

National Postal Mail
 Handlers Union
 Local 297
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 Raytown, MO 64133

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Visit us on the Web
www.npmhlocal297.com

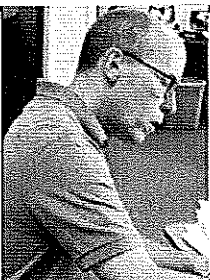
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President's Report

By Chris Bentley, Local 297 President

Great news: After years of USPS employee numbers nationwide declining, with plants shutting down and consolidating, I'm happy to report that in Local 297, at least, things are looking up.

As Local 297 President, I have spent my first year pressuring management to try to get them to hire more Mail Handlers, to convert more MHAs to career regulars, to reduce non-volunteer overtime, and to re-think management's plan to consolidate Springfield's work into Kansas City. Those efforts are paying off:

At our KCK NDC plant, Western Area management agreed two weeks ago to convert 56 MHAs to career regulars this month. That means an instant raise of \$2.54 per hour, from MHA base pay of \$14.37 to career Mail Handler Level 4 step AA pay of \$16.91, plus full benefits and rights. Congratulations, and welcome to the career workforce!

This increases the number of career Mail Handlers at the NDC from 174 to 230, an improvement of almost one-third.

Management also agreed to add 33 more Mail Handler positions to the NDC as soon as possible. This includes voluntary transfers of current Mail Handlers, as well as new hires. In addition, management also will hire three more Casuals.

Overall, this will increase the NDC's Mail Handler workforce by 36 people – purely on the basis of existing duties, without adding extra work to the plant. This will add about \$1.5 million per year to the USPS payroll, and have a big impact on the local economy. It should eliminate

the need for non-volunteer overtime at the NDC – good news for Mail Handlers who were sick of being forced to work daily overtime or a sixth day, week after week.

Similar improvements are under discussion for the KCMO P&DC, too. I expect a similar agreement there this summer, with management converting MHAs and hiring more Mail Handlers. Things are moving slower there, unfortunately, because nationally the Postal Service is still deciding whether to designate the KCMO plant as a Surface Transportation Hub, in addition to its current mail-processing duties. If the plan is approved, the Hub work will add a large number of Mail Handler duties and jobs to KCMO. But even if it is rejected, we still need more Mail Handlers at KCMO, based on the plant's current high overtime rates.

There are finally positive signs for Springfield, too. I am negotiating there to get at least some MHAs converted to regulars, and add new hires. But the best news is that management finally admitted it is studying changing Springfield's consolidation plan.

For years, managers in Springfield and KCMO have agreed with us that consolidating Springfield is a bad idea – but say they can't stop it. But last month, in a call with top Western Area managers, I finally got them to confirm they are "studying changes to the Springfield plan," including proposals to keep some or all of Springfield's work in place. Springfield is still on the schedule to consolidate in July, but this was the first official word that the plan may change soon. The facts are on our side – Springfield's mail volume is way up over last year, while in the rest of the country, it's down. So stay tuned!



Mail Handler Issues



REMOVING AN ABUSIVE 204B

As most of you know, when disputes between the Union and Management can't be resolved in the grievance process, they often end up in arbitration.

Local 297 has a strong winning record in arbitration, which Management is well aware of. So, even if Management denies a grievance through all three steps of the grievance process, they often are willing to settle it in pre-arbitration negotiations rather than go up against us in arbitration. That's why it's important for stewards and members not to get discouraged by Management's denials in the grievance process, but to keep meeting grievance deadlines and keep appealing cases through the system.

Over the past year as President, I have settled 37 cases in pre-arbitration negotiations. We have taken five cases to arbitration.

In the most recent pre-arbitration settlements, Management settled three grievances from the NDC, filed on all three tours, over a 204b who was rude and disrespectful to Mail Handlers. Some people mistakenly think there is nothing that can be done about members of Management who disrespect Mail Handlers. That is flat wrong. There are rules requiring Mail Handlers to be treated with dignity and respect — rules this 204b regularly broke. This was especially bad because the 204b himself is a Mail Handler. (We're not giving his name here, because he is a Union member).

I settled all three cases in

pre-arbitration by pressing management to remove him as a 204b, with the stipulation that he cannot serve as a 204b or member of Management for one year. This protected our members from being mistreated at work, but without imposing discipline on a Mail Handler who happened to be a 204b, while giving him a year to rethink his treatment of his fellow Mail Handlers.

