability, staffing, network realignment and more. Lawmakers also pressed the Postal Service regarding its plan to ensure a safe working environment for USPS employees, and how it is combating mail theft and crime, particularly violent assaults on letter carriers.

In opening remarks, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) highlighted an assault on May 15 on his district office staff, which was interrupted by a letter carrier who startled and distracted the assailant, enabling staff to escape a violent attack that could have been even worse. "One of the heroes in the story was actually the postman," Connolly said. "He came to the office while the attack was going on...and that allowed the woman who was being beaten on the head to escape. He's an unsung hero in our story."

Ranking Member Jamie Raskin (D-MD) criticized DeJoy's recently announced plan for combating the issue of mail-related crime as "light on proactive protection for letter carriers." He emphasized that this problem has become increasingly serious, noting that more than 2,000 letter carriers have been assaulted or robbed since 2020, with 305 carriers targeted so far in 2023. Raskin, along with Reps. Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) and Connolly, sent a letter to Postmaster General DeJoy ahead of the hearing, requesting details on the Postal Service's new plans to protect postal employees.

Overall, DeJoy did not offer any specifics on USPS's plan to protect letter carriers and committed to getting back to the committee with more information by June 12, as requested in the letter.

In addition to concerns around the increase in assaults on letter carriers, lawmakers also questioned DeJoy on what USPS is doing to protect other aspects of the health and safety of employees. They indicated that a large number of letter carriers and postal workers have reached out directly to their offices to raise concerns, and legislators pointed to specific instances of letter carriers getting injured on the job, facing exposure to dangerously hot or cold temperatures, being affected by lack of staffing and high turnover, and more.

DeJoy recognized these issues and said that the Delivering for America plan is meant to improve these conditions and address these concerns, but that financial limitations present a significant challenge in responding to these issues.

NALC is committed to using every available resource to address the increase in attacks on letter carriers, including engaging the public, coordinating with law enforcement, pursuing legislation and seeking strategies such as enforcement measures and protective video technology that will better protect letter carriers.

On the issue of Postal Service finances, several lawmakers and DeJoy recognized the increased financial stability that USPS has seen over the last year following the passage of the bipartisan PSRA. However, many members pressed DeJoy on the agency's finances. Specifically, Rep. Gary Palmer (R-AL) questioned DeJoy about when he expected the Postal Service to "break even."

DeJoy pointed out that the 10-year plan accounts for executive action on the Postal Service's obligations to Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) pensions. This was a reference to the Segal Report, a 2010 report from the Postal Regulatory Commission that directs the Office of Personnel Management to accurately value USPS's CSRS pension assets and liability. If these recommendations, which can be achieved only through executive action, were implemented, the Postal Service would save billions of dollars annually. For years, NALC has been advocating for administrative action on this issue, which complements the repeal of the pre-funding mandate and other financial victories from the PSRA.

Rep. Palmer also questioned DeJoy on the Postal Service's investment strategy with regard to the \$299 billion in assets and employee pensions currently on the Treasury's books. Palmer pinpointed the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and CSRS investment model for the rest of the federal government and asked whether an alternative investment model would benefit the agency. The question comes following a recent inspector general audit report—"Postal Service Investment and Interest Rate Risk"—that outlined how other investment strategies would result in a significant return on investment.

DeJoy acknowledged that if the \$299 billion on the Treasury Department's books were invested differently, USPS's investment funds could more than double. DeJoy noted that any change to the existing investment strategy would have to be approved through congressional legislation.

NALC has long advocated for recalculation of Postal Service pension liabilities by the White House and will continue to do so. With regard to investment, NALC is encouraged to see support and congressional interest in a sounder investment approach, and we will work with lawmakers to pursue legislation.

## Resolutions protecting service reintroduced in House

On May 9, Reps. David Joyce (R-OH) and Sanford Bishop (D-GA) reintroduced a door delivery resolution (H. Res. 376), which calls on Congress to take all appropriate measures to ensure the continuation of door delivery for all business and residential customers.

The resolution, which has had consistent bipartisan support in the past, already had 20 bipartisan co-sponsors from both parties as this magazine was going to print.

More than 35 million U.S. businesses and households receive mail at their doors six, and sometimes seven, days a week. Receiving mail, including bills, paychecks, medications, ballots and packages at the door is preferred by the public. Continuing this essential service is critical to the economic success of the Postal Service, and NALC encourages all letter carriers to contact their representative to co-sponsor H. Res. 376.

Reps. Don Bacon (R-NE) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) reintroduced another service-related resolution on April 6. H. Res. 277 expresses the sense of Congress that the Postal Service should take all appropriate measures to restore the service standards that were in effect as of July 1, 2012. At press time, the resolution had 29 bipartisan co-sponsors.

On May 23, Reps. Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Gerry Connolly (D-VA) and Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) reintroduced a resolution to protect the Postal Service from privatization. H. Res. 439 calls on Congress to ensure that USPS remains an independent establishment of the federal government and is not subject to privatization.

This resolution was first introduced in 2018 following a report from a commission appointed by President Trump that called for privatization of the Postal Service. Fortunately, this idea was dead on arrival in Congress and the resolution has received broad support each time it has been introduced.

NALC opposes any service reductions or efforts to privatize the agency and supports resolutions that protect the essential and affordable service that our customers rely on.



Spacecoast Florida Branch 2689



Anchorage, AK Branch 4319

## Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive comes at the right time

Three decades after letter carriers first collected food in a national one-day food drive, they continue to conduct the largest single-day food drive in the country. On May 13, the Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive once again brought in donated food by the truckload.

