



NALC

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The parties met at USPS Headquarters on Feb. 22.

NALC, USPS formally open bargaining talks

The leaders of the National Association of Letter Carriers and the United States Postal Service formally opened negotiations for a new collective-bargaining agreement on Feb. 22, the 16th such event since collective-bargaining rights were achieved with the establishment of USPS in 1971.

In his opening statement, NALC President Brian L. Renfroe told Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, “In this round of collective bargaining, letter carriers have the chance to be recognized, and rewarded, for being the backbone of this beloved American institution, the United States Postal Service. Letter carriers are the face of the Postal Service. We are the ones customers see delivering to their homes and businesses. They know us and rely on us for dependable, consistent service. We are indispensable and directly carry out the Postal Service’s mission.”

Joining Renfroe for the event—held in the Benjamin Franklin Room at the U.S. Postal Service Headquarters in Washington, DC—were the other members of the NALC Executive Council as well as letter carrier and professional staff from Headquarters and legal counsel. USPS executives and postal headquarters employees joined DeJoy at the Ash Wednesday morning meeting.

Postal Service Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino, who serves as the chief human resources officer, kicked off the event, welcoming the leaders of NALC to the bargaining table. “There is one certainty that has existed in each and every round of bargaining that I have participated in, and that is that the parties will encounter new and unique challenges to tackle and address,” Tulino said. “This round of bargaining will be no different, but I am confident that we can and we will find mutually acceptable solutions to the challenges we will face in this round of bargaining.”

Tulino, who will lead the negotiations for the Postal Service, said, “As we continue the strategy of becoming the delivery provider of choice for the American public, it is essential that we continue down the path to modernize our work practices and work rules, be more precise in our operational execution, and provide a work environment that enables our employees to provide the best-in-class service—and that includes the safety and security of all of our city letter carriers.”

He added that USPS’s “future success” will depend on “decisions we make relative to maintaining an affordable and flexible workforce capable of responding to a constantly changing business environment where we compete for business every day.” Tulino credited letter carriers’ ability to adapt through the last three turbulent years.

“Deploying that same ingenuity and adaptability to this round of bargaining will go a long way to us achieving a negotiated agreement,” he continued. “As we begin the process of bargaining, I pledge my commitment to working with you, Brian, and your entire team to achieve a negotiated agreement that is fair to our employees, meets the objectives of both our organizations, and enables us to continue outstanding service to our customers, the American public.”

Paul Barner, who as NALC executive vice president serves as the union’s chief spokesperson for this round of bargaining, then kicked off NALC’s presentation, saying, “We’re glad to be here to begin negotiations on our next national agreement with the Postal Service.” He thanked the management team for their hospitality and introduced the attendees representing NALC.

President Renfroe then gave his statement (printed in full at right). The video of the statement is available at nalc.org/cb-opening

Following President Renfroe, Postmaster General DeJoy thanked NALC for its cooperation in working with the Postal Service on the issues that have arisen since he became postmaster general. He recounted the accomplishments of the last three years—weathering the COVID-19 pandemic and guaranteeing the delivery of mail ballots during two nationwide elections. He highlighted the procurement of Next Generation Delivery Vehicles and the efforts to streamline the organization’s infrastructure.

“Collective bargaining is an opportunity to address some of our most critical challenges,” he said. “We are better together. We have proven that. Let us jointly focus on how we can reach an agreement that will make the Postal Service stronger than ever with the future of the organization and its people as our main objective.”

DeJoy singled out Renfroe and Tulino, saying, “I have the confidence that they will work together to deliver to us what we all want and need, a successful path forward in our working relationship as we continue to transform the Postal Service into an organization that will enjoy a vibrant existence far into the future.”

The present collective-bargaining agreement is set to expire at midnight on May 20. If the parties fail to reach an agreement by then, federal law establishes a system of mediation and binding arbitration to resolve disputes; the law forbids strikes by postal workers. The parties have organized bargaining committees and have begun negotiations.

Future updates on bargaining will be in the *NALC Bulletin*, in *The Postal Record*, on the NALC Member App and on NALC’s social media accounts.



Postmaster General Louis DeJoy (l) and NALC President Brian L. Renfroe



Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino



The NALC Executive Council, along with members of the letter carrier and professional staff, attended the opening.

NALC President Brian L. Renfroe’s opening remarks for the 2023 collective-bargaining session

Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Postmaster General DeJoy and Deputy Postmaster General Tulino, for hosting this opening ceremony for NALC’s 16th round of collective bargaining with the Postal Service. I am honored to be here today representing the nation’s city letter carriers for the first time as NALC president. We are eager to work in good faith to reach a new contract. As we look forward to the negotiations ahead, I see opportunities for both sides of this table.

We meet at a crucial time for the city letter carrier craft. Almost three years ago, the world as we knew it started shutting down due to the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus. While millions of Americans worked from home and sheltered in place across the country, our work became a lifeline for millions of homes and businesses.

Letter carriers seamlessly kept the economy and our communities running by delivering essential goods and medications, school supplies, stimulus checks, at-home COVID tests, and everything else that the American people needed. For months, we enabled our customers to safely shelter at home, a luxury that essential workers like letter carriers did not have. We proudly rose to the occasion, just like we always have.