If you have a problem with a 204b or any member of Management who is rude, abusive, or intolerant, let us know! There is no reason to accept this treatment. Ask for a steward, who can file a grievance under the Joint Statement on Violence and Behavior in the Workplace. It says, in part:

"Every employee at every level of the Postal Service should be treated at all times with dignity, respect, and fairness... Those who do not treat others with dignity and respect will not be rewarded or promoted. Those whose unacceptable behavior continues will be removed from their positions."

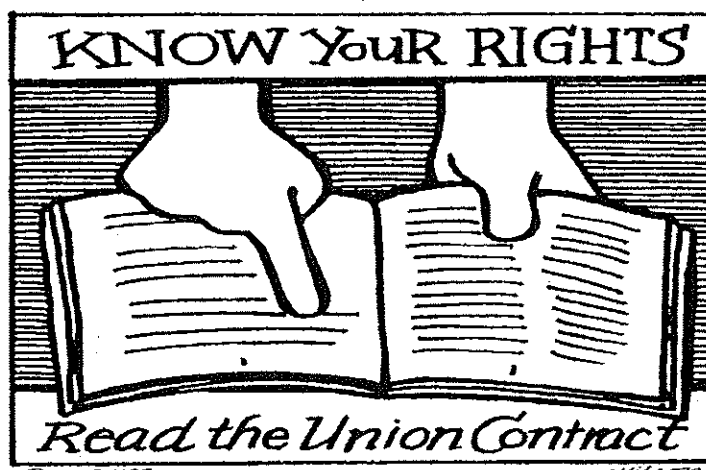
TROUBLE SEEING YOUR STEWARD?

Springfield Management recently has been denying stewards' requests for Union time, and delaying Mail Handlers who ask to see a steward, for days or even weeks. This is unacceptable. It violates our national contract and also federal law — the National Labor Relations Act. Every Mail Handler has the right to see a steward, and every steward has the right to reasonable Union time.

Springfield Branch President Rick Western and Chief Steward Mike Caird have filed and won several grievances over this issue, but Management just isn't getting the message. So, we're taking it to the next level. Rick recently filed Labor Charges against Management, and we are insisting that stewards and members must be afforded prompt, reasonable Union time. We expect the National Labor Relations Board to force Springfield Management to give ample Union time soon.

If you have trouble seeing a steward or getting Union time, contact a steward, your Branch President, or me as soon as possible.

- Chris Bentley





LaWanda Newton

Vice President / KCK NDC Branch President

Hello,

To all the Local 297 union members, from La Wanda Newton the KCNDC Branch President and the Local 297 Vice-President.

We have been very busy here at the KCNDC. We have had a lot of unexpected changes come our way since the last newsletter. I would first like to welcome all the new mail handlers that came to the KCNDC. I know that things have been tough lately with Management abolishing, reverting jobs, changing jobs and hours within 60 days of the job awards and lots of overtime. Changing the newly awarded jobs was a very unpleasant surprise for all of us. Just know that we, the stewards have filed every grievance that we could think of over these changes. The un-

ion is very displeased with the way management lured mail handlers into jobs just to take them away. Then management attempted to appease the mail handlers by promising to pay out-of-schedule pay. That they still have not paid properly. This is not bargaining in good faith! Things may be moving at a snails pace, but we are on it!

I would also like to welcome all my new union stewards. Thank you all for stepping up to help fight the fight as a team and make management abide by the articles in our National Agreement. I need all of your help. Thank you!

Management, had a team come in to study and evaluate what the KCNDC needed to improve productivity and to raise the employee morale. The team came up

with we needed more mail handlers, we have too many begin tours and we need supervisors. We already knew this by just looking around and/or asking the mail handlers on the workroom floor who actually process the mail. We didn't need a team for these results! I'm sure there will be more changes coming our way. I am ready to fight the fight and challenge anything that is not reasonable or not within the scope of our National Agreement. I am working hard for all of you. We will continue to file, file, file!

On a lighter note the KCNDC Branch Picnic will be September 19, 2015 for all the KCNDC union members and their families. If you are interested in helping with the picnic plans, contact your union official on your tour.

Thanks to all of you and hang in there!

New Stewards Appointed and Trained for both KC Plants

By Chris Bentley
Local 297 President

In the last newsletter, I asked for volunteers to step up and become stewards. I also sent letters directly to Mail Handlers at the KCK NDC, inviting them to talk to me about becoming stewards, because our ranks there were so low.

