

Miller to Chair Postal Board

The USPS Board of Governors has elected James C. Miller III, chairman, and Alan Kessler, vice chairman, for 2005.

“We look forward to working with the new leaders of the Board of Governors and to helping them serve the American people,” said APWU President William Burrus. “We are hopeful that under their stewardship the USPS will meet the challenges ahead.”

“We are mindful, however, of Mr. Miller’s public statements advocating postal privatization and his assertions that postal workers are overpaid,” Burrus said. In a 1985 article for the Cato Institute, titled *End the Postal Monopoly*, Miller wrote:

“The costs of the Postal Service are significantly higher than they should be because the incentive to hold down costs – most notably labor costs – is limited. Postal workers are paid far more than is necessary to retain their services.”

Accepting the chairmanship of the Board on Jan. 11, Miller said he has come to “know, appreciate and value the contributions of every USPS employee.”

Miller was Director of the Office of Management and Budget under President Reagan. Now a financial consultant with the CapAnalysis Group, he has served on the postal board since April 2003, when President Bush named him to the position during a congressional recess.

The USPS Board of Governors is comparable to the board of directors of a private corporation. The nine governors are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate to serve nine-year terms. They select the Postmaster General.

The Board oversees the Postal Service, directs and controls its expenditures, conducts long-range planning, and sets policies on all postal matters.

Reform Bill Introduced

Introducing postal reform legislation was the first order of business for Rep. John McHugh (R-NY) when the 109th Congress convened on Jan. 4. The measure was co-sponsored by Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA), Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), and Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL).

The new bill is based on a measure approved by the House Government Reform Committee last year. The panel approved the bill unanimously, but, like a similar measure in the Senate, it stalled when the White House announced opposition to a provision that would release from escrow billions of dollars in USPS overpayments to the Civil Service Retirement System, and a provision that would return to the Treasury financial responsibility for military retirement benefits for postal workers who served in the military.

Both provisions remain in the bill introduced by Rep. McHugh.

WageWorks Commuter Program In the Works

Working with a company called WageWorks, the Postal Service has initiated a program – currently in the test phase – that will allow career employees to pay commuting expenses on a pre-tax basis. Announced last year, the program thus far is available only to a group of management employees.

Under this program, no federal income, Social Security, Medicare, or (in most cases) state or local income taxes will be withheld from the pre-tax amount of eligible commuting expenses – as much as \$105 per month in public-transportation fares and as much as \$200 per month for work-related parking expenses.

Initial testing began last fall among management employees working at USPS headquarters in Washington. Phase Two, now expected to launch in February, will include all career employees in the Capital Metro Area, comprising the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas as well as Richmond, VA. USPS and WageWorks officials hope that all career employees will be eligible to take part in the program by the end of the summer.

APWU Seeks Local COPA Success Stories

The APWU is asking local and state organizations to provide information about members who deserve special recognition for their efforts to benefit the union’s Committee On Political Action (COPA). The next edition of *The American Postal Worker* will include a wrapup of contributions for 2004 – the fund’s strongest year ever –

and will highlight the outstanding efforts.

Union members are asked to forward the names and phone numbers of exceptional COPA activists to: APWU Communications Department, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20005, or call 202-842-4250.