

NALC contract talks extended

NALC President Fredric Rolando and USPS Postmaster General Pat Donahoe announced on Dec. 7 that the parties' 2006-2011 National Agreement had been extended to midnight Dec. 16—after this issue went to press—to give the parties additional time to negotiate the provisions of a new contract. This was the second extension. The 2006 agreement originally had been set to expire at midnight Sunday, Nov. 20.

"We have been working in good faith to hammer out a new contract and we hope that this extension will lead to an agreement that our members can enthusiastically ratify," President Rolando said.

The entire NALC Executive Council and the USPS negotiating team were sequestered at a hotel in Washington for the seven days leading up to the initial Nov. 20 deadline to work around the clock on the terms of a new National Agreement. As the teams continued their work, council committees chaired by the union's resident national officers have engaged management counterparts in intensive discussions on the full range of contract issues affecting working conditions and workplace rights dur-

ing daily negotiations that often stretched late into the night.

President Rolando coordinated the work of all the committees and took the lead on the key economic provisions of the contract, including pay, health benefits and other matters such as the structure of the city carrier workforce. As the expiration date approached, the focus shifted to finding innovative ways to reduce the cost of employee health care while preserving and protecting the benefits of NALC's members (*see story on page 6*).

The 2011 round of bargaining kicked off in August at a time of extreme challenges for the Postal Service, as the congressional mandate to pre-fund future retiree health benefits has financially crippled the agency. Over time, the talks have gathered momentum. In the end, the parties agreed that more time could help the talks succeed.

"We remain committed to negotiating a fair contract that will advance the best interests of the nation's city letter carriers and of the Postal Service, while serving the needs of all Americans," Rolando said. ☒

Paying tribute to you

Next month's *Postal Record* will be the annual special edition honoring NALC members who contributed in 2011 to our political action fund, the Committee on Letter Carrier Political Education (COLCPE).

This special COLCPE issue continues a tradition inaugurated seven years ago of using the union's official journal to thank all those who help to financially

support the letter carrier legislative and political program.

SCRIBES TAKE NOTE: There will be no Branch Items, or State, Retiree or Auxiliary reports in the February issue. Scribes and other correspondents should hold their submissions for the March issue. The deadline for March is Feb. 10. (Election Notices and Mutual Exchange ads will appear as usual.) ☒

