

NAPUS

Update

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Board okays major benefit improvement:

NAPUS Legal Defense Plan to pay 100 percent of attorney fees, costs

The NAPUS Legal Defense Plan—already the best available to the nation's Postmasters—has just become even better!" said President Wally Olihovik.

"From here on out," he explained, "NAPUS now will pay 100 percent of all attorney fees and costs associated with the defense of NAPUS-member Postmasters in *all* adverse actions. Such actions *include* demotions, suspensions of more than 14 days, appeals to federal courts and removals."

By contrast, the NAPUS leader pointed out, League of Postmasters members must pay 50 percent of legal fees for demotions and suspensions before the Merit Systems Protection Board or appeals to federal courts.

The significant improvement to the Mel Hettenhausen Legal Defense Plan unanimously was approved by the 26-member NAPUS National Executive Committee during a Sept. 13, 2002, telecon. To be eligible for the expanded coverage, proposal letters must be dated on or after Sept. 13, 2002.

"NAPUS now is the *only* Postmaster association to, under its Legal Defense Plan, provide member Postmasters with 100 percent representation in adverse actions before the MSPB,"

Olihovik stated.

"Moreover," he added, "NAPUS also is the *only* Postmaster association to waive its three-month eligibility requirement for Legal Defense Plan benefits if the Postmaster or OIC becomes a member within

15 days of his or her appointment and the event prompting the adverse action is related to his or her position." Again, by contrast, the League has a six-month waiting period for new members to be eligible for its plan. ♦

PMR pay improvements 'welcome, but fall short of need,' NAPUS says

During the Postmaster pay talks that culminated on July 19, NAPUS argued—loudly and clearly—for the agency to greatly improve the recruitment and retention of Postmaster Reliefs/Replacements. PMRs, of course, provide relief to many of the nation's Postmasters when the latter are out of their offices.

Well, those NAPUS arguments have paid off—to an extent, that is. On Sept. 30, the Postal Service announced what it termed "significant changes" to the PMR compensation policy (*please see table on page 3*), effective Oct. 5, 2002. Corresponding changes will be made to the officer-in-charge (OIC) schedule (*see table*) on the same day.

Specifically, the agency noted, the new PMR schedule has been reduced from seven steps to six (*see the Step Conversion table*) by combining former Steps 1 and 2.

Moreover, the PMR hourly rates have increased for all steps and categories and the continuous service requirement for advancing to the highest step has been reduced from 10 to eight years.

"While NAPUS obviously welcomes any long-overdue improvement in PMR pay," said President Wally Olihovik, "on balance, the revised PMR policy falls far short of addressing the critical, ongoing need for the Postal Service to attract and retain qualified individuals for this important position. I find it incredulous that, at least in terms of pay, the Postal Service seems to value a casual employee more than a PMR."

"I believe the Postal Service is moving in the right direction on the PMR issue," Olihovik stated. "Am I satisfied? No. The only way we can ensure we have a corps of quality PMRs ready to step in and relieve

our overworked Postmasters is to get substantially more money in the PMR pay schedule. NAPUS will continue leading the fight on this important issue that affects so many of our Postmasters.”

In view of “the magnitude of the new changes,” the Postal Service said Sept. 29, the former PMR Retention Payment System is discontinued immediately. Accordingly, the agency added, “the lump-sum payment scheduled for January 2003 will not occur.”

Under the changes, existing PMRs with sufficient continuous service to qualify for one of the new service categories automatically will be moved to the new rate on Oct. 5. For example, upon implementation of the new schedule, a PMR with four but less than five years of continuous service under the existing schedule automatically will be placed in the new Step 4.

“In the future,” the Postal Service explained, “when PMRs/OICs complete the continuous service requirement for the next-higher category, they automatically will be

advanced to the correct rate.”

As before, however, a break in service of just one day or more—unless the PMR is serving as an OIC—will constitute a break in service. That would require the PMR to start over in terms of both pay and the service required to advance to the next step.

