

APWU NEWSservice

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American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

End-of-Session Tax Bills Crucial To Retirees' Health-Care Planning

The next few days may offer the last chance for the enactment of legislation that would have a big effect upon the tax status of retirees, particularly concerning their health-care benefits.

The 107th Congress is expected to adjourn Oct. 4 and it hasn't been determined whether the legislators will return after the Nov. 5 elections for a "lame-duck" session in December.

Two bills with APWU support – S. 1022 and H.R. 2125 – would allow postal, federal and military retirees to pay their share of health insurance premiums with pre-tax dollars. The bills were introduced by Sen. John Warner (R-VA) and Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA), respectively.

Current IRS tax law allows both private and public (including active postal workers) employees to pay their health insurance fees with pre-tax dollars: Income tax and Social Security contributions are based on their wages after health insurance payments have been deducted.

For some reason, retirees are not afforded the same tax treatment as workers. To complicate matters, just when they are likely to need medical care the most, retirees in-

variably see their health-care costs rise at a rate faster than inflation.

APWU members, auxiliary members, and retirees are urged to immediately contact their U.S. senators and representatives to encourage them to sponsor and work to

The IRS allows both public and private employees to pay for health insurance with pre-tax dollars. Retirees should be subject to the same tax laws.

enact into law S. 1022 and H.R. 2125. The Senate measure currently has 28 co-sponsors. The House bill, meanwhile, with 248 sponsors, already has sufficient votes for passage.

It's time to treat postal, federal and military retirees with the dignity they have earned during a lifetime of service to this country by passing and enacting S. 1022 and H.R. 2125, the premium conversation legislation.

First Post-Convention NEB Meeting

Executive Board Resolves to Tackle Excessing and Attendance Issues

At its Sept. 17 meeting, the APWU National Executive Board resolved to provide "all the necessary resources" to address two major concerns of employees on the work floor: excessing and attendance.

Citing a dramatic increase in excessing across the country, the board unanimously endorsed a resolution to fight excessing and downsizing.

"Postal workers are bearing the brunt of management's cost-cutting plans, while the USPS gives money away to major mailers," APWU President William Burrus said.

"We must find the ways to assist the locals and the state

organizations that are confronted with excessing on a mass scale."

The board also vowed to do everything in its power to alleviate the rash of discipline and harassment caused by management's Resource Management Database (RMD) attendance program.

"Under this program, harassment and intimidation have soared," Burrus noted.

"RMD is designed to discourage employees from exercising their rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act," he said, "and from taking time off for legitimate absences."

Combined Federal Campaign Starts Soon

Members Asked to Support Postal Employee Relief Fund

The Postal Service's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is set to begin soon, and, for the next several months, postal employees will be asked by co-workers to support their favorite charities.

The APWU urges members to consider making contributions to the Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF), which for more than a decade has been assisting victims of natural disasters.

In an instant, a flood, tornado, hurricane or fire can destroy homes and personal property, and leave families devastated. Many insurance policies, however, don't cover losses caused by natural disasters and assistance such as

that provided by PERF may be the only means for a victim who needs to start over.

When a CFC volunteer asks for a donation, please remember your fellow postal employees and make a generous contribution to the Postal Employees Relief Fund (designation number 9891). The person you assist could be your union brother or sister, co-worker or friend.

Locals and state organizations that want material to distribute or additional information about PERF should write to the Human Relations Department, Sue Carney, Director, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005; or call 202-842-4271.

Legislation Awaits President's Signature

Renaming Bill Sails Through Senate

By unanimous consent, the U.S. Senate passed a bill to rename the Brentwood postal facility in Washington, DC, after APWU heroes Joseph Curseen Jr. and Thomas Morris Jr. Their action followed by one day a 401-0 House vote on the measure. The legislation was forwarded to the White House.

Soon after Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) introduced S. 2907 to rename the Washington Processing and Distribution Center on Brentwood Road, 10 other Senate Democrats signed on as co-sponsors: Daniel Akaka (HI), Hillary Clinton (NY), Jon Corzine (NJ), Tom Daschle (SD), Tim Johnson (SD), Edward Kennedy (MA), Patrick Leahy (VT), Paul Sarbanes (MD), Chuck Schumer (NY), and Bob Torricelli (NJ).