The response was great, from both Kansas City plants. In February, we got volunteers off work and brought them to the Union Hall, where I spent a full day training them. We also included a few fairly new stewards, who at-

tended for refresher training. We followed up with another training day in March for three more volunteers who couldn't attend the first session. I was glad that a few of the volunteers had been stewards before for Local 297, but had quit for a variety of reasons. Getting them back was a sign that our union is making a fresh start, and whatever problems may have caused them to quit are now in the past.

One of the volunteers was Nancie Noce, a former USPS manager, now a Mail Handler, who knows the system from the other side and wants to help defend the

contract for the union — another good sign of positive change.

Thank you to all our new and returning stewards for stepping up to help your fellow Mail Handlers!

NDC: Bridget Williams, Dee Forshee, Sherri Mitchell, Nancie Noce,

KCMO: Willette Brown, Jeannine Smith, Phyllis Judie, Lonette Tindall, Patricia Thomas.

If you're interested in becoming a steward, or volunteering to help your union in some other way, give me a call.

Treasurer's Report

Pamela Grant, Local 297 Treasurer

Local 297 Account

NPMHU Local 297

BALANCE SHEET

As of March 11, 2015

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

UMB \$63,422.83

Total Checking/Savings \$63,422.83

Total Current Assets \$63,422.83

TOTAL ASSETS \$63,422.83

LIABILITIES & EQUITY 0.00

Local 297 Building Fund Account

NPMHU Local 297

BALANCE SHEET

As of March 11, 2015

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

US Bank \$12,035.75

Total Checking/Savings \$12,035.75

Total Current Assets \$12,035.75

TOTAL ASSETS \$12,035.75

LIABILITIES & EQUITY 0.00

New Branch President Installed in Wichita, KS

Former Wichita chief steward Zach Miller was installed as Wichita Branch President effective March 13, by the unanimous vote of the Local 297 Executive Board. Zach fills the vacancy created by the resignation of previous Branch President Gary Gonzales, who resigned midway through his second term due to ongoing health issues.

Zach brings years of experience in both Wichita and Alaska as a Mail Handler and steward. Gary is remaining as a steward on Tour 1, while long-time steward Brett Miller is now chief steward.

The Executive Board appreciates Zach's willingness to step up into the Branch President's job to serve his fellow Wichita Mail Handlers.

The Executive Board also appreciates the good work that Gary did as Branch President. His voluntary resignation when he decided he could no longer perform the Branch President's duties shows his commitment to the Union and willingness to ensure Wichita Mail Handlers have a strong Branch President.

Please join the Executive Board in thanking both of them for their work for the Union.

“It was the labor movement that helped secure so much of what we take for granted today. The 40-hour work week, the minimum wage, family leave, health insurance, Social Security, Medicare, retirement plans. The cornerstones of middle-class security all bear the union label.”

- President Barack Obama
Labor Day, 2010

“Management ‘deemed documentation desirable’ for my FMLA absence — is that fair?”

Over the past few weeks, several members have asked President Chris Bentley the question in the headline, and it seems likely many more may need the answer, too.

Question: I have FMLA, but when I call in sick, Management still asks me for documentation. Can they do that? How can I make them stop? I already gave them my FMLA documentation and it was approved!

Answer: This is the famous “deems desirable” rule. For absences of more than three regularly scheduled workdays, USPS rules say an employee must submit medical documentation “or other acceptable evidence” in support of a request for Sick Leave. That could be a doctor’s note, a note from someone who knows the employee well, or (as some employees have done) a puddle of vomit sprayed on the supervisor’s desk. For absences of three days or less, a supervisor can take the employee’s word that he or she was sick, but has the authority to require documentation “when the supervisor deems documentation desirable for the protection of the interests of the Postal Service.”

There has been a lot of debate over what that means. In 2007, the Union and Management agreed at the national level that if a supervisor deems documentation desirable, it cannot be a blanket policy covering a group of

employees, it must be made on a case-by-case basis, and “may not be arbitrary, capricious, or unreasonable.”

In the real world, that means management is not allowed to make a rule that anyone who calls in sick over the Fourth of July, for instance, must bring in documentation. They have to be able to show they had a valid reason to request documentation from each particular employee. One example might be if an employee asked for Annual Leave over the Fourth of July, but was denied because all the slots were already taken, and then took the day off anyway by calling in sick. Arbitrators have ruled that would be a reasonable circumstance for supervisors to ask for documentation. Another example would be if an employee called in sick, but then was seen jogging. (Jogging might be OK to do, though, if the illness is stress, migraine, or another issue that exercise might help.)