“NAPUS considers the PMR ‘break-

in-service’ policy to be overly stringent,” President Olihovik said. “While we understand you can’t have a PMR cycling in and out of employment, NAPUS feels time-in-service accommodations should be made for the PMR who temporarily leaves and then returns. And, frankly, if the Postal Service was doing more to retain PMRs, this largely would be a moot point.” ♦

Postmaster Reliefs/Leave Replacements (PMRs) Schedule

Effective Oct. 5, 2002

Steps		1	2	3	4	5	6
PMR Grade	Post Office Grade	Years of Continuous Service					
		Zero to Less Than 2	2 to Less Than 3	3 to Less Than 4	4 to Less Than 5	5 to Less Than 8	8 or More
A-E	A-E	\$7.65	\$8.15	\$8.65	\$9.15	\$9.65	\$10.15
EAS-9	EAS-11	\$8.15	\$9.15	\$10.15	\$11.15	\$12.15	\$13.15
EAS-11	EAS-13	\$8.65	\$9.65	\$10.65	\$12.15	\$13.15	\$14.15
EAS-13	EAS-15	\$9.15	\$10.65	\$12.15	\$13.15	\$14.15	\$15.90

Officers-in-Charge (OICs) Schedule

Effective Oct. 5, 2002

Steps		1	2	3	4	5	6
PMR Grade	Post Office Grade	Years of Continuous Service					
		Zero to Less Than 2	2 to Less Than 3	3 to Less Than 4	4 to Less Than 5	5 to Less Than 8	8 or More
A-E	A-E	\$8.49	\$9.05	\$9.60	\$10.16	\$10.72	\$11.27
EAS-9	EAS-11	\$9.05	\$10.16	\$11.27	\$12.38	\$13.49	\$14.60
EAS-11	EAS-13	\$9.60	\$10.90	\$12.19	\$13.49	\$14.60	\$15.71
EAS-13	EAS-15	\$10.16	\$11.64	\$13.12	\$14.60	\$16.13	\$17.65

Step Conversion

Old Step	New Step
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	6

NAPUS develops new workplace environment survey

Growing concern about Postmaster treatment in certain areas of the country has prompted NAPUS to develop an objective survey to determine Postmasters’ perceptions of their workplace environments.

The first Postmaster Workplace Envi-

ronment Survey, modeled after the Postal Service’s own VOE survey, was sent by NAPUS to all 1,050 California Postmasters via First-Class Mail in late September.

President Wally Olihovik developed the survey with Executive Director Charlie Moser following five trips Olihovik made to California since March in an attempt to resolve ongoing Postmaster treatment issues there. On those occasions, Olihovik met with the USPS area vice president, a district manager and sev-

eral groups of Postmasters—NAPUS, League and nonmembers alike. NAPUS Area 22 (CA/NV/HI) Vice President Bob Rapoza and CA Chapter President Rich Webberson joined him in several of the discussions.

“Postmaster General Jack Potter repeatedly has voiced his support and commitment in treating all employees, both craft and management alike, with dignity and respect,” President Olihovik said in a letter accompanying the survey. “As

Working both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue for Postmasters

*By Wally Olihovik
NAPUS National President*

I knew the tone of the meeting would be positive when I was shown a football autographed by Tom Brady, quarterback of the world-champion New England Patriots.

And I even got to wear an “A” ID badge, so often seen on the NBC series, “The West Wing.” As I walked down the marble hallway, I knew 43,000 NAPUS members and every other Postmaster in the nation walked with me.

So began my excursion to Pennsylvania Avenue to meet with key White House officials on Oct. 1. The major topic of our discussions was the possible creation of a presidential commission on the future of the Postal Service. The White House is particularly concerned about the Postal Service’s financial difficulties.

I reiterated my position that such a commission, if appointed, must be comprised of independent, fair-minded individuals committed to universal postal service—not individuals with a predetermined mindset or agenda.

I acknowledged that tough decisions and shared sacrifices must be made to ensure the Postal Service’s very existence. I shared with Bush Administration staff that there are too many competing and conflicting agendas regarding the Postal Service’s future. The lack of progress—“stalemate” might be a better word—only benefits the agency’s competitors

A presidential commission would, however, be an appropriate first step in focusing public and congressional attention on the challenges confronting the Postal Service and potential strategies to meet those challenges.

I was asked for my opinion regarding the ability of Postmasters to perform their jobs and serve postal customers. It was clear to me the staff anticipated my response: “Postmasters are hindered from performing their jobs effectively by the lack of authority the Postal Service provides them.” I provided detailed examples of the frustrations Postmasters experience as a result of being micro-managed and subjected to layer upon layer of postal bureaucracy.

We also talked about whether growing communities are being under-served because of the limited number of post offices. I expressed the NAPUS position that, when the Postal Service talks about the need to scale back its infrastructure in certain areas, it also should get serious about expanding its post office network in growing areas of the country.