"American postal workers deserve our attention and our gratitude for their bravery, steadfastness and dedication," Mikulski said. "The lives of Curseen and Morris truly exemplify the best qualities of our nation's postal workers."

Sen. Daschle, the recipient of the anthrax-laced letter that killed the two APWU members, noted that "our action today clears the way for the President to sign the bill into law."

"My staff and I feel a special kinship with the workers and others affected by these attacks," Daschle said. "While the uncertainty and horror of Oct. 15 – the day the letter addressed to me was opened – and the ensuing months were very real for us, the suffering of those struck by the disease was even greater."

"Postal workers are on the front lines on the war on terrorism here at home – keeping Americans safe and keeping all of us connected through the U.S. Mail," Daschle said. "Ask many of them and they will probably say they are just 'doing their job.'"

"The Joseph Curseen Jr. and Thomas Morris Jr. Processing and Distribution Center" will forever stand as a memorial to their sacrifice in the line of duty."

COLA Update

An increase in the Consumer Price Index in August means that after the first month of the third Cost-Of-Living Adjustment (COLA) period in the National Agreement, employees have accrued an annual raise of \$88.40.

The COLA adjustment amounts to a 4.25 cents per hour increase, which works out to \$3.40 per pay period.

The rise in the CPI-W from January through July (the second period in the contract) will mean a \$12 increase in APWU members' biweekly paychecks starting the end of this month.

Under the 2000 Collective Bargaining Agreement, COLA adjustments are made every six months. The USPS began paying the "second" adjustment during pay period 20-2002, with an effective date of Sept. 7. The \$12 increase will be reflected in paychecks issued Sept. 27.

Because the CPI-W actually fell from August 2001 through January 2002, there was no COLA adjustment during the "first" period.

Pay scales can be seen on the APWU Web site (www.apwu.org).

Seattle Is Site, Oct. 25-28

National Presidents' Conference Call

The next meeting of the National Presidents' Conference (NPC) will be in Seattle from Friday, Oct. 25, through Monday, Oct. 28.

The Western Region, through the Greater Seattle Area Local, is hosting the event at the DoubleTree at SeaTac. Local Treasurer Steve Taylor is the event's coordinator.

Sunday and Monday will feature NPC business sessions starting at 9 a.m. The Sunday session will close at 5 p.m.; the Monday session an hour earlier.

To make reservations at the DoubleTree, call 800-445-8667 or 305-265-3859. The phone number for the Seattle local is 206-241-6038; fax is 206-241-7939.

Officers are encouraged to submit agenda items (regardless of attendance). Forward items to: NPC Agenda Items, J.N. "Jim" Alexander, Chairman, PO Box 4004, Medford, OR 97501.

Agenda item ideas also can be faxed (541-826-9427), or e-mailed (jimsturn@internetcds.com).

One item on the agenda is a special seminar, "Global Economics and Postal E-Volution," on Oct. 25. The seminar hosted by the Seattle local in conjunction with the NPC requires a separate registration and fee.

On Saturday, Terry Grant, Ohio Postal Workers Union President, and Tony Carobine, APWU National Postal Press Association president, will present "Building the Local Union," an all-day training program. There is no charge for this NPC-sponsored program.

Pre-registration for the presidents' conference is encouraged. Mail the registration form (below) along with \$50 (checks payable to APWU NPC) to: Greater Seattle Area Local, APWU, Attn: Steve Taylor, Treasurer, 132 SW 153rd, Burien, WA 98166.

APWU NATIONAL PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE

Oct. 25 - 28, 2002

Name _____ Title _____

Address: _____ City _____ State _____

Phone: _____ Fax _____ E-mail: _____

Local _____

Delegate ____ Alternate ____ (Choose One)

Mail to: Greater Seattle Area Local
Attn: Steve Taylor, Treasurer
132 SW 153rd
Burien, WA 98166

Enclosed is a check or money order for \$50 payable to APWU Presidents' Conference