

APWU and USPS reach tentative contract agreement, AFL-CIO

The American Postal Workers Union and the U.S. Postal Service announced March 14 that they had reached a tentative agreement on a new contract, just as this issue of *The Postal Record* went to press.

"Throughout the bargaining process, the union has sought to negotiate a contract that would be fair to our members and that would enable the USPS to succeed in the future," APWU President Cliff Guffey said in a statement posted on the union's website. "The tentative agreement accomplishes those goals."

The new, four-and-a-half-year collective-bargaining agreement, which will expire on May 20, 2015, retains protection against layoffs for all career employees who were on the rolls as of Nov. 20, 2010, when the current contract was scheduled to expire.

The agreement also limits excessing, in most cases, to within 40 to 50 miles outside of an installation. Guffey said that excessing "in recent years has forced thousands of APWU members to sell their homes, uproot their families, and move hundreds of miles away from their communities."

The contract includes a two-year wage freeze, followed by three pay increases totaling 3.5 percent. The contract also retains cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) beginning in 2012.

In a new development, the contract eliminates casual and temporary employees as a workforce category and calls for the creation of a new position called "non-career assistants" (NCAs). These employees will be paid less than career workers but more than casuals and TEs. More importantly, they will become part of the APWU bargaining unit and will have the opportunity, by seniority, to become career employees.

Further, the position of 204-b will be eliminated from offices with supervisors, except to fill absences and vacant assignments of more than 14 days.

"This is a responsible agreement that is in the best interest of our employees, our customers and the future of the Postal Service," Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe said in a press release. "The contract will help lay a foundation that is fair to our employees and stakeholders."

"NALC respectfully recognizes the dedication and professionalism displayed by our sister union, the APWU, and the Postal Service in negotiating a tentative agreement to replace their contract," NALC President Fredric V. Rolando said in a statement.

"The tentative agreement appears to address the unique challenges confronted by the APWU in this round of collective bargaining, as the crafts it represents have suffered major job losses due to the ongoing transformation of the Postal Service," he said.

"NALC and APWU have bargained separately with USPS since 1994," Rolando added. "The NALC contract expires on Nov. 20, and we look forward to the start of collective-bargaining negotiations in August 2011, or earlier, when we will focus on the unique contributions of the 203,000 city letter carrier who perform the core delivery function of the Postal Service, as well as the unique circumstances and challenges facing our members."

A more detailed analysis will follow once further details become publicly available.

Under the APWU constitution, a majority of the members of the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee must approve an agreement before it can be sent to the entire membership for a ratification vote. Meanwhile, the negotiations for a new contract covering the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association were headed to binding arbitration as this issue of *The Postal Record* was being prepared. ☒