

Collective-Bargaining Conference gives members rare insight into negotiations

One week after the expiration of the 2023-2026 *National Agreement*, NALC held the first of its kind two-day Collective-Bargaining Conference to give branch and state association presidents an insider's view on the state of negotiations as the process moves through the required 60-day mediation process. That agreement, which expired at midnight on Friday, May 22, 2026, remains in full force and effect until a new negotiated or arbitrated agreement takes effect. After the mediation period, any unresolved issues will be addressed through an interest

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe explains the negotiation process to the conference attendees.



arbitration process, which would result in a final and binding decision on the contents of a new *National Agreement*.

The conference was held in Washington, DC, with an opening reception held on the evening of June 1 followed by two all-day sessions. More than 250 branch and state association presidents or their designees attended to ask questions, share feedback, and gather information to bring back to their members.

“The timing of this conference is intentional,” NALC President Brian L. Renfroe said at the start of the conference. “We’re going to dive really, really deep over the next couple of days.”

Day 1 covered the economic portion of negotiations. The second day focused on NALC’s potential case in interest arbitration and proposed work rules changes, specifically related to Article 8, Hours of Work, and Article 15, Grievance-Arbitration Procedure. On both days, microphones were open to all members. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and share their ideas and feedback.

President Renfroe began by giving an insider’s view into negotiations with the Postal Service. He said that negotiations have been ongoing since the opening of bargaining. “We have been bargaining with them weekly, in some cases multiple times a week, on different topics since we opened Feb. 25,” he said.

He took a moment to thank the NALC officers and staff who have been working for months, and even years, on preparation for these negotiations. All of the proposed contract changes or additions were created by subcommittees of NALC Executive Council members and Headquarters staff after months of intensive preparation. The subcommittees developed our concepts and proposals after consideration of NALC’s official bargaining positions adopted at national conventions, feedback from the first-ever Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees and member feedback at the national rap session in Cleveland, OH, last fall, an all-member survey, and more. With that information, NALC created and submitted bargaining proposals to the Postal Service.

NALC officers and staff have also spent time considering different bargaining scenarios and strategies for achieving the best possible agreement. “Based on all that information, I think we have a really good sense of what those scenarios look like,” Renfroe said. “As an Executive Council, we have spent hours and hours and hours over the last few months having conversations about how we prioritize different pieces in different scenarios, the things that we could potentially see playing out in bargaining.

“So, the conversations with the Postal Service on the economic front over the first couple of months of bargaining were of a general nature about, ‘These are the things that we absolutely have to accomplish in any agreement,’ ” he said, while outlining specific economic provisions the union is considering.

The unprecedentedly transparent insight into the process was enlightening to even longtime members.



Many branch presidents asked the Executive Council that any tentative agreement benefit all members of the city letter carrier craft, the brand-new carriers, the top-step carriers and everyone in between, which Renfroe confirmed was part of NALC's consideration and laid out goals that would benefit all members.

Next, President Renfroe led a conversation on city carrier assistants (CCAs), part-time flexibles (PTFs) and the starting pay for new employees. While NALC has the standing goal of eliminating the non-career workforce and going exclusively to career, the president walked the attendees through several possible scenarios of raising pay for CCAs, raising pay for PTFs, or lowering the maximum time until CCAs are automatically converted to career.

Several members took to the microphones to speak about the CCA complement, saying that in addition to the pay, there are concerns that in some locations CCAs are being overworked because there aren't enough CCAs, and in other locations there are CCAs who can't get enough hours because there are too many CCAs in the installation. President Renfroe said that is a problem Headquarters is aware of and is working to fix.

Next, President Renfroe discussed proposals that the Postal Service has brought forward in negotiations, and

how NALC views those concepts. NALC has polled members on some of these concepts to see how letter carriers view these proposals, and many attendees took the opportunity to ask questions about the concepts and how they might go into effect.

The first day concluded with a preview of the NALC University online learning program (see article on page 5).

The second day shifted to potential interest arbitration hearings to obtain a new collective bargaining agreement, what NALC's case would look like and what NALC could expect from a case by the Postal Service. The conversation also included a consideration of the Postal Service's finances.

President Renfroe told attendees that the Executive Council has to consider what NALC reasonably thinks it could get through a tentative agreement versus what the outcome of interest arbitration likely would be.

"Balancing those two things and what the Postal Service is willing to do in negotiations ultimately is how the decision is made as to whether we're able to get a tentative agreement that our members can choose whether to ratify or not, which is always our preference if we're able to get there, or we use the interest arbitration process," Renfroe said.

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The NALC president then discussed several work rule proposals from both sides having to do with Article 8, Hours of Work, and Article 15, Grievance-Arbitration Procedure, of the *National Agreement*. Several members took to the microphones to talk about the implications of the work rule proposals.

Finally, President Renfroe made time available for anyone to come to a microphone to comment or ask a question of him or any of the members of the Executive Council before closing the conference. This feedback will further help inform NALC's next steps in the bargaining process.

"I appreciate every branch and state leader who joined us for these two all-day sessions to learn more about where we are in the collective-bargaining process," President Renfroe said following the conference. "Your commitment, engagement and dedication make our union stronger. I look forward to these branch and state leaders taking their knowledge home and sharing it with our members."

Further updates will be provided on nalc.org, on the union's social media channels, in future issues of *The Postal Record*, and in the *NALC Bulletin* as the collective-bargaining process moves forward. **PR**