



JARAP 2011... and what about JARAP 2012?

The Joint Alternate Route Adjustment Process (JARAP) 2011 agreement called for the route adjustment review process to be completed by Feb. 28. There were about 20 of the 67 districts around the country that didn't make the deadline. They all requested and were jointly granted extensions to complete the process. I'll give the Postal Service credit for holding up its end of the bargain that the NALC made with it when we agreed to extensions in the first round of JARAP 2011.

We're hoping that all route adjustments will be implemented by the time you read this. There are a couple of districts that will struggle to get through by then, but we're going to do our best to help them in any way we can.

The reasons extensions were needed in both rounds of JARAP 2011 to complete the process were pretty much the same wherever you are—3999s not done timely, the teams started late, and/or not enough teams activated to finish on time.

These are not unfamiliar problems. It seems like these problems should be easy to solve, but in some districts, it's really tough. Overall, we learn a little more each time we do this "RAP" thing.

As JARAP 2011 comes to a close, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who served as NALC representatives at every level of the process for your efforts this year. Your dedication to our joint process is greatly appreciated.

The question now turns to whether or not we should continue with a joint route adjustment process this year or return to the traditional six-day route count and inspection process.

I think the answer depends on whether or not the Postal Service is interested in another one-year deal that is fair to letter carriers. I can report that we have been discussing this matter without agreement since contract negotiations reached an impasse back in January.

Since August, we've been talking about the broader subject of whether or not to continue with a joint route adjustment process during the life of a new contract and what that should look like. When contract negotiations reached an impasse on Jan. 20, we moved on to dis-

cussing the idea of a one-year deal. It remains to be seen how things will work out.

We should know which way this thing is going to go pretty soon. I expect we'll have the final answer by the time this issue of *The Postal Record* reaches you.

If the final answer is that the Postal Service is interested in a one-year deal that is fair to letter carriers, I think it serves the interests of our customers, as well as our own, to enter into such an agreement. It's always better to have a seat at the table when routes are evaluated and adjustments are made. This is our best chance to avoid the kind of disasters we've witnessed around the country in the flats sequencing system (FSS) and caser-streeter sites that had their routes adjusted unilaterally.

However, if the final answer is that the Postal Service is not interested in a one-year deal that is fair to letter carriers, we'll move on to preparing for the battle of traditional six-day route inspections. If we have to travel this road, we will use the tools we have now to create new ones to assist letter carriers and shop stewards throughout the route count and inspection process.

There are traditional route inspections being scheduled all around the country as I write this. We go through this every year as the joint route adjustment agreement expires. In the past, we've been able to get them stopped, but just in case this year is different, a bit of advice is in order.

If management begins conducting a traditional route inspection in your office, the best tool we have is the NALC Route Protection Program that President Rolando put together several years ago.

This is a great resource to use. Every branch should already have a copy of this three-chapter book. It was also distributed on a CD and is available on the "City Delivery" page of our website, nalc.org.

Let me switch gears before I run out of room. All of you surely have heard of management's decision to proceed with its mail processing plant closing idea. If this actually happens, it surely will create new excessing events. There is also still a lot of confusion out in the field over seniority rights when excessing takes place. Therefore, this month's Contract Talk section is dedicated to the subject of seniority rights when excessing takes place. ☒