



PTFs and withholding

I've received a number of letters from part-time flexible (PTF) letter carriers over the past year, asking if they will ever make regular in the present withholding environment in the Postal Service. It's difficult when the delivery unit is withholding full-time residual vacancies for full-time postal employees (craft employees in and out of the letter carrier craft) anticipated to be excess while PTF letter carriers are not being promoted to fill those vacancies. The question I'm always asked is, "Will I ever make regular?"

First, it is important to understand that the concept of withholding is in the NALC/USPS National Agreement to ensure, to the extent possible, that sufficient residual positions in the affected area are withheld for full-time employees who are excess to the needs of an installation.

When it is necessary to withhold letter carrier positions, your national business agent's (NBA) office should be notified as much as six months in advance whenever possible by the postal area office. Article 12, Section 5.B.3 of the collective bargaining agreement requires the Postal Service area office to discuss with the NBA their latest review of the reasons to withhold.

The reasons to withhold not only encompass the basic reasons (FSS deployment, closing of a plant, etc.), but also include such factors as the legitimacy of the number of positions needed, the attrition rate, the correct application of Article 12 withholding provisions, the number and location of withheld positions, the correct tracking of excess employees, the legitimate loss of routes through the adjustment process, etc. 12.5.B.3 gives the NBA the opportunity to explore all facets of withholding with the Postal Area Office to ensure contractual compliance.

The main difference between withholding currently and that done in previous times is the massive scale on which it is being implemented. The concentric withholding circles that geographically overlap across the country, each drawn for a different withholding necessity, makes tracking the withholding a monumental task. That is why the NALC has developed a national withholding/excessing tracking system that monitors all facets of withholding operations. The tracking is being

facilitated by input from NALC branches to the NBA offices and from NBA offices to NALC Headquarters.

Another facet of tracking withholding pertains to the October 22, 2008, National Memorandum of Understanding (NMOU) between the national parties. Part of that NMOU requires the Postal Service to provide all new deliveries to the letter carrier craft, except in cases of inefficiency or when such deliveries are in-growth on a rural delivery route or a legitimate contract delivery service route.

All NBAs have solicited from NALC branches all such information of new deliveries from the date of the NMOU through present. (Check with your branch president to find out what such information has been provided the NBA's office.) Assignment of these new deliveries to the city carrier craft will in many cases reduce the need to excess letter carriers. Employee attrition and employees otherwise assigned so that they no longer need to be excess into the letter carrier craft are numbers that similarly detract from the total positions originally needed to be withheld.

The NALC is monitoring this tracking so that, when the Postal Service has withheld enough positions, we can enforce contractual provisions that mandate withholding to cease and the normal filling of vacant full-time positions to take place. The most obvious way to accomplish that is to promote senior PTFs to regular to fill a like amount of residual vacancies that remain.

One other factor is important. Withholding may never end if the Postal Service's strategy to revert to five-day delivery is successful. Were that to happen, one-sixth of the present carrier workforce could be targeted for excessing and withholding would not end, at least in the foreseeable future.

Proper tracking of all withholding factors, proper crediting of new deliveries, maintaining six-day delivery and accurate input of all withholding factors by the NALC branches communicating to the NBA's office provides the NALC with extremely vital information. One important result is the promotion of our PTFs to regulars. ☒