

## Postal Reform Enters Critical Stage

### *Special Assessment of Members' Dues Is Postponed*

This year's battle over postal "reform" has entered a critical stage, as legislation recently approved by key congressional committees awaits action by the full House and Senate. The proposed legislation could be further shaped by amendments on the floor of either chamber, and it's uncertain whether Congress can meet an increasingly tight timetable for enacting postal reform legislation this year.

At least one thing *is* certain: Key lawmakers in both chambers have thus far rejected the anti-worker proposals made nearly a year ago by the President's Commission on the Postal Service. The APWU remains vigilant in protecting postal jobs, pay and benefits.

APWU President William Burrus announced, however, that because most of the union's major concerns about postal reform legislation have been addressed at this point, *a special dues assessment authorized by the National Executive Board to fund a media campaign will not be implemented in July as planned.*

### **Lawmakers Limit 'Worksharing'**

In the Senate, postal workers, consumers and small businesses scored an important victory June 2 when the Governmental Affairs Committee narrowly approved an amendment offered by Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) to limit "worksharing" discounts for the big mailing houses. Panel members voted 9-8 in favor of Lieberman's amendment, then unanimously approved their version of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (S. 2468).

Sen. Lieberman proposed his amendment "so that the Postal Service can maintain fair and non-discriminatory rates for each type of mail it handles." He noted that limits placed on discounts would mean that good postal jobs would be preserved rather than "lost to mailers who are performing work that postal employees can do for less." The APWU, the Mail Handlers Union, and consumer organizations applauded Lieberman's effort.

Also hailed was the stand taken by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), who crossed party lines to cast the deciding vote. In late May, President Burrus asked Pennsylvania APWU members to call the senator's office and urge him to support the drive to limit worksharing discounts. Hundreds of APWU members did so, and their actions undoubtedly played a large part in Sen. Specter's decision.

The House Government Reform Committee approved

its postal reform legislation May 12. At APWU's urging, the House bill also contains a provision to limit excessive discounts.

### **Media Campaign On Hold**

Last July, the APWU executive board approved a special assessment of union members' dues to be available for a battle against proposals harmful to postal workers and the American public. Ten months after the board action and a full month before the Senate committee vote, Burrus announced that the first of four \$2 assessments would take place in July.

Last week, however, Burrus said the media campaign was not necessary "at this time."

"We have decided that at present it is not necessary to fund an advertising campaign to defeat postal reform," Burrus said. "Should it become necessary, we can implement the assessment and raise enough money to finance a broad effort."

Burrus cautioned, however, that if postal reform legislation fails to pass this year, the process will begin again in 2005 and the Commission's anti-worker proposals could be back on the table.

"In the crucial months ahead," he said, "we must keep our position clear on corporate subsidies, and continue to work with our friends in both chambers to protect the jobs and rights of APWU members."

### **APWU Board Endorses Kerry**

The APWU National Executive Board voted unanimously at its May meeting to endorse Sen. John F. Kerry in the November presidential election.

"Of course, APWU members are free to follow their conscience on this matter," said union President William Burrus. "But I believe this election will be a referendum on the Bush Administration, which has been a disaster for the middle class and for working people."

Delegates to the APWU National Convention will have an opportunity to vote on the endorsement at the union's biennial meeting in August.