



Letter carriers call for fair contract as negotiations begin

On Feb. 22, three days before NALC and the Postal Service formally opened contract negotiations, letter carriers nationwide participated in the union's national day of action. More than 100 branches from coast to coast held local "Fight Like Hell!" rallies calling for a fair contract.

In sun, snow and rain, letter carriers and supporters across the country showed up to fight for what we deserve. Rallies focused on making our demands known, which include higher wages, an all-career workforce, and comprehensive contract compliance. The events also reminded the public that a strong, well-compensated, well-respected workforce is key to the Postal Service's success and the essential service that letter carriers provide. As always, letter carriers successfully delivered the message, and rallies were covered in nearly 50 local media markets.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe attended Branch 176's rally in Baltimore, MD. "As we enter into collective bargaining, it is of utmost importance to the public that this job pays a fair wage, that this job creates and continues to improve the opportunities for carriers," Renfroe told the crowd. "Letter carriers have a lot of value. We work harder than we've ever worked before," he continued.

He ended by saying, "I want to send a real clear message to the Postal Service: We are prepared. We will sit down and bargain in good faith, and we will make every effort to reach an agreement that is fair for letter carriers. If we are not able to reach an agreement that is fair for letter carriers, we will go to battle—and we will win!"

With the successful national day of action behind us, NALC encourages members to stay engaged. "Our members did what they do best—organized and mobilized to fight for letter carriers," President Renfroe said. "As NALC puts out future calls to action, I urge all our members to participate and be part of the fight for the contract we deserve."



The rally held by Topeka, KS Branch 10

NALC and USPS open negotiations

Only three days later, on Feb. 25, NALC and USPS officially opened negotiations for a new collective-bargaining agreement. The NALC Executive Council, Postmaster General David Steiner, Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino and other USPS leaders attended the opening ceremony held at USPS Headquarters in Washington, DC.

Following welcoming remarks from USPS Vice President of Labor Relations Michael Elston, USPS Director of Contract Administration Jim Lloyd and Deputy Postmaster General Tulino, President Renfroe delivered his opening statement (printed in full, at right).

"We come here this morning with a singular goal, and that is to reach a contract that fairly compensates, recognizes and values America's 200,000 active city letter carriers," the NALC president said. We know what we deserve. We know the value of the work that we do. We are hopeful that through this process, we are able to reach an agreement that achieves our goals."

Renfroe clearly laid out some of NALC's top demands for a fair contract: an all-career workforce, higher wages at all steps of the pay scale, reducing the time it takes to reach the top of the pay scale, and comprehensive contract compliance by local postal management.

"Fifty-five percent of all city carrier assistants leave the job within the first year. It's time to abolish this position," he told USPS leaders.

Regarding wages, Renfroe acknowledged that "while starting pay is undoubtedly too low, and it must be addressed, letter carriers, regardless of where they are in their career, should be compensated fairly and should be rewarded for their contributions for our service to the American people."

He added that 12 years to reach the top of the pay scale was "unacceptable," and emphasized that "in today's world, more than a decade to reach the top of the pay scale takes our experience and our skills for granted."

Regarding contract compliance, Renfroe said, "It's clear how letter carriers view this constant and willful disregard for the terms of our collective-bargaining agreement. They view it as disrespect. It's disrespectful to a proud, dedicated workforce, and it's disrespectful to our union."

He ended by urging the Postal Service to properly invest in its workforce, and reminded USPS leaders, "There is no service, there is no operations without the work that our members do."

Following President Renfroe's remarks, Postmaster General Steiner, who is participating in his first round of negotiations with NALC, delivered remarks. He acknowledged the hard work letter carriers do and committed to working in good faith to reach an agreement.

A video of President Renfroe's remarks can be seen by scanning the QR code at left.

While this event was a ceremonial kickoff, NALC is constantly working earnestly for the next round of contract negotiations. All this preparation and member feedback will be invaluable at the bargaining table on both work rule and economic discussions.

Collective-bargaining subcommittees

Starting in the late summer of 2025, collective-bargaining subcommittees, made up of Executive Council members and letter carrier staff, began meeting on their assigned articles of the contract. These committees reviewed convention proposals and other unions' contracts as they formed ideas and proposals related to their articles. They also considered feedback from the two Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees (more information below) and ideas from branch and state leaders shared at the national rap session last November in Cleveland, OH. The subcommittee proposals are being presented as work begins with their counterparts at the Postal Service.

Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees

For the first time, NALC convened two groups of Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees. These 30-member committees divided letter carriers from across the country into three groups: branch leaders, contract enforcers and newer members. These groups followed a similar process that the Executive Council subcommittees follow. They spent a full week working together in person on economic and work rule bargaining proposals. Their direct experience from the workroom floor, at various experience levels and places in their career, provided invaluable feedback that will be used in NALC's negotiations with the Postal Service.

Active member survey

Another new and important part of collective-bargaining preparation was a member survey. Last month, all active members had the opportunity to participate in an online survey. The short survey asked respondents to rank their priorities for our next collective-bargaining agreement as well as provide open-ended feedback on what they hope to see in our next national agreement.

More than 6,000 active members completed the survey, with responses from members of every employee classification, including full-time regulars, part-time flexibles and city carrier assistants (CCAs).

On average, respondents ranked the following as their top priorities:

1. General wage increases
2. Reducing time to top step
3. Raising top pay
4. Tie between:
 - Addressing management's non-compliance with the *National Agreement* and grievance settlements
 - Raising career starting pay by eliminating steps in the pay scale
5. Eliminating the CCA position and going to an all-career workforce

These responses reinforce what NALC is fighting for at the bargaining table and will be valuable as negotiations progress in the coming weeks and months.

"Our intense and thorough preparation has supplied NALC with more input and member feedback to bring the negotiating table," Renfroe said. "I appreciate the hard work of our Executive Council, Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees, and every member who took the time to make their voice heard as we work toward achieving our shared goals in our next national agreement."



Members of Santa Ana, CA Branch 737 rally for a fair contract.



President Renfroe presents NALC's opening statement



Postmaster General David Steiner (l), Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino and other USPS leaders

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe's opening statement

Good morning, everyone. We start by thanking Postmaster General Steiner, Deputy Postmaster General Tulino, Vice President Elston, and everyone here at the Postal Service Headquarters for hosting this kickoff. I'd also like to thank everyone in the room for being here at a kickoff of a process that is, of course, important to America's 200,000-plus letter carriers. It's important to the Postal Service. It's also important to the 300-plus million Americans that we serve every single day. I am joined here this morning by the entire NALC Executive Council, the nine other resident officers that are seated here at the table with me, our 15 national business agents, as well as our three national trustees, as well as key members of our headquarters, letter carrier and professional staff and counsel, of course.

We come here this morning with a singular goal, and that is to reach a contract that fairly compensates, recognizes, and values America's 200,000 active city letter carriers. We know what we deserve. We know the value of the work that we do. We are hopeful that through this process, we are able to reach an agreement that achieves our goals. Everyone on both sides of this table knows that letter carriers' jobs have always been difficult.

The famous saying that's engraved on a building in New York about rain, snow, and the gloom of night is familiar to everyone. But today, we work through even more hazards than that. Extreme heat, cold, the nature of our work, handling heavy parcels day to day, and unfortunately, the enduring threat of violent crimes. But through it all, we've continued to fulfill our essential duties to the American people. Yet, our compensation has not kept up with that level of dedication. The job of a city letter carrier was once sought after as a stable, middle-class job. Unfortunately, in many locations now, we cannot attract enough people, and we even have some that work multiple jobs early in their careers. This, frankly, is unconscionable, especially as the work we do is more valuable than it's ever been before.

We all know what we do for the American people. No one else can match what the Postal Service does. Letter carriers reach every home and business in the country six, and oftentimes seven, days a week. There is no service in Postal Service without letter carriers. Time and time again, we proved that we can adapt. Whether it was natural disasters, global pandemics, record-breaking temperatures, and everything in between, we take pride in continuing to serve the American people. It's only right and it's only fair that that commitment is rewarded with a fair contract that's been earned through the dedication and hard work of America's letter carriers. For us, the major pieces of a fair contract are simple.

First is an all-career workforce. Simply put, the city carrier assistant position does not serve our craft, nor does it help achieve the goals of the Postal Service. Fifty-five percent of all city carrier assistants leave the job within the first year. That has been the case every single year since the classification was created in 2013. Astronomically high turnover rates like this seriously undermine the Postal Service's ability to provide quality, universal service. Hiring directly to career nationwide is essential to retain letter carriers, to appropriately staff our delivery units, and to give the Postal Service the ability to provide the level of service that our customers expect. We commend the Postal Service for working with us in good faith over the last several years to convert hundreds of installations around the country to an all-career model. There's no question this is a positive step and has shown improvement in those locations, but it's not enough. It's time to abolish this position.

