

**Remarks by APWU President William Burrus  
2006 USPS-APWU Negotiations – Opening Session  
August 29, 2006**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Postmaster General Potter, representatives of the United States Postal Service, and my colleagues, APWU representatives of postal employees in the Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle and Support Services crafts.

We assemble today for the 12<sup>th</sup> time since 1971, when the Postal Service and postal unions assumed the responsibility of collective bargaining. And I guess that I have graduated to become the dean of postal bargaining, this being the 9<sup>th</sup> contract negotiation in which I have been directly involved.

We meet once again to discuss issues of concern and to forge agreements that will guide us into the future.

Despite the gloom and doom message that was articulated to advance postal “reform,” and in spite of continued congressional financial mandates, these negotiations mark the conclusion of an unprecedented period of labor and financial stability. Each of the unions and management organizations negotiated labor agreements of five years duration or longer.

The platform from which we begin is sound, and serves as a guide for continuing our success into the future.

To list a few of our outstanding achievements:

- ***Postal finances are positive.***

The Postal Service has eliminated all debt, which had reached a high of \$10.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2002.

We have overcome the Congressionally-imposed escrow account of \$3 billion per year, in addition to payment for military service.

Despite these burdens, the Postal Service has accrued \$8.4 billion in net income over the past three years.

And in addition to these financial achievements,

- ***Total Mail volume is at an all-time high, reaching a count of 212 billion pieces in Fiscal Year 2005 and trending positive in Fiscal Year 2006, an increase of 1 billion pieces per year over the life of our expiring contract.***

The entire postal community has contributed to these accomplishments, but the employees represented by APWU have played a major role. Through their efficiencies and commitment to serving the American public, they have made exceptional contributions to this positive record.

And because of our success, the drumbeat for postal reform has subsided. The financial picture of the Postal Service has never looked better. Radical change is not necessary, but based upon the legislative proposals under consideration, may arrest this outstanding progress.

A review of the specifics of this record reveals that the cost of services performed by APWU-represented employees as a percentage of total cost has been reduced at a greater rate than any other group of employees.

These cost reductions have come with tremendous sacrifices by the employees who I represent. In fact, at times they have been treated like the equipment with which they work. Change has been constant, with ever-present concerns and uncertainty about where they will work, who they will work with, and under what conditions.

But despite all of these uncertainties, the employees have performed in an outstanding fashion.

These negotiations are our opportunity to address their concerns, restore some semblance of stability and predictability to their lives, and to compensate them for their extraordinary efforts.

We shall present proposals that represent the objectives of employees in a profitable and successful enterprise. We hope to engage your representatives in discussions and find mutual ways of addressing these goals.

Our objective is to negotiate a contract that is fair and rewarding.

The employees we represent have been productive, dedicated, and loyal, they deserve no less.