

# APWU NEWS Bulletin

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO



WILLIAM BURRUS, President ROY BRAUNSTEIN, Editor

## Committed, Determined Union Members ‘Make the Difference’ in State of APWU

“Since our last convention, our world has changed dramatically,” APWU President William Burrus said in his 2004 state of the union address, “but the unchanging constant has been the commitment and determination of APWU members.”

Speaking on the first day of the 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention in Los Angeles, Burrus told union members, “*You make the difference.*” He selected that slogan as the convention theme “to emphasize that our strength and our effectiveness grow from individual involvement.”

The union has made major gains and is poised with confidence to move into the future, the APWU president said.

Burrus noted that union teamwork stood out when the APWU stood virtually alone in criticizing the “reform” efforts of the President’s Commission on the U.S. Postal Service. “Not a single anti-worker recommendation it proposed is included in the legislation under consideration. To the great dissatisfaction of the powerful forces of large mailers,” Burrus noted, “we were successful in preserving collective bargaining rights and limiting work-sharing discounts, a long-standing objective of our union.”

If postal reform is not passed in 2004, “it is certain that bills will be reintroduced in 2005 and APWU will again draw the line to protect our interest.”

Burrus commended union members for their record-breaking COPA contributions.

“The fact that we surpassed \$1 million in our 2003 COPA drive was historic, and when we achieve our goal of \$2 million this year we will join the lead-



William Burrus

ers in the political arena. Whether we achieve these goals will be determined by the actions of local and state leadership and, most importantly, our membership. We have work to do, but *you* make the difference.”

The 2002 contract extension provided much-needed stability during a time of uncertainty, Burrus said. “We made a judgment that conditions in late 2003 would not be favorable for contract negotiations and we were right. The economy slid into recession; the president appointed a commission; and mail volume was decreasing dramatically.”

“Instead of bitter negotiations and arbitration we achieved early retirements, upgrades, limits on excessing, guaranteed pay increases, and the highest cost of living adjustment in 24 years. You ratified the contract extension with 90 percent approval and I thank you for your show of confidence in our judgment.”

“The state of the union is strong,” Burrus told the convention. “We will use every tool available – fight anytime, any-

where, to preserve our jobs and good service to the American public.”

As to the future, Burrus asked delegates to “address the issue of declining revenues caused by declining membership.” The union must do everything it can to further cut costs, he said.

“You will decide resolutions relating to our conventions and our elections,” he said, referring to proposals to convene every three years instead of every two, and to hold balloting for national officers every four years instead of three.

He said he fully supported these resolutions “because we have a solemn obligation to allocate the dues money efficiently no matter our membership level,” Burrus said. “We must make structural changes that make us more efficient.”

The union president promised, however, that the APWU would never accept the proposition that postal hiring practices dictate the size of our membership. “We have tools at our disposal to grow our union and we will use them.”

In closing, Burrus told delegates, “In the upcoming presidential contest, *you* make the difference. ... You must go to the polls – take your family members to the polls and exercise your fundamental right to vote. Your future, my future, our future is in your hands.

*“You make the difference!”*

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# Hotel Workers Thank APWU for Support

Having demonstrated support simply by showing up, the APWU will lend a hand Tuesday to Los Angeles hotel workers in the middle of a contract stalemate.

“In ‘APWU blue,’” APWU President Burrus announced, referring to the T-shirts that some 3,000 delegates will be wearing today, “we will stand shoulder-

to-shoulder with our sisters and brothers in their demand for a fair and decent contract.”

A contract covering 3,000 hotel workers expired on April 15. Both sides agreed to extend it indefinitely, but the Hotel Council representing nine of the 17 hotels involved terminated the agreement on June 1.

Maria Elena Durazo, the president of Local 11 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees union, addressed the convention Monday, and thanked the APWU for not moving to another city.

“We are so happy and so grateful that you are having your convention in Los Angeles,” Durazo said. “Thank you for listening to us and to our needs.”