Since the NALC's first national food drive in 1993, active and retired letter carriers, with the help of volunteers from their communities, have collected a total of 1.82 billion pounds of food leading up to this year's drive. The food collected from postal patrons who leave bags of food at their doorsteps or next to their mailboxes the second Saturday each May is delivered to local food banks.

The total for this year will be announced in the July issue of *The Postal Record*, but preliminary results pointed to a great year.

"The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive is 31 years strong, and this year's results look promising," NALC President Brian L. Renfro said. "Letter carriers showed up again for their communities and helped ensure that the needs of the hungry are met in every city and town in the United States."

One in 8 Americans, including millions of children, senior citizens and veterans, are unsure where their next meal will come from. The May food drive helps to relieve shortages of food that food pantries experience in spring and summer after holiday donations have been depleted. And when summer arrives, most school meal programs are not available, so the need for food grows.

This year, the virtual donor drive that branches used to make up for the cancellation of in-person food collection events during the COVID-19 pandemic continued as a supplement to the traditional food drive, so some of the support for local food banks came in the form of online cash donations.

The economic disruption of the pandemic caused a spike in demand for food, while squeezing food bank supplies due to canceled food drives, including the NALC Food Drive. But for some food banks, the problems didn't end with the pandemic shutdowns.

"Food banks never thought they would see client numbers rivaling the COVID-19 pandemic, when they were distributing emergency food to lines of cars at baseball stadiums and shopping malls. Alarming, we are seeing more people in need this year," Jerry Brown, director of public relations for St. Mary's Food Bank in Phoenix, AZ, wrote on AZCentral.com, the *Arizona Republic's* web news outlet.

"We are distributing more food, purchasing more food (due to sagging donations from both public and government sources)," Brown wrote, "and, like everyone else, paying a lot more for that food than ever before."

In the days following the food drive, reports from branches and media outlets again demonstrated the dedication that postal employees and their customers have to the food drive—and also showed that food banks and the people they serve appreciated their efforts.

"It's everybody together helping out their communities in a way that touches everybody, which is food," Devon Randalson, food drive coordinator for Brunswick, GA Branch 313, told the *Brunswick News*. "Being right here, Brunswick-Glynn County, it's great motivation to get people to help each other out in a way we can all relate to."

Don Young, food drive coordinator for Vancouver, WA Branch 1104, told the *Columbian* news outlet, "Because it's this time of the year when kids are starting to get out of school, it's a good time to do it, to replenish the food bank, because it's depleting."

Reno, NV, postal patrons donated a great deal of food this year, said Reno Branch 709 President Clarence McCarthy in a report by Reno's KTVN-TV. "It's just a very good feeling at the end of the day," he said. "It's a lot of hard work for our letter carriers, but I think they all like doing it."

The Open Door food pantry President and CEO Julie LaFontaine told the *Salem News* of northeastern Massachusetts. "It's a sight to see, as mail trucks arrive and unload bags and bags of donations."

"The Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive makes a huge impact in our community each year, and we are so grateful to everyone in our community who so generously participated," a representative of the Clark County (WA) Food Bank said. The food bank serves 120,000 people in the Portland, OR, and Vancouver, WA, area.

"We want to thank those people who participate, whether it's the person putting the bag of groceries on the porch, whether it's the person who's volunteering to help us that day at all those locations, post offices across the state, or whether it's particularly the postal workers themselves—we just want to say thank you for giving us one day of their incredible service," Utah Food Bank President Ginette Bott told Utah's *Deseret News*.

The annual food drive wouldn't be possible without the support of our national partners: the U.S. Postal Service, the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association, Vericast, United Way Worldwide, the AFL-CIO, Valpak, the Kellogg Co. and CVS Health. These partners help through such actions as paying for the specially marked postcards, donating thousands of pounds of food and thousands of dollars to food pantries, donating bags that letter carriers distribute to customers, gathering volunteers, or getting out the message about the food drive.

Branches are asked to report their food drive totals to Headquarters by June 1.

## Health Benefit Seminar planned for October

The NALC Health Benefit Plan announced that the 36th Health Benefit Seminar is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 15, through Wednesday, Oct. 18, at the Tropicana in Las Vegas, NV. Hotel block guarantee cutoff is Sept. 15, with a room rate of \$149 plus \$20 resort fee and tax per night.

The schedule is tailored and prepared with the role of the health benefit representatives and branch officers in mind. Starting on Sunday, a health fair will be offered where you can meet with HBP's vendors and participate in a variety of health-related activities before closing the day with an opening reception.

Throughout the remainder of the seminar, general sessions featuring special speakers will be held daily, followed by breakouts to cover a variety of topics designed to assist the health benefit representatives and branch leaders to effectively promote the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

Closing the event on Wednesday evening, all registered attendees and guests are invited to attend a special thank-you reception for their dedication and support promoting the Plan.

Seminar registration forms can be found in the January/February *Health Benefit Representative Report* and also has been included on the Plan's website at nalchbp.org.

## Prepare for the summer heat

Letter carriers should first educate themselves on heat safety. One way to do this is to download and install the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)'s Heat Safety Tool Smartphone App. Once the app is installed, it can detect your location and provide you with the current temperature, humidity and heat index (combination of temperature and humidity). It also will provide the expected heat index for the balance of the workday.

For more information on heat-related safety, see the Contract Talk column in the May *Postal Record*, available on nalc.org.

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