

# APWU NEWS

Bulletin

AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION, AFL-CIO

WILLIAM BURRUS, President MYKE REID, Editor

## Convention Delegates Protest National Chain's Offensive 'Brand'

The APWU convention was delayed Thursday morning while nearly 1,000 postal workers staged quiet demonstrations at three Las Vegas retail stores, with delegates protesting the offensive phrase *Goin' Postal* in a "pack-and-ship" business's name.

"We're appalled that the U.S. Postal Service has entered into an 'Approved Shipper Program' partnership with the franchising operation," said President William Burrus.

"We want to send a message that we object to the use of that term. It's no joke to us," he told delegates as they assembled at a North Las Vegas store.



"It's a sore subject with us, considering what happened in Oklahoma City, which is when this phrase was coined," said picketer Mike Knowles of the Miami Area Local, referring to an incident in suburban Edmond, OK, in 1986.

"For somebody to be using it for profit is an insult to every postal worker around the country," Knowles said. "To keep bringing this up and keep the perception there is just wrong, and to make



Protestors kept their voices down, but the shirts and signs spoke loud and clear.

a profit off of it is totally wrong."

Seventeen busloads of APWU delegates marched silently in front of three different *Goin' Postal* outlets within 20 miles of the Las Vegas hotels where the delegates are staying. All of the APWU demonstrators wore blue T-shirts mocking the USPS partner's corporate logo.

"The word 'postal' is part of a brand name that touches the lives of every citizen six days a week," Burrus said, "so there is immediate recognition of any business or organization that uses the word in its name. In this sense, our reputation is being used as a means to make money. We're hoping that this demonstration can help postal workers win back our good name."

The national union had been aware of the package-shipping retail operation, but had not known about its relationship with the Postal Service until earlier this year when APWU mem-

bers visited a Minneapolis-area store and learned that it had been designated as a partner in the USPS Approved Shipper program.

In a letter to Postmaster General John E. Potter on May 30, the APWU president inquired about the relationship between the USPS and the 300 *Goin' Postal* stores.

"The postal community has rejected the use of the phrase 'going postal,' which demeans and stigmatizes more than 700,000 dedicated postal employees," Burrus wrote. "I am unable to reconcile our collective disdain for this cruel stereotype with management's partnership with a company using the same name."

In a phone call with Burrus on Thursday, Potter said that he was unaware that the franchise operation was an "Approved Shipper." (See related story on Page 2).



Mike Knowles

# Finally: A USPS ‘Response’

In timing that seemed more than coincidental, Postmaster General John E. Potter has finally commented on the subject of the *Goin’ Postal* stores ... sort of.

APWU President William Burrus told delegates to the union’s National Convention Aug. 21 – the day the union had designated to protest the chain’s offensive name – that he had received a letter on the topic from management. But the letter didn’t exactly clarify the Postal Service’s attitude on the term “going postal.”

The saga began in early May, when *E! Entertainment Television* started to promote an upcoming series titled “Going Postal: 15 Shocking Acts of Violence.” The APWU objected in a letter to the CEO of Comcast, which owns *E!*

“The title of the series is an affront to more than 700,000 hard-working postal employees who are stigmatized by the cruel stereotype that suggests that postal workers are violent sociopaths,” Burrus said in a May 13 letter. “Of course, statistics show that postal employees are no more likely to engage in acts of violence than the public at large.”

Burrus sent a copy of the letter to Postmaster General John E. Potter, only to be puzzled by management’s reaction: Silence.

“Frankly, I was surprised,” Burrus said at the time. “In December 2003, when FOX-TV broadcast a comedy skit that mocked postal workers and portrayed them as violent, USPS management took the initiative to protest and asked postal unions to join their effort,” he noted.

Approximately two weeks after the correspondence about the *E!* TV series, the union learned that *Goin’ Postal*, the chain, had been designated a partner in the USPS Approved Shipper program. On May 30, Burrus sent a letter to Potter, inquiring about the relationship between the USPS and the franchise company.



The APWU disapproves of USPS Approved Shipper program practices.

The Postal Service’s silence continued.

Speaking to convention delegates at the protest outside one of the offensively names stores in a Las Vegas strip mall, Burrus said, “On the one hand, the Postal Service has joined with us in contesting and condemning the use of the phrase. But at the same time they are signing a

contract with this company that uses the term.”

“It turns out that the letter we got yesterday from the postmaster’s office,” he said, “was a response to the earlier letter about the TV show.”

The Postal Service said it had written to *E!* to “express concern” about the series title.

After the protests at the three Las Vegas stores had concluded Thursday, Burrus gave an update to the convention. “I spoke with

Postmaster General Potter over the phone today,” he said.

“Potter said that he was not aware that the Postal Service had signed a contract with the chain of stores, and agrees that it is contradictory.” Burrus added that the PMG “promised to investigate it personally and get back to me.”

## Local Hosts Hot and Cool

Las Vegas Area Local President Joe Lewis opened the APWU convention with a promise that the weather for the protest on Aug. 21 would be a “cool 100 degrees” and he almost made good on his pledge: It actually was only in the mid-90s when the demonstrations ended.

“Over all, I thought it went really well,” the host local’s president said.

“When I first saw these stores a couple of months ago I was really offended. We had talked about do-

ing something in the local, and I was pleased when the national union got behind it.”

“I enjoyed seeing brothers and sisters from all around the nation,” he said, “marching together to show that

postal workers have and deserve a lot of dignity and respect.”

“I think our local is going to get fired up by this.”

The host local won kudos from delegates throughout the week for staging a smooth-running event.



Joe Lewis with Las Vegas Area Local Vice President Denise Walker-Hoffman.

# Everybody Loves a Parade



In keeping with tradition, the Parade of States must go on, on the night before the last day of the APWU Biennial Convention. The pictures say it all.



# Examples of Union Tribute and Support

At a Memorial Prayer Service sponsored by the Human Relations Department on Aug. 17, delegates paid tribute to APWU members who made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The union is aware of 13 union members who died in combat or have lost a family member in the fighting. A display in the Exhibit Hall honored the fallen throughout the convention.

The pre-convention event also high-



A delegate looks over the memorial to APWU-family members killed in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

lighted the National Marrow Donor Program, and encouraged union mem-

bers to add their names to the program's donor registry. On any given day, 6,000 men, women and children search the bone-marrow registry for a life-saving donor.

APWU bargaining-unit employees are eligible for up to seven days of administrative leave for the purpose of donating bone marrow, stem cells, or blood platelets, and can receive up to 30 days for an organ do-

nation. For more information, contact Human Relations at 202-842-4271.



## APWU Chorus of Inspiration



The APWU Chorus inspired delegates before convention business each morning. Elise Bryant of the National Labor College also conducted the musicians in 2004 and 2006.

## All on Board at the ABA



Newly elected and re-elected officers of the APWU Accident Benefit Association include, from left, Wayne Maurer, Edward Brennan, Gene Johnson, Gary Neuharth, James McCarthy, Lynn Pallas-Barber, John E. Durben, Dave Daniel, APWU President William Burrus, Terry Grant, Michael B. Ganino Jr., Samuel Anderson, and Richard Phillips.

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### Credentials Committee

As presented by Chairperson Geneva Greenlee of the Indiana APWU, the preliminary report of the APWU Credentials Committee for Thursday, Aug. 21, is as follows:

The 19th Biennial Convention's 3,218 delegates represent 415 locals, 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance are 85 national officers and five Retirees Department delegates.