

Staffing



**Brian
Renfroe**

In late 2011 and into 2012, as we worked through negotiations for the next National Agreement and the interest arbitration process, staffing had become a major issue in a large number of offices around the country. The Postal Service had not hired career letter carriers in several years in the vast majority of locations. As retirements took place, jobs were often not filled.

Significant changes have taken place in this area as the provisions of the 2011 National Agreement have been implemented over the last couple of years. These changes have sparked questions such as, “Why do we now have unassigned regulars?” and “What is ORNA?” I

will cover some history and explain what has taken place.

The Jan. 10, 2013, interest arbitration award, issued by the panel chaired by Arbitrator Shyam Das, set the terms of our current National Agreement. The award included complement changes and, most importantly, created a direct career path for non-career letter carriers, something NALC fiercely fought for throughout negotiations and interest arbitration.

The first step was to fill the residual vacancies in our craft. While the award contained the direct career path for CCAs to fill these positions, we needed to develop the mechanism or process for city carrier assistant conversions to full-time career status to take place.

“Significant changes have taken place in this area as the provisions of the 2011 National Agreement have been implemented.”

After several months of negotiations, we entered into the Memorandum of Understanding Re: Residual Vacancies – City Letter Craft (M-01824) on Aug. 31, 2013. This agreement contained a number of steps for filling residual vacancies in our craft, including part-time flexible (PTF) conversions to full-time status, the approval of transfer requests that had been on hold for several years in some cases, and city carrier assistant (CCA) conversions to full-time regular career status. This agreement resulted in thousands of transfers finally being processed and thousands of conversions of both PTFs and CCAs to full-time status.

The process in M-01824 applied to filling residual vacan-

cies. It was apparent that there was a need to have additional full-time regulars beyond those on routes and in carrier technician positions. The district caps on city carrier assistants contained in Articles 7.1.C.1 and 7.1.C.2 of the National Agreement are percentages directly tied to the number of full-time letter carriers in a district. As our work grew due to the increase in parcel volume and the additional services like Sunday parcel delivery and grocery delivery, the Postal Service realized the need for a larger number of CCAs to perform this work during the testing phases. The number of full-time letter carriers is increased by converting CCAs to full-time career status, which raises the cap and allows for the hiring of more CCAs.

On March 31, 2014, we came to agreement with the Postal Service on a new MOU, Re: Full-time Regular Opportunities – City Letter Craft (M-01834). M-01834 extended the M-01824 process for two months, and effective June 1, 2014, incorporated some changes to the process. One of the changes allowed for the posting of full-time regular opportunities, which included residual vacancies but also allowed additional unassigned regular positions to be included in the process. The next step was to determine where to add these additional full-time employees in each district.

We worked with the Postal Service on a process to identify “on rolls not available,” or “ORNA,” letter carriers. These are letter carriers who are on the rolls in an office but are not there to work for a variety of reasons. These may be injured employees, full-time union officials, 204-b’s, etc. Regardless of the reason, an assignment is likely being covered on a daily basis by a CCA. This affects the staffing in a particular office. For every assignment being covered by a CCA, the end result is one fewer CCA to serve as leave replacement and perform other work in our craft.

It simply made sense to add the unassigned regulars in locations with ORNA letter carriers to improve staffing on a daily basis. The first round of these eReassign postings and subsequent conversions took place last fall. It resulted in thousands of CCAs being converted to full-time career status across the nation.

M-01834 expired March 31 of this year. The very next day, we came to agreement on a renewal of this agreement (M-01856).

Over the months of July, August and September, we have reviewed the ORNA numbers nationally. Around 9,000 positions have been posted in eReassign during these three months alone. The resulting CCA conversions to full-time career status are still in the process of taking place.

When the conversions from the September posting are complete, more than 25,000 CCAs will have been converted to full-time career status nationally since this process began in late 2013. This is the largest influx of new career employees in our craft in many years. The process has served us well.