“This contract,” Durazo said, “sets the standard for 2,000 more hotel workers in the area, and thousand of others in the food service industry.” The stand taken by the APWU is crucial, she said. “You have a reputation second to none for the actions that you take in solidarity with other unions and other workers. Thank you for coming here.”

Also addressing the convention was Donald Wilson, a chef at one of the hotels involved in the dispute. “We need a stamp of approval from this union,” he said, and then asked rhetorically: “Is it all right to fight for higher wages? Is it all right to fight for a better pension plan? Free health care? Job security?” The delegates answered each query with a resounding “Yes!”

City officials last week urged a quick



Maria Elena Durazo



Donald Wilson

resolution to the impasse. “A blow to tourism is a blow to all Angelenos,” City Council President Alex Padilla said at a joint meeting of the council’s Housing, Community and Economic Development Committee and the Conventions, Tourism and Business Enterprise Committee.

“The last thing we want to see,” Padilla said, “is another long strike like

we saw with grocery workers that ended up a lose-lose-lose situation.”

A resolution approved by the two committees endorses the efforts of hotel workers to reach a contract that protects health care and improves working conditions.

Meanwhile, Peter J. Hurtgen, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, met separately with the two groups last week.

Wages of union-represented room attendants average just over \$11 an hour in Los Angeles, compared with hourly rates of nearly \$19 in New York, \$15 in San Francisco, and about \$13 in Washington and Boston.



## The Convention That Almost Wasn't

Because of an ongoing labor dispute at four of the five hotels that APWU delegates are using this week, the union had looked into the possibility of moving the convention.

“It wouldn’t have been easy to find another place or time,” APWU President William Burrus said, “but we were not going to be held hostage or used as a means to threaten workers who seek a fair and just contract.”

Burrus offered the APWU’s support to the hotel workers, and demanded a commitment from hotel

management that delegates would not be subjected to any repercussions of the labor dispute. In late July, the APWU received written assurance.

As recently as Aug. 12, however, there was a spontaneous walkout by approximately 100 workers at a Los Angeles hotel, and the management council threatened to lock out their workers the next day.

After discussions with hotel-worker union officials and a federal mediator, however, the lockout was called off.

# Pro-Worker U.S. Reps Address Delegates

In three rousing speeches on the eve of the 17th APWU convention, two very active U.S. representatives and one retired Congressman delivered strong statements in support of workers and against the Bush administration.

Rep. Linda Sanchez said that she was proud to be a sponsor of H.R. 4341, the bill sent to the House floor that contained none of the negative recommendations of the President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service. "The administration keeps trying to put the last nail in the coffin of organized labor," Sanchez said, adding an appeal to the APWU delegates to help her to work hard for change.

"I need complainers," the freshman from Los Angeles said, "to tell the president that we will not tolerate what this administration is trying to do. I need troublemakers to let this administration know that we need a change at the presidential level."



Linda Sanchez



Juanita Millender-McDonald



William L. Clay

"And I need hell-raisers," Sanchez said. "We need to send a clear message that we're serious about such things as affordable health care for every working person in America."

Juanita Millender-McDonald, another

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**"I need complainers ... troublemakers ... and hell-raisers to let this administration know we need change."**

—Rep. Linda Sanchez

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House member from Southern California also called for activism. "It's time to get to the streets. It's time to get another JFK in the White House and get that rascal out of the White House."

"There's nothing compassionate about his conservatism," she said of President Bush. "This country is moving in the wrong direction with the wrong leader."

A former long-time Congressman and a long-time friend of the APWU, William L. Clay, also criticized the Bush administration.

"The presidential commission tried to turn the Postal Service into an ATM for large mailers," Clay said. "Its proposals were misguided, and harmful to the average consumer, small mailers, and the postal workforce."

Clay, who retired from the House after 16 terms representing Missouri's 1st Congressional District, said he was appalled by the Bush commission's proposals for postal reform.

"Allowing those who can afford to pay more to pay less is an idiotic illogic."

