

Unique and changing times



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Over the last few months, we have all experienced events and circumstances that are unique both inside and outside our postal and letter carrier worlds. Everything that has happened and is currently happening has caused reactions in most of us, including uncertainty, outrage and hope.

In March, we all began to experience the COVID-19 pandemic. The effect this pandemic continues to have on our day-to-day lives, minute-to-minute work lives and our employer are unprecedented. Seemingly overnight, everything changed. Our daily routines outside of work changed. Our jobs changed in many ways. As mission-critical employ-

ees, letter carriers continue to heroically serve through the pandemic, even as we have had to adjust many of our activities at work. So much is uncertain. While some issues with COVID-19 have become clearer, there is still uncertainty that requires us to be diligent on a daily basis to protect ourselves, our families and the customers we serve at a time when they need us more than ever.

The pandemic has had a dramatic effect on the economy, resulting in shifts in mail volume and revenue. We've seen sharp decreases in letter and flat mail, while parcel volumes have suddenly increased. So far, the revenue loss from mail has to some degree been offset by the increased revenue from parcels. Predictions are difficult, but it's safe to assume that some of the mail volume lost will not come back, and that the parcel volume will not sustain the Christmas-like volumes that we have had during the last few weeks. The Postal Service needs legislative assistance to financially sustain our service through the pandemic. Additionally, the Postal Service has entered a new era, with Postmaster General Louis DeJoy having taken office on June 15 and with two new governors recently confirmed to the USPS Board of Governors.

The interest arbitration hearing dates for a new collective-bargaining agreement scheduled for May, June and July were previously postponed due to the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have confirmed new hearing dates in September through November in front of neutral arbitrator Dennis Nolan. We continue to prepare for interest arbitration daily, while continuing discussions with the Postal Service.

In May, the world witnessed another example of systemic racism in our country with the horrific killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. This led to outrage and sustained protests all over the country. Unfortunately, a few took advantage of these protests to destroy property, loot and commit violent acts. Several post offices were destroyed or damaged, and letter carriers were robbed. Thankfully, no letter carriers were seriously injured, and as protests grew, they quickly became more peaceful in most places. These protests and the varying ways that millions of people now participate in the Black Lives Matter movement have shown the power of solidarity.

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All of these factors make this the most unique period that many of us, including me, have experienced in our lifetimes. There is, to be clear, some good news here. That good news is that there is hope. Even in a time where each of these issues I mentioned has been politicized when none of them should be, there is hope. That hope comes in many forms.

It remains to be seen when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, but we all hope it is soon—for our safety and health, our economy and our employer. The heroic work of letter carriers serving the people of this country has given hope to many. Your hard work to educate our elected officials gives us great hope of achieving the legislative action we need. We look forward to working to build what we hope will be a strong partnership with Postmaster General DeJoy that aims to strengthen the Postal Service through legislation, improved operations and innovation in a way that values postal employees. We have confidence in our officers, staff, attorneys and the others who will participate in our interest arbitration proceedings. Our goal is to present a strong case and achieve a collective-bargaining agreement that is fair and that rewards letter carriers for our contributions to the success of USPS.

The sustained, powerful and peaceful involvement of millions of people in the Black Lives Matter movement gives us real hope that things will change. We stand with our members in the effort to eliminate once and for all the institutional racism that has plagued us for too long.