It became clear from our discussions that President George Bush is concerned not only with the Postal Service’s balance sheet, but also the agency’s ability to effectively carry out its core mission—delivering the mail to everyone, everywhere, every day.

Later that day, I met with Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). Sen. Collins is a senior member of the Governmental Affairs



Sen. Susan Collins

Committee and ranking Republican on the Investigations subcommittee. She also is author of S. 2754, legislation to establish a presidential commission on the future of the Postal Service.

Depending on the results of the Nov. 5 congressional elections, Sen. Collins could be the next chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee. She expressed her deep appreciation to NAPUS members for their courage and leadership in working with her on ensuring the continued viability of the Postal Service. Moreover, she detailed her continued commitment to universal postal service and rural post offices.

My visits on behalf of Postmasters will continue, be they with White House staff, Sen. Collins and her colleagues or other of our nation’s most influential leaders at both ends of Pennsylvania Ave. As President Bush and Congress, each in their own way, prepare to determine the Postal Service’s future, they will continue to find NAPUS a reasoned voice for progress. ♦

NAPUS national president, I support that philosophy and will settle for nothing less.”

The NAPUS leader asked Postmasters for their honest assessments in completing the survey. “I can assure you NAPUS will remain focused on improving those workplace environments that

are in desperate need of attention, while, at the same time, holding up others as models of positive environments,” he wrote.

“Together,” he continued, “we *can* make a difference in improving the quality of work life for Postmasters as we better focus on our mission of serving the

American public.”

For confidentiality purposes, Postmasters responding to the survey are asked to not provide their names or post offices. They are, however, asked for their districts, post office levels and length of service with the Postal Service, among other information. ♦

2003 Leadership Conference, Legislative Rally shaping up as 'the best ever'

Mark your calendars *today!* You won't want to miss this!

The informative, exciting 2003 NAPUS Leadership Conference and Legislative Rally will be March 22 to 27 at the spectacular Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC. (*Look for a special conference/rally registration insert in the center of the December 2002 Postmasters Gazette—Ed.*)

The event, which traditionally has spanned the three-day Presidents' Day holiday in mid-February, was rescheduled to March because the Postal Ser-

vice changed the National Rural Mail Count dates to February.

"A majority of the Postmasters—many of them chapter officers and key committee chairs—attending last February's conference indicated they would not be able to attend a conference in February because of the rural mail count," President Olihovik stated.

"Many of our members are uncomfortable with the prospect of being out of their offices during such a critical time," he continued. "Other Postmasters told us that, based on previous experiences, they likely would not be able to find Postmaster reliefs/replacements to fill in for them."

"Obviously, we were left with no choice but to change the conference dates," he said. "And because suitable alternative dates weren't available from the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, the conference venue itself had to be changed. Clearly, these were circumstances totally beyond the control of NAPUS."

That said, plans already under way will help ensure the conference is one of the best in NAPUS history. The new

108th Congress will be in session and late March is Cherry Blossom time in the nation's capital.

On Friday, March 21, and Saturday, March 22, President Olihovik and new National Secretary-Treasurer Jim Price will welcome 11 new NAPUS national vice presidents to Washington for the National Executive Committee meeting. The first business session will be Sunday afternoon, March 23.

Breakouts are planned for all day Monday, March 24, followed by the second business session on Tuesday morning, March 25. The conference banquet will be Tuesday evening.

On Wednesday morning, March 26, there will be a Legislative Rally. "Letters of invitation already have gone out to key members of Congress who serve on the House and Senate committees with postal oversight jurisdiction," President Olihovik said. "We also look forward to welcoming such prominent congressional leaders as Sens. Tom Daschle, Trent Lott, Ted Kennedy, Joseph Lieberman, John McCain and Hillary Rodham Clinton and, on the House side, Speaker Dennis Hastert and Rep. Dick Gephardt." ♦

Update publication schedule

As voted in August by the National Executive Committee, the *NAPUS Update* now will be published as the dissemination of breaking or otherwise critical information warrants.

While it is anticipated there will be more or less six issues per year, they will be identified by number and year rather than month and year, as previously.

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

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INSIDE: Legal Defense Plan to Pay 100% of Attorney Fees • PMR Pay Raise • Postmaster Workplace Environment Survey • NAPUS on Pennsylvania Ave.

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