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## Resolutions Provide Framework for 2005 Contract Talks

APWU delegates got down to business Monday, voting on proposals to guide union negotiators during contract talks next year. Resolutions focused on issues such as

excessing, leave, and limiting the performance of bargaining-unit work by supervisors.

Reflecting the frustration of union members who have suffered excessing, convention delegates approved a series of resolutions that would limit its impact on members. Among them were a resolution that would require management to notify the APWU about excessing at least six months in advance and one seeking contract language that would prevent management from withholding residual vacancies for more

than six months. Under Article 12 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, the USPS withholds jobs that remain vacant at the conclusion of a bidding cycle to accommodate excessed employees.

A proposal that would require the USPS to provide the union's regional coordinators with updates on withholdings at least once a month also was approved.

Delegates voted in favor of several resolutions aimed at speeding the conversion of part-time flexible (PTF) employees to full time. Conven-

tion attendees supported resolutions that would require conversion when PTFs work 35 hours or more per week in a five-day week for a six-month period. Current language requires PTFs to work 40 hours. A separate proposal favored such conversions regardless of the number of part-time flexible employees scheduled to perform the assignment.

Other approved resolutions would seek contract language prohibiting supervisors and postmasters in small post offices from performing bargaining unit work.



Labor-Management Committee Chairperson Cindy Martinez.

# Widow of APWU Member Killed in Iraq Expresses Gratitude to His ‘Postal Family’

Ryann Roukey, the widow of an APWU member killed in Iraq, thanked her late husband’s “postal family for all its support,” in a moving speech to the convention.

Lawrence Roukey, who worked in the Portland P&DC, was killed in action April 26 in Iraq.

“I never realized how many friends Larry had,” Ryann Roukey said. Co-workers came by and mowed her lawn and fixed her shutters in the days just after his death, and have been helping out ever since. “I received over 700 letters and cards from the four corners of the country,” she told the assembled delegates on Monday. The outpouring of concern has helped her carry on.

Roukey, 33, was a sergeant in the Army Reserves, and had been with the Postal Service since being hired as a part-time clerk in 1999. Last June, he switched to a maintenance job, both to become a regular employee and to spend more time with his wife, his 2-year-old son, Nicholas, and a stepdaughter, Sonya, 15.

Mrs. Roukey quoted one of his co-workers, who told her that her husband was a special person. “I was ready to give up and give in,” the co-worker said. “Larry asked me not to give up because he believed in me, and I kept these words close to my heart. It would have been easy for me to give up, but I remembered that Larry believed in me.”

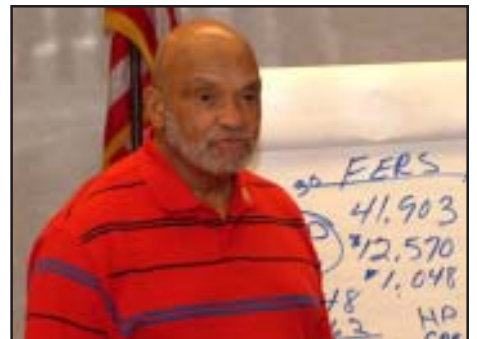


Ryann Roukey

## Pre-Convention Highlights



The APWU Research and Education Department presented more than 30 workshops over two days just before the convention began. The “Casuals Hired in Lieu of Career Employees” workshop, left, was among the many workshops filled wall to wall. Attentive at the “Advanced Steward Training” workshop is James Kappel.



APWU Retirees Department Director John R. Smith led “Retirement Planning” seminars as part of the Research and Education pre-convention workshops and for the Human Relations Conference.



From left are Human Relations award-winners Peggy Cooper, Bettye Maddox, James White, Jacqueline Lee, Diane North, David Wigley, Human Relations Director Sue Carney, President William Burrus, Martin Sanchez, Tony Carrobine, Gregory Poferl, and Ronald Morgan.

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### Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Paulette Lindsey of the Kansas City (MO) Metro Area Local, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Monday, Aug. 23, is as follows:

The 17th Biennial Convention’s 2,212 delegates represent 312 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 83 national officers and five Retirees Department delegates.