

Local negotiations are coming, Part 2



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Drass**

As of this writing, ballots have been sent to all active members. By the time you read this, we will know whether or not the proposed National Agreement is ratified. I hope everybody voted.

My crystal ball tells me that the proposed 2019-2023 National Agreement will be ratified. Even if my crystal ball is wrong, we still have to prepare for local negotiations. The only difference will be when they occur. This article will be based on a vote of ratification.

The 30-day negotiating period for each local memorandum of understanding (LMOU) in the country will begin April 29 and end May 28.

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 the 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 city carrier assistant (CCA) annual leave last month. This MOU can be found on page 94 of the proposed National Agreement. In my last article, I pointed out how the language in this MOU provides good reason for both parties that have no annual leave provisions for CCAs or appropriate language for part-time flexibles (PTFs) 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 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. This month's Contract Talk discusses these items. It is advisable to create multiple proposals for each item where possible. It also is 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 late March or early in April, 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 well before April 29 to establish ground rules and schedule negotiating meetings.

As mentioned earlier, we plan on using the Members Only section of the NALC website to provide additional resources to branches for local negotiations. This information will be available to all branch presidents and branch secretaries. If you are a branch president or branch secretary, just go to the Members Only section of the NALC website and click on "Local Negotiations." There is a member survey sample, notice of intent to negotiate, ground rules, the standard language to memorialize a new LMOU and more. These documents will be in Word format, so you can easily make adjustments to meet 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.