

# Local negotiations are coming, Part 1



**Lew Drass**

**A**s you know by now, we have a tentative agreement for our national contract. The matter now is in your hands. I hope every member takes the opportunity to review the proposed agreement and casts a ballot for or against ratification as you see fit.

If it turns out that our national contract is ratified, the 30-day negotiating period for each local contract in the country will begin on April 29 and end at midnight on May 28. The official title for a local contract is the local memorandum of understanding (LMOU), and every city should have one.

**Negotiating the LMOU for each city** in a branch is one of the most important

aspects of representation at the local level. Just as every member is directly affected by the terms of our national contract, the same is true with respect to the terms of his or her LMOU. There are 22 items that can be negotiated—that includes vacation planning and other annual leave rules, the holiday schedule pecking order, and whether non-scheduled days will be on a fixed or rotating basis, to name a few.

Preparation is the key to successful negotiations for your LMOU, and now is the time to get ready. This is true whether or not our national contract is ratified.

**If you do ratify the proposed agreement, there will be** good reason for both parties in many cities to open local negotiations—at least on a limited basis. This is due to the continuation of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding city carrier assistant (CCA) annual leave and the expansion of how many part-time flexible (PTF) letter carriers we will have. The continued MOU sets a clear path for CCAs to have annual leave planning rights. The language in the proposed MOU follows:

**Re: City Carrier Assistant (CCA) Annual Leave**

Article 30 of the National Agreement and Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU) provisions do not apply to city carrier assistant employees, except as follows:

In any office that does not have provisions in its current LMOU regarding annual leave selection for CCAs, the parties agree that, during the 2021 local implementation period, the local parties will, consistent with the needs of employees and the needs of management, include provisions into the LMOU to permit city carrier assistant employees to be granted annual leave selections during the choice vacation period and for incidental leave. Granting leave under such

provisions must be contingent upon the employee having a sufficient leave balance when the leave is taken.

In the event a proposal(s) on this subject is appealed through the Article 30 impasse procedure, prior to a request for arbitration, such dispute(s) will be referred to an Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) team established by the national parties. The expectation is that the ADR team will reach an agreement that will allow city carrier assistants to plan for leave use while accounting for city carrier assistant absences, including during scheduled five day service breaks.

Any office that currently has provisions in its LMOU regarding annual leave selection for CCAs will continue such provisions, unless modified during the upcoming local implementation period. Any impasses that arise under this paragraph will be processed in accordance with Article 30 of the National Agreement.

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**There are some things that branch presidents can do now** to get started. The first is to review your current LMOU and evaluate any problems you may have had with any of the existing provisions over the last few years.

The next step of preparation is to consider the views of the active letter carriers in each city your branch represents regarding the current LMOU language.

This can be accomplished in many ways, such as sending out a survey or having a discussion at your monthly meetings. If you decide you want to send a survey to your active members, there is a sample survey in the Members Only section of our website, to which each branch president has access. The sample survey is in a format where you can change the mailing address and questions to fit your needs.

Here is some advice for this round of bargaining for a local contract: Unless your branch is happy with the current language you have, the LMOU already has provisions to permit CCAs to be granted an annual leave selection during the choice vacation period and for incidental leave, and it includes language for PTFs, you should plan to open local negotiations. As long as you will be planning to open local negotiations, the best advice is to be ready to negotiate all 22 items. To be continued....

**In closing, I want to wish all of you and your families a happy new year!**