We also helped to uphold American democracy in two national elections by working directly and successfully with the Postal Service to ensure that American voters could safely and confidently cast their ballots at home during a time of intense polarization and heightened congressional scrutiny. During the pandemic, vote-by-mail skyrocketed, and letter carriers and the NALC were proud to play a crucial role in getting tens of millions of ballots delivered securely and on time.

Through all of this, our union and letter carriers across the country led a 12-year effort to finally enact bipartisan postal reform that protected this invaluable network by repealing the pre-funding mandate, which had burdened the Postal Service for over a decade. By achieving this goal, working in concert with you and the other postal unions, we not only put the Postal Service on more solid financial footing, we also demonstrated that productive collaboration is essential to the continued success of our union and the Postal Service.

As everyone knows, our country’s economic landscape is drastically different than it was in 2019 when we last sat at a negotiating table. Unemployment rates are at a 50-year low, and we face the increasingly difficult challenge of attracting sufficient applicants for letter carrier jobs at today’s starting wages. This has significantly affected our ability to properly staff post offices and ultimately deliver the nation’s mail.

Today, letter carriers are working harder and longer hours than at any other point in our history. The staffing shortages, coupled with the influx of parcel volumes, changing technology and heightened customer expectations, have made our jobs more challenging and demanding.

But that’s not all. Too often, we still struggle with the lack of management’s contract compliance at the local level. This leads to complications on the workroom floor, which affect morale and productivity, while needlessly costing the Postal Service money.

And perhaps most importantly, crime against letter carriers is on the rise. These repeated attacks against our members are horrific, unacceptable and must be addressed through action. No letter carrier should fear for their life or safety while on the job. Candidly, crime is a deterrent in an already difficult environment to attract letter carriers to join the Postal Service.

In this round of collective bargaining, letter carriers have the chance to be recognized, and rewarded, for being the backbone of this beloved American institution, the United States Postal Service. Letter carriers are the face of the Postal Service. We are the ones customers see delivering to their homes and businesses. They know us and rely on us for dependable, consistent service. We are indispensable and directly carry out the Postal Service’s mission.

Through a fair agreement, the Postal Service has the opportunity to strengthen the letter carrier workforce, and in turn, bolster the Postal Service’s ability to achieve the goals in its 10-year plan. One of the goals of the 10-year plan is to invest in and empower employees to create a stable workforce. Other key portions of the plan, like implementation of sorting and delivery centers, will only be successful if we use these negotiations to build a stronger city letter carrier craft.

As we seek a new agreement, we will aim to preserve and improve the standard of living for the nation’s city letter carriers, as we always have. It is our expectation that we will be able to reach voluntary agreement; however, we will not hesitate to pursue a fair agreement through binding interest arbitration if necessary.

Our goals are simple.

First and foremost, we must address the staffing issue that is debilitating our craft. Nationwide, letter carriers are overworked, and post offices are understaffed. One obvious solution that we seek is increased wages. If the Postal Service wants to recruit and retain letter carriers, it starts with a competitive wage—plain and simple.

The staffing crisis can also be addressed by shifting to an all-career workforce and abolishing the city carrier assistant position. The CCA position, in its current form, no longer serves the Postal Service or our craft.

Overwhelming turnover is seriously undermining service. While we have made positive strides in our recent agreements to convert certain installations across the country to the all-career model, NALC seeks to convert all CCAs to career positions and make the all-career model the standard nationwide.

Lastly, we will insist on practical solutions to address the increasing crime against letter carriers. The safety of letter carriers is our No. 1 priority. We must work together to ensure that letter carriers are safe from the moment they arrive at their stations until the moment they park their vehicles after delivery. We cannot allow these crimes to persist.

If we work together, I wholeheartedly believe that we can achieve these goals and that doing so will ultimately benefit both parties. Together, we have implemented several successful initiatives since our last agreement, including numerous COVID-related memorandums of understanding, the development of the New Employee Experience and Retention Program, the conversion to the all-career model in hundreds of installations across the country, and the Technology Integrated Alternate Route Evaluation and Adjustment Process, just to name a few.

We commend your willingness to work with us on these key initiatives. We have long been involved in the bargaining process with Deputy Postmaster General Tulino. I appreciate your commitment and look forward to what we will continue to accomplish together.

Similarly, after years and years of declining service quality, it is refreshing to have leadership that is willing to sit down and maintain regular, substantive engagement to address this problem while promoting the work letter carriers do proudly six—and sometimes seven—days a week. Your leadership, Postmaster General DeJoy, has fostered that engagement that we look forward to continuing in the future.

I will close by saying, during these negotiations, I believe both parties have a unique opportunity to build something transformative for the nation’s letter carrier workforce and the entire agency. If we can increase wages, appropriately staff our craft, address safety concerns, and enforce managerial contract compliance, letter carriers, in turn, can ensure that the Postal Service remains strong and competitive.

City letter carriers deserve a contract that will enable them to have a dignified, safe and dependable job that provides a comfortable middle-class working life and retirement. It is my privilege to lead the nation’s city letter carriers in our pursuit of these goals.

Again, NALC is committed to doing all we can to swiftly reach agreement on a mutually beneficial contract. I look forward to working with all of you in the weeks and months ahead. Thank you.



NALC President Brian L. Renfroe

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