Next is higher wages at all steps of the pay scale. While starting pay is undoubtedly too low, and it must be addressed, letter carriers, regardless of where they are in their career, should be compensated fairly and should be rewarded for their contributions for our service to the American people. We spend the majority of our working hours on the street exposed to risks that typical indoor or work-from-home employees will never face. Heat, cold, injuries, the physical toll of the job, unfortunately, the threat of being attacked on the job, these are all real hazards that we face every day. Our current wages do not match this work. The Postal Service cannot expect to retain and attract new letter carriers without substantial wage increases that account for the physicality and challenges of this job.

Similarly, the time to reach top step of our pay scale must be reduced. More than 12 years to reach the top of the pay scale is unacceptable to America's letter carriers, particularly when workers in a number of similar jobs enter at a higher rate and reach top pay in a third of the time that we do. We understand our industry, and we know that the structure of our pay scale is no longer competitive. In today's world, more than a decade to reach the top of the pay scale takes our experience and our skills for granted. For the Postal Service to retain seasoned and experienced letter carriers that have made this service great for many, many years, this time must be substantially reduced.

The last specific issue I'll point out is local postal management's lack of contract compliance. A lot of people on both sides of this table and in this room have worked hard and in good faith on the existing terms of our collective-bargaining agreement. The words of that agreement mean nothing if local managers violate them, as they do across the country every single day. Whether it's caused by the decision of a supervisor, a station manager, a postmaster or district management, it's clear how letter carriers view this constant and willful disregard for the terms of our collective-bargaining agreement. They view it as disrespect. It's disrespectful to a proud, dedicated workforce, and it's disrespectful to our union. This problem is rampant. It hurts morale. It hurts productivity. It costs the Postal Service hundreds of millions of dollars every year. To us, it's simply a matter of dignity and respect.

Thankfully, there is what should be an easy solution. For managers that make operational decisions at the local level every day, simply comply with the terms of the agreement that we have negotiated in good faith at this very table over the years. In this round of bargaining, we are eager to engage on anything we can do to improve contract compliance across the country.

Now, it's no secret that the Postal Service faces financial hurdles. Some changes that are needed on the path to financial solvency involve action from the Congress or the administration. Our union will keep doing more than anyone else to make further legislative and administrative changes that benefit the Postal Service a reality. But it doesn't stop there. As we all know, to succeed, the service must be competitive. Particularly in the package business, where there continues to be opportunity for significant revenue growth. For us to stand out in this increasingly competitive package delivery market, exceptional, reliable service is key. There's no question that finding ways to invest in and modernize our infrastructure is very important. We are committed to continuing to do our part to make that happen, as we have for many years.

But the most important piece of achieving the levels of service that we, and more importantly, our customers, expect is a stable, well-compensated workforce. There is value for everyone here in the Postal Service properly investing in its workforce. There is no service, there is no operation without the work that our members do. We are the key to the service that will allow us to surpass our competition. In many ways, we are the key to the success of the Postal Service. As Deputy Postmaster General Tulino mentioned, last year, the Postal Service celebrated its 250th year. Letter carriers are proud to be part of this 250-year legacy. We are proud to be the face of the Postal Service that the American people see every single day. This pride largely comes from our craft's very rich history of providing a safe and reliable middle-class job, working life, and retirement. That is what we are pursuing in this round of collective bargaining. The promise of a well-respected, well-compensated job. One where you can go to work, do your job, be paid fairly, and return home safely to your family and your loved ones. We are committed in this round of bargaining to doing everything possible to reach an agreement on a fair contract.

We are very appreciative of our long history of good-faith bargaining, and we look forward to continuing that over the course of the coming weeks and months. Thank you once again for hosting this opening session. We are excited and eager to get to work.

Sixth COLA is \$250

The sixth regular cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for career letter carriers under the 2023-2026 National Agreement was \$250 annually following the release of the January consumer price index (CPI). This increase was added to every step in Table 1 and Step P in Table 2, and then applied proportionately to Steps B through O in Table 2. The increase has been applied to the pay chart on nalc.org and in the March issue of *The Postal Record*, and will take effect March 7.

This is the final increase under the 2023-2026 *National Agreement*. Over the course of this 36-month agreement, active carriers will have seen an average increase of 19.5 percent including all negotiated increases general wage increases, COLAs and step increases.

City carrier starting wages have risen 14.1 percent, and each step in the pay scale has increased at least 9.2 percent since the beginning of the contract. Steps B through O saw an increase of 9.2 percent, and Step P saw an increase of 10.5 percent with the additional \$1,000 received in June 2025.

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