

Contract Negotiations Begin *Union Pledges 'Best Effort' to Achieve Agreement*

Negotiations for a new national agreement between the American Postal Workers Union and the U.S. Postal Service began Sept. 1 in Washington, DC. The current contract expires Nov. 20, 2010.

"Every contract negotiation brings special challenges, and this will be no different," APWU President William Burrus said at the opening session. "Mail volume is depressed and revenue is down, but we have faced similar circumstances before.

"The history of the Postal Service is replete with forecasts of doom and gloom, but such dire predictions have not prevented us from exploring every opportunity to achieve agreement," he said.

The union president said that warnings of the imminent demise of the Postal Service, and demands for "wholesale changes to the foundation we have built over our 40-year history" ignore the fact that each contractual provision has a history of give-and-take." That is the essence of contract negotiation, he said.

The Postal Service is experiencing difficult times, Burrus noted, but APWU members also face challenges. "Each time I have an exchange with a young mother



PMG John E. Potter (left) and APWU President William Burrus.

who balances the competing obligations of her work at the Postal Service and home, I am reminded of the unique needs of postal employees, who are responsible for maintaining the best and cheapest postal system in the world," Burrus said.

"The Postal Service and APWU are responsible, through their designated negotiators, for determining the conditions of employment," he noted.

"The road will be difficult and the outcome uncertain, but there are components of an agreement awaiting our discovery. I pledge the best efforts of the American Postal Workers Union to find a way," he said.

Postmaster General John E. Potter said the parties have a joint interest in the viability of the Postal Service for the future, and promised to "work across the table to find an agreement that benefits both the USPS as an institution and postal employees."

However, he cautioned that the Postal Service would put proposals on the table that would be "unpleasant."

The next round of talks is set for Sept. 8. For updates, visit the union's Web site, at www.apwu.org.



Members of the APWU negotiating team meet with management.

Incentives Offered to Locals to Get Out Vote

Union Ballots to be Mailed Sept. 13-15; Due Back by Oct. 5

Be sure to vote in this year's election of APWU national officers. It's a right – and a privilege – afforded to every member.

"The democratic principles of our union have value only if the membership engages in the process," said APWU President William Burrus.

Ballots will be sent to all eligible APWU members Sept. 13-15, and must be returned to and received in the designated post office box by 2 p.m. on Oct. 5.

Direct election of union officers has been a hallmark of the APWU, and in these turbulent times, it is especially important that union members vote.

To encourage APWU members to participate in this

year's elections, the national union will hold a voter-participation competition among locals, rewarding those that vote in the highest percentages.

The incentive for participation in the election process will be payments to the locals to be used on behalf of the membership. The top three locals in each of the following size categories will receive cash awards: 1,000 members and above (\$4,000); 500-999 (\$2,000); 100-499 (\$1,000); 1-99 members (\$200).

To be eligible, locals must reach a voter participation level of at least 50 percent. If more than three locals in any category generate 100 percent participation, all "100%" locals will receive awards.