

# Post-ratification: The work begins



**Fredric V.  
Rolando**

contract had been ratified by a margin of 16-to-1. That is an amazing endorsement of our collective-bargaining agreement. On behalf of the 28 members of the union's Executive Council, I thank the tens of thousands of letter carriers who voted in the ratification ballot for your strong support for the new contract. With 15 months of bargaining and the ratification process behind us, we can now begin the work of implementing the negotiated provisions as we simultaneously plan for the next round of bargaining.

**Our immediate task is to work with management to implement the economic terms of the agreement.** That includes confirming the date that the negotiated pay raises will be included in paychecks, as well as the date that letter carriers can expect to see the back pay calculated retroactive to the effective dates of the increases. The new pay rates and the back pay calculations will include: the 1.2 percent general increase retroactive to Nov. 26, 2016, for both career and CCA letter carriers; cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for career letter carriers retroactive to September 2016 and March 2017 (\$21 and \$333 annually); an additional 1 percent general increase for CCA letter carriers retroactive to Nov. 26, 2016; and the step increases for CCAs effective Nov. 26, 2016—\$0.50 per hour when you reach(ed) 12 weeks of service as a CCA, and another \$0.50 per hour after 40 more weeks of service as a CCA.

Recently retired letter carriers also will be eligible for back pay for hours worked after the effective dates of the

**T**hese days, it seems, Americans don't agree on much of anything. The country appears deeply divided politically, culturally and economically. So as NALC members, sometimes it feels as if we are a rare island of unity, even though we are demographically and politically just as diverse as the customers we serve.

That unity was evident with the overwhelming ratification of the 2016-2019 National Agreement between NALC and the U.S. Postal Service. In early August, the Ballot Committee announced that the new contract

retroactive wage increases but before their retirement dates. In addition, such retirees will also have their annuities adjusted by the Office of Personnel Management to reflect their slightly higher end-of-career earnings. Our Retirement Department at headquarters stands ready to assist any members who have questions or concerns about that process.

The new contract will provide five additional COLA increases over the term of the agreement for career employees, and another general increase this November will include a 1.3 percent increase for career employees and a 2.3 percent increase for CCAs.

Once the Postal Service provides NALC the new workyear reports, which will determine the offices that qualify as 200-, 125- and 100-workyear offices, we will monitor implementation of the MOU to convert eligible CCAs to career status—either as part-time flexibles (125- and 100-workyear offices) or as full-time regulars (200-workyear offices). Those eligible are CCAs with at least 30 months of relative standing as of the date of ratification (Aug. 7, 2017). These conversions to career must be effective no later than 60 days from the ratification date of Aug. 7, 2017. As provided by the new contract, we will also continue discussions with postal management regarding CCA conversions to career in offices with fewer than 100 workyears, where there is no clear path to a career opportunity.

**Other provisions to monitor include one to ensure that** when CCAs with eligible TE time are converted to career, they are placed in a career step that exceeds their increased CCA pay rates. Additionally, upon ratification, former CCAs with eligible TE time who are currently in Step A of the career Table 2 pay scale will automatically be upgraded to Step B. (Eligible TE time includes periods of service as a transitional employee after Sept. 29, 2007.)

We will soon send letters to our CCA members to explain the new provisions regarding their options for health benefits coverage (including a special open season to elect or change coverage), as well as the increased USPS contribution to their premiums. Under the new contract, CCAs with "self plus one" or family health insurance coverage will receive more than the flat \$125 per pay period currently provided for "self-only" coverage under the Postal Service's Non-career Health Plan. Instead, those with "self plus one" or family coverage will receive a USPS contribution of 65 percent of the total premium during their initial year of CCA employment, rising to 75 percent after the initial year of CCA employment.

The NALC Contract Administration Unit is working with our national business agents regarding training and materials for local branches on the local memorandum of understanding (LMOU) implementation process. The 30-day local implementation period will begin on Oct. 16, giving branches the opportunity to make improvements to their LMOUs, including ensuring that provisions are added to grant CCAs the opportunity to make annual leave selections during the choice vacation period and for incidental leave.

We are also preparing to engage management in implementation of the Joint Workplace Improvement Process MOU. This process commits NALC and USPS to create and enhance a culture in every workplace that improves relationships between management and city letter carriers for the purpose of providing a safe, efficient work environment in which all employees are treated with dignity and respect. NALC will commit the resources necessary to accomplish the intent of this MOU by working with management through the agreed-upon process or, if necessary, through other unilateral means should the joint process prove inadequate.

Additionally, we are in the process of developing the agendas for the task forces on various contractual provisions and MOUs adopted by the new contract. These include task forces and working groups on Article 8, Article 12, joint route inspections, the CCA uniform process, city delivery, arbitration, the dispute resolution process, safety, staffing and voluntary transfers, among others.

And, of course, we have begun updating the *Joint Contract Administration Manual (JCAM)*. The *JCAM* is a jointly drafted manual designed to help NALC branches and local postal managers faithfully implement the terms of our contract by fully explaining its provisions and the parties' intent when they were adopted.

As we move into 2018, we will monitor the scheduled May 2018 advancement in the career pay scale of eligible former transitional employees based on their time served pursuant to the Step Credit MOU. We will also seek to resolve any implementation issues surrounding the November 2018 pay grade consolidation, at which time all career and CCA letter carriers will receive a pay upgrade approximately equivalent to a 2.1 percent increase in pay (3.1 percent for CCAs).

**Even as we undertake the challenges of implementing** this agreement through September of 2019, we also will begin preparing for the next round of formal negotiations, which will officially begin in June of 2019. Of course, collective bargaining does not have a beginning and an end.

It's an ongoing process that involves long-term strategizing and detailed planning. In the run-up to formal bargaining sessions, there are months of comprehensive preparation and research for both bargaining and possible interest arbitration. In addition, as the parties implement the existing contract, we are empowered to nego-

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tiate contract clarifications, update memorandums and resolve disputes when there are contrary interpretations of the National Agreement. So whether it is enforcing our existing contract or negotiating new terms, our bargaining rights give us the ability to project and exercise our collective voice as NALC members.

There is no secret to our success as a union. Our strength comes from our unity. We are an open shop union, by law—membership is entirely voluntary. So when more than 92 percent of active letter carriers choose to join NALC, our message to postal management (and to Congress) cannot be any clearer: We are united and we are strong. That gives our collective voice power and authority.

While I am very proud of the skills and hard work of my fellow officers and the extraordinary staff of letter carriers and professionals we’ve assembled in Washington and across the country, I know that the real source of our strength is you. That is the genius of collective bargaining—together we are stronger than we would be on our own. For that we should all be proud.

