

# APWU NEWSservice

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American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

## APWU, USPS Discuss Contract Extension

APWU President William Burrus announced Oct. 28 that the union and the Postal Service are discussing a two-year extension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, which is due to expire Nov. 20, 2003. If an extension is agreed upon, it would be the first of its kind in APWU history.

"This opportunity must be given serious consideration," President Burrus said. Speaking at a meeting of APWU local and state presidents in Seattle, he said, "Powerful forces are seeking to undermine the Postal Service as we know it.

"In light of the USPS' continuing financial difficulties and the soft economy, negotiating a contract a year from now would be quite challenging."

A contract extension would preserve the terms of the current National Agreement, with modifications.

"If we extend the Collective Bargaining Agreement, we will ensure stability for our members despite the turmoil surrounding the USPS."

"Of course, the final decision belongs to the members of the APWU," Burrus said.

If an agreement is forged, the terms would be presented to the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee, which would decide whether to send the agreement to APWU members for a ratification vote.

The Rank and File Bargaining Committee is composed of 13 APWU members, each appointed by a member of the union's National Executive Board, in accordance with Article 13.9 of the APWU Constitution and Bylaws.

If an agreement to extend the contract is not reached, full-scale negotiations will begin in August 2003.

## Union Denied Fundamental Right of Free Speech

### Legal Challenge Prevents Posting Of APWU Candidate Endorsements

As Election Day approaches, the right of APWU members to express their political views and endorse candidates is being challenged. Although the union recently distributed a poster encouraging members to vote this Tuesday, we have been barred from presenting on union bulletin boards a list of candidates we support.

The names of APWU-endorsed candidates are posted on the union Web site, [www.apwu.org](http://www.apwu.org), and we ask members to review that list before they decide which candidates to support in Tuesday's election. We hope that our members will support candidates who best represent the interests of America's working families.

We can post our endorsements on our Web site, but not on our bulletin boards, because of a challenge under the Hatch Act made by the Office of Special Counsel. It was just two years ago that a federal District Court upheld the APWU's right to post candidate endorsements. In that case, the federal judge who issued an injunction protecting the APWU's right to display a political poster described that poster as "protected speech, classically protected speech."

And in a decision earlier this year that again upheld that

right, a federal judge wrote that the legislative history of the Hatch Act does not offer "a shred of support" that Congress intended to "prevent employees from exercising their rights as citizens to hang and view political posters on Union bulletin boards, located in traditional places in non-public areas of post offices."

Nevertheless, the Special Counsel has again challenged the union's right to post its recommendations on our bulletin boards.

"This fight for free speech," APWU President William Burrus said, "is part of a broader struggle to ensure workers' rights.

"It's important that we support candidates who will protect our right to work without fear of injury, to retire with dignity and security, to have a Medicare program that includes full prescription-drug benefits, and to have a Social Security program that cannot be looted by the private sector.

"We encourage everyone to vote, regardless of how they plan to vote," Burrus said. "We encourage our members to vote to protect their job, their family and their future."

## PAUL DAVID WELLSTONE 1944 - 2002

### APWU Mourns Loss of 'Labor Senator'

The APWU mourns the tragic loss Oct. 25 of U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN). Sen. Wellstone, his wife, Sheila, and daughter, Marcia, were among eight people who died in the crash of a private plane in northern Minnesota.

In the midst of a tough re-election campaign, Wellstone was traveling to the funeral of Frank Rukavina, a retired United Steelworkers of America organizer.

"Paul Wellstone was a true friend of working people and an unabashed defender of organized labor," said APWU President William Burrus. "He was also a good friend of postal employees. We will miss him."

Two months ago, Sen. Wellstone spoke on the first day of the APWU National Convention in Minneapolis. He brought the crowd to its feet several times with a rousing speech covering a wide range of labor issues and the need for corporate and economic reform. He commended postal workers for their performance during and after the Fall 2001 terrorist attacks.

In his speech, Sen. Wellstone said he was proud to be a "labor senator." He vowed to fight his Washington colleagues' attacks on the rights of federal employees and to spread the word that homeland security, a strong economy, welfare reform and other major goals could be attained only if Americans are guaranteed "civilized workplaces."

"Paul Wellstone stood up for the little guy," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said in a statement. "He was tireless and unapologetic for championing the rights of working men and women – even when he stood alone."

The son of Russian immigrants, Paul David Wellstone was raised in Arlington, VA. He was a champion wrestler



APWU President Bill Burrus, Sen. Paul Wellstone, and APWU Vice President Cliff Guffey at the National Convention in Minneapolis Aug. 12.

at the University of North Carolina, where he earned a bachelor's degree and a Ph.D. in political science. He was teaching at Carleton College in suburban Minneapolis when he entered politics in 1990. He was the only challenger in U.S. Senate races that year to unseat an incumbent.

He was often recognized as a fighter for social and economic justice during two decades as a college professor and this reputation was sustained during 12 years in Washington. Sen. Wellstone was perhaps best known for his tireless support of universal health-insurance coverage, and for his campaigns for an increase in the minimum wage and improved workplace safety.

In addition to the Wellstone family members, three campaign staffers and two pilots died in the crash. The Wellstones leave two other children and six grandchildren.

## COLA UPdate

An increase in the Consumer Price Index in September means that after the second month of the third Cost-Of-Living Adjustment (COLA) period in the National Agreement, employees have accrued an annual raise of \$156.00.

The COLA adjustment amounts to a 7.25 cents per hour increase, which works out to \$6 per pay period.

The rise in the CPI-W from January through July (the second COLA period in the contract) resulted in a \$12

increase in APWU members' biweekly paychecks beginning with pay period 20-2002. The increase was reflected in paychecks issued Sept. 27.

Under the 2000 Collective Bargaining Agreement, COLA adjustments are made every six months. Because the CPI-W actually fell from August 2001 through January 2002, there was no adjustment during the "first" of the contract's four COLA periods.

Pay scales can be seen at [www.apwu.org](http://www.apwu.org).

## Non-Members Weaken Our Efforts

### Sign Up a New Member Today

APWU President Bill Burrus is calling upon all union members to speak to their co-workers who are not members and encourage them to join the APWU. "Non-members enjoy every benefit we negotiate," he said, "but they contribute nothing to the effort."

"Excessing and harsh attendance policies are taking a toll on postal workers across the country," he said.

"Non-members weaken our ability to address these issues. By not joining the union, they hurt our efforts to protect our jobs and theirs.

"The plant closings and facility consolidations that management is threatening will affect APWU members and non-members alike. I urge all APWU members to sign up a non-member today!"