

What will 2013 bring?



**Timothy C.
O'Malley**

The inauguration of President Obama is on Monday, Jan. 21, and the new Congress will be in place. Our legislative issues will again be our main agenda items. We will need legislation to assist us with the future of the Postal Service and with our need to expand our services, along with restoring the overpayments to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) and the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). We also will require relief from the 2006 legislation that requires us to pre-fund retiree health benefits at a cost of \$5.6 billion annually.

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This fund has approximately \$47 billion in it currently. We need this relief now. Most of the USPS debt (\$11.1 billion in 2012 alone) is a direct result of this piece of legislation. These issues must be addressed during this congressional year. We will need your help and that of anyone else you can get to assist with this endeavor.

Labor-management meetings

An important tool for all branches to use is to hold labor-management meetings during the course of the year.

Article 17, Section 5. A. provides for labor-management committee meetings. These types of meetings can be held at national, area and local levels, and at such other intermediate levels as may be appropriate.

Local branches should establish that they meet with management on a regular basis to discuss issues or concerns to improve the workplace. A wide variety of topics can be covered at these meetings. Some examples are: discussion on leave, overtime, handling of mail, posting of positions, holiday scheduling, maintenance issues, work environment, vehicles and safety. There are many topics

that can be discussed—these are just a few.

Meetings should be scheduled with ample advance notice at a mutually agreeable time. It is important to circulate an agenda to inform the parties who will be in attendance of the topics for discussion. This will give the participants the opportunity to review in advance, prepare and/or bring relevant information pertaining to the agenda item(s) to the meeting.

During the course of the meeting, the parties sometimes conclude that a subcommittee is needed to review or analyze information and report back to the committee at a subsequent meeting. This is an effective tool for the parties to use, as sometimes the allotted time for the meeting is not enough to thoroughly review and develop an action.

During the meeting, someone should be designated to take minutes. The key parties should then review the minutes and approve them before dissemination. This normally takes place prior to the next meeting.

A few common problems that sometimes occur with labor-management meetings are: no agenda, no advance notice, lack of the parties to control the meeting, decision-makers not in attendance, complaining, not looking for solutions, or the meeting becoming a lecture.

In summary, branches should look at labor-management meetings as a conduit for working on solutions to everyday questions that arise. Labor-management meetings are mechanisms to discuss items that can relieve questions in the workplace and can lead to making a better environment for all. Communication is the key ingredient to resolving work place issues.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a happy and healthy new year. Best wishes!

