

Local negotiations are coming, Part 2



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While it remains to be seen whether the proposed National Agreement will be ratified, this question will be answered in the next few weeks. By the time you read this, every active member should have a copy of the proposed agreement and a ballot.

I'll take this last opportunity to encourage each of you to review the proposed agreement and cast a ballot for or against ratification as you see fit.

One issue that is settled is that, if our national contract is ratified, the 30-day negotiating period for each local memorandum of understanding (LMOU) in the country will begin on Oct. 16 and end on Nov. 14.

Whether or not the proposed National Agreement is ratified, NALC will produce an updated local negotiations guide and distribute it through your national business agent's office as we normally do. We also plan to use our new "members only" section of the NALC website to provide additional resources designed to assist branches with the local negotiations process.

We printed the text of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding CCA annual leave last month. This MOU can be found on page 95 of the proposed National Agreement. In my last article, I pointed out how the language in this MOU provides good reason for both parties to open local negotiations this year. I also offered some initial preparation advice regarding reviewing your current LMOU and gaining some bargaining suggestions through a survey, at monthly meetings, etc.

The next step in preparation is to form a local negotiations committee. There are no hard and fast rules for the size and makeup of the committee. However, when choosing the members, consider mixing experience with youth. This is the best way to ensure that the next generation of letter carriers in every city understands the provisions of their LMOU, what they mean and how important this issue is. Many branches have more than one local negotiations committee to cover several cities under their jurisdiction. Many of the more successful branches form core groups to conduct local negotiations for multiple cities and then they rotate letter carriers from each city to participate in the process in their individual installations.

Once your LMOU negotiating committee is formed, you need to choose a spokesperson. Many branches choose the branch president for this role, but that is not a requirement.

Some branches choose a different person or have multiple committees, with each one needing a chief spokesperson due to the number of LMOUs under their branch's jurisdiction. The point is that this is an internal decision that should be made based on individual circumstances.

The next task is to create proposals for each of the 22 items identified in Article 30. It is advisable to create multiple proposals for each item where possible. It is also a good idea to gather evidence/documentation to support your proposals. This can be accomplished through information requests, interviews, statements, etc.

Another good idea (but not a requirement) is to notify management in writing of your intent to open local negotiations. This should be done sometime in September or the beginning of October given the timeline of the 30-day negotiating period this year.

You should consider following up any written notification of your intent to open local negotiations by scheduling a meeting with management before Oct. 16 to establish ground rules and schedule negotiating meetings.

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As mentioned earlier, we are using the "members only" section of the NALC website to provide additional resources to branches for local negotiations. This information is available to all branch presidents. If you are a branch president, just go to the "members only" section of the NALC website and click on "Presidents Docs." Then click on "Local Negotiations." There is a sample survey, notice of intent to negotiate, ground rules and the standard language to memorialize a new LMOU. These documents are in Word format and can easily be adjusted to adapt to the needs of your branch.

Here is the short version of what should be considered when preparing for local negotiations:

1. Review your current LMOU.
2. Poll the active members.
3. Select a negotiations committee.
4. Choose a chief spokesperson.
5. Create proposals for each of the 22 items identified in Article 30.
6. Document your position.
7. Notify management of your intent to negotiate.
8. Agree on ground rules.
9. Schedule negotiation meetings.

Next month, I'll cover the actual negotiations process.