When an employee has FMLA, management has much less reason to suspect that he or she is faking a sick call, because they already have received solid medical documentation for a serious illness. But a situation could still arise where the supervisor thinks the employee wasn’t really sick. In that case, the supervisor can “deem documentation desirable” — but only

if the employee asks for paid leave.

One quirk of the FMLA law is that it fully protects employees who take up to a total of 12 weeks of **unpaid** leave. So, if the employee takes unpaid leave (LWOP) under FMLA, management is not allowed to ask for additional documentation. In other words, management cannot deem documentation desirable if you take LWOP.

But if the employer offers paid leave, like the USPS does, the FMLA law says employees may substitute their paid Sick Leave or Annual Leave for FMLA unpaid leave. If they take paid leave, though, management’s rules for paid leave kick in. In other words, if you take FMLA leave and request Sick Leave or Annual Leave, a supervisor has the right to deem documentation desirable.

There are ways around this. First, if the supervisor’s request is unreasonable, as it often is for employees with an FMLA condition, ask to see a steward and file a grievance. You may still have to provide documentation, but your steward should be able to show there was no justification for the request and get you paid for the time, expense, and trouble of providing documentation.

But the simplest way around “deems desirable” is to withdraw your request for paid Sick Leave or Annual Leave, and submit a new 3971 for LWOP to cover your FMLA absence. Management has no right to deem documentation when you take LWOP for your FMLA leave.

PAUL HOGROGIAN TO BE SWORN IN AS NEW NPMHU NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Paul Hogrogian, President of NPMHU Local 300, covering the New York Metropolitan Region, and Northeast Region Vice President on the National Executive Board, will become the Union's national president on May 2.

He will replace the Union's national president for the past 13 years, John Hegarty, who announced his retirement in February, effective May 1.

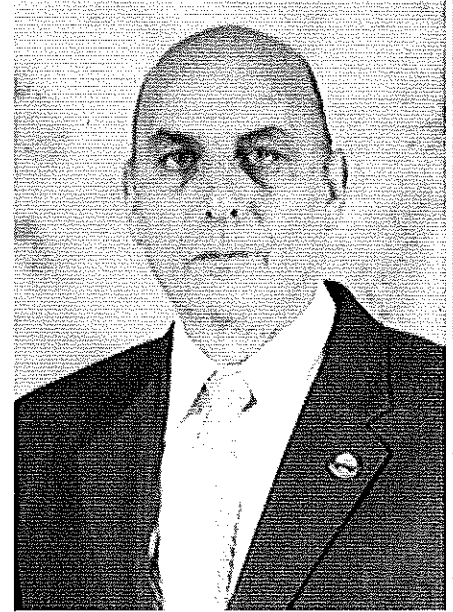
President Hegarty has been an excellent leader of the national union, restoring it to a financial firm footing and consistently promoting training and development of union stewards and officers, as well as leading contract negotiations that have raised Mail Handlers' wages and benefits. He will be missed.

Hogrogian has led the NPMHU's largest Local Union, with more than 4,700 dues-paying members, not simply as its Local Presi-

dent and Vice President, but as the primary representative for all Mail Handlers in the New York Metropolitan Region on contract enforcement matters, in the grievance-arbitration process, and on legislative and political issues. He also has helped ensure that Local 300 maintains a healthy financial surplus and a strategic focus that looks toward fixing current problems while planning for future events.

Hogrogian's involvement with the NPMHU National Union also has been extensive. He has served as a member of the National Training Committee since 1996, and has been a member of the Field Negotiating Committee during contract negotiations in 1998, 2000, 2006 and 2011.

In addition, Hogrogian has served as the National Shop Steward Trainer and sits on the Article 12 Task Force. He also has been a member of the Committee on the Future and a key leader on various contractual and legislative matters.



Paul Hogrogian

Hogrogian brings a distinctly New York style to the NPMHU, as a strong and forceful advocate for all Mail Handlers. We're lucky to have him lead us through the next round of union issues.

New Members Signing Up In Local 297

Since our last newsletter, 23 more Mail Handlers have signed up as dues-paying members from KCMO, the NDC, Wichita, and Springfield.

The union gets stronger with every new member, so THANK YOU for joining with us!

Please welcome our new members:

Constance Barker, Alex Campbell, Milton Cowley, Victor Delgado, Stephanie Frazier, Marva Graham, Leah Jones, Muryel Josenburger, Shawn McGuire, Hailey Middaugh, Dominique Reed, Maureen Ubert, Mischa Warren, LeMarco Williams, Stephen Witaker, Gary Dossett, Matther Matteson, Diana Obando, Keandra Swopes, Linda Taylor, Jeffry Nix, Ky Le, Chelsea Holt.

