

# Collective bargaining begins



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Days after our national day of action, NALC met with the Postal Service at a collective-bargaining opening ceremony. While this ceremonial meeting is a marker in the bargaining schedule, it doesn't tell the full story of the extensive work and preparation that leads up to it.

**Collective-bargaining preparations have been ongoing for months and even years.** Since last fall, our collective-bargaining subcommittees, made up of Executive Council members and Headquarters letter carrier staff, have continued to meet regularly to review information such as convention resolutions and draft proposals to be submitted in this round of bargaining. This process has been utilized in the last several rounds of collective bargaining, and this time, the subcommittees had access to even more member feedback.

In September 2025 and January of this year, two 30-member groups of Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees met to discuss and formulate bargaining proposals. These new committees, which were divided into groups of branch leaders, contract enforcers and newer members, offered valuable perspectives directly from letter carriers representing a wide variety of viewpoints and experiences.

Another new and important part of bargaining preparation was a survey available to all active members. Last month, every active member had the opportunity to provide their feedback, rank their priorities, and explain what they want to see in our next contract. The results reinforced the bargaining goals and priorities we've been working toward.

When asked to rank their top priorities in a new contract, respondents ranked general wage increases, reducing the time to reach the top step of the pay table, raising top pay, addressing

**W**e're only a few months into the year, and it's already been a pivotal one for NALC.

Last month, I had the pleasure of joining Baltimore, MD Branch 176 at its "Fight Like Hell!" rally for a fair contract. It was an excellent event with an even better energy. The attendees were engaged, fired up, and ready to fight for the contract and wages we deserve.

That energy wasn't contained in Baltimore. Branches across the country held similar rallies on Sunday, Feb. 22. If you attended one, I hope you left as energized and hopeful as I did. If you didn't, I hope you'll be on the lookout for upcoming actions organized by NALC.

contract compliance, raising career starting pay by eliminating steps of the pay table, and transitioning to all-career workforce at the top. These results reinforce all the hard work our Executive Council, staff members, and Rank-and-File Bargaining Committees did and will continue doing. History tells us that achieving every one of our goals at the bargaining table in any single round of negotiations is a tall order. But these survey results affirmed that we are fighting for what our active members want to see in their next contract and plays a large part in determining how we prioritize different goals as negotiations play out.

We know we are in a harsh bargaining environment, with an employer that operates to serve, not profit. The Postal Service may seek to take away other economic or workroom floor gains that we've made over our long, consistent history of bargaining success. Regardless, we know that our work is as valuable as ever. We deserve more and we won't settle for anything less than what we've earned.

**While last month signified the ceremonial kickoff of negotiations,** the truth is that NALC is in a constant state of bargaining with the Postal Service. We perpetually exchange ideas, regardless of where we are in the contract or negotiation cycle. Collective bargaining isn't a series of a few pre-scheduled meetings that finalize everything. It's constant conversations with our counterparts at the Postal Service. The work of our bargaining team never ends. I am honored to lead this team and its work on behalf of our 200,000 active members.

While our work on collective bargaining is constant, and our fight for a fair contract that meets our members' needs is central, it isn't our only battle. We cannot forget that other threats remain and we must always keep our defenses—and offenses—ready. We are dealing with a postmaster general who is less than a year into the job, an administration that has proven to make hasty decisions (ones that have not been friendly to our fellow federal employees), and a Congress that struggles to agree on anything. All these factors amount to uncertainty. That's why we're always on the lookout and are ready to fight back if anyone tries to come after our jobs, retirements, the universal network, or anything else that affects letter carriers' future.

As president of our great union, it is my job to be truthful about the challenges we face while doing everything possible to achieve the best outcomes for our members. If you're a leader in your state, region, branch or station, you know that being a leader naturally brings feedback and criticism. But you likely also know that, despite anything else, your sole goal is to serve your members the best you can. That is my goal in this round of collective bargaining and in every single fight we face. I am committed to doing what is in the best interest of letter carriers and our union at the bargaining table and in every arena we enter.