What To Expect From Your Union Steward

When you have a problem at work and ask to see a steward, the steward should:

- Meet with you and hear you out.
- Research the issue and give you their honest opinion of how to solve it. This may be by filing a grievance, by simply talking to your supervisor or co-workers, or by another method, such as EEO complaint, Labor Charge, or OSHA safety filing.
- Take a signed statement from you.
- Pursue your issue vigorously and get back to you with a report on it within at most a few days.
- Let you know immediately when it is resolved.

If your steward isn't doing these things, let me or your Branch President know!

- Chris Bentley

Mail Handlers PAC Salary Allotment Form

No part of members' Union dues are ever used for political purposes. Your dues pay for Union expenses in negotiating and defending our contract. As a federal employees' Union, by law dues cannot be used to lobby politicians. However, the USPS is currently under political pressure in the U.S. Congress, with changes already taking place to slow mail delivery, downsize the USPS, consolidate plants, and reduce the workforce. The American people deserve the best Postal Service in the world to stay the best.

So, the national Union has established a Political Action Committee, which members may donate to voluntarily, entirely separate from their Union dues, to have a say in the political arena as laws are proposed and passed that will affect our jobs. A Salary allotment to the Mail Handlers PAC can be set up easily and quickly using PostalEase. You choose the amount you give. Some members give one dollar per Pay Period, while others give \$25 per period. Follow the instructions below, and thank you!

PostalEase by TELEPHONE

Dial 1-877-4PS-EASE-(877-477-3273) and follow the prompt for the Employee Services Main Menu.

When prompted Press #1 for PostalEase.

When prompted, enter your eight-digit USPS employee Identification number.

When prompted again, enter your USPS PIN number. (This is the same as the PIN number you use for telephone bidding and/or other payroll allotments).

When prompted, Choose Option #2 (to select payroll allotments). Then Choose Option #1 (to select allotments)

When prompted, Press #2 to continue.

When prompted, Press #3 to add the allotment.

When prompted for the routing number, enter **054001220**.

When prompted for the account number, enter the following: **11260001** _____ (the last nine digits of your account number is your SSN—this information will allow us to identify you as the PAC contributor).

Press #1 if correct.

When prompted, Press #1 for CHECKING.

When prompted, input the bi-weekly dollar amount of your PAC allotment.

Press #1 if correct.

When prompted, press #1 to process.

You will be provided a confirmation number as well as the start date for the salary allotment.

For your records:

Record the confirmation number _____.

Record the start date of the salary allotment _____.

Press #1 to repeat, or Press #9 to end call.

Retain this form for your records.

The Postal Service will not process the allotment request without the above information. Please make sure all information is correct and **THANK YOU for your contribution to the Mail Handlers PAC.**

PostalEase on the WEB

To initiate your bi-weekly PAC contribution on the web, simply go to www.liteblue.usps.gov

Enter your eight-digit USPS Employee ID Number and your USPS PIN.

Follow the link to PostalEase—you will again be asked to enter your Employee ID Number and your USPS PIN.

Follow the link to PAYROLL - Allotments/NTB Continue to the ALLOTMENTS section.

Your ROUTING TRANSIT NUMBER is: **054001220**.

Your ACCOUNT # will be:

11260001 _____ (the last nine digits of your account number is your SSN—this information will allow us to identify you as the PAC contributor).

For ACCOUNT TYPE - please select "CHECKING".

When prompted, please input the AMOUNT that you would like to contribute to the PAC each period.

To process your PAC allotment, you will need to select the VALIDATE button, and to finalize the transaction, please select SUBMIT. Be sure to print out a copy of the confirmation page for your records.

Don't know your USPS PIN?

To obtain a PIN:

1. Call PostalEASE at 1-877-4PS-EASE (1-877-477-3273)
2. Press 1 for PostalEASE.
3. When prompted, enter your eight-digit USPS Employee Identification Number.
4. When prompted for your USPS PIN, pause, then press 2.
5. Your USPS PIN will be mailed to your address of record the next business day.



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In This Issue... Converting 56 MHAs to regulars, hiring 33 new Mail Handlers: Union negotiates \$1.5 million per year staffing.

MOVING?



**GIVE THE UNION YOUR
NEW ADDRESS.**

LOCAL 297 CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

Name: _____
Facility: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Date: _____

Give this form to a Union Steward, Fax to 816-753-8284, Call 816-753-6030 or Mail to:

NPMHU Local 297, 9429 E. 63rd Street, Raytown, MO 64133