

PRC Ruling Undermines Postal Service

2-Cent Postage Cut is ‘Bad News’

A ruling by the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) that required the Postal Service to lower postage rates from 49 to 47 cents will “disrupt service and undermine a great national treasure,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “The decision is bad news for customers, workers and the Postal Service,” he said.

The price reduction, the first since 1919, ended the emergency increase granted in the wake of the Great Recession. It is expected to cost the Postal Service \$2 billion in revenue annually.

“We want our customers to enjoy the lowest postage rates possible, but postage can’t be so low that it destroys service and damages the institution,” Dimondstein said. “Our country needs a vibrant Postal Service and the USPS needs revenue to properly serve the people.

“The PRC decision fits right in with the ‘4 Ds’ strategy of the privatizers: Defund the USPS; degrade service; demonize the workers, and dismantle the institution,” he said. “The ruling – along with the congressional mandate that requires management to pre-fund retiree healthcare costs 75 years into the future – defunds the USPS.

“The 2-cent reduction is a boon to the major mailers who already get excessive discounts at the expense of individual mailers. It won’t save individual mailers much money at all.

“But it will further damage service and undermine a great national treasure. Two of the three PRC members – one Republican and one Democrat – shamefully voted for the 2-cent reduction.”

Union Negotiates New Health Benefit for PSEs

Postal Support Employees (PSEs) will soon be able to sign up for health insurance during their first year of employment, President Mark Dimondstein has announced. Currently, PSEs can enroll only after they complete their first 360-day appointment.

Beginning with a Special Enrollment Period from May 16, 2016, to June 30, 2016, PSEs will be eligible to join the USPS Health Benefits (USPSHB) Plan. Coverage will be effective on July 9, 2016.

The Postal Service will contribute at least \$125 per pay period toward the cost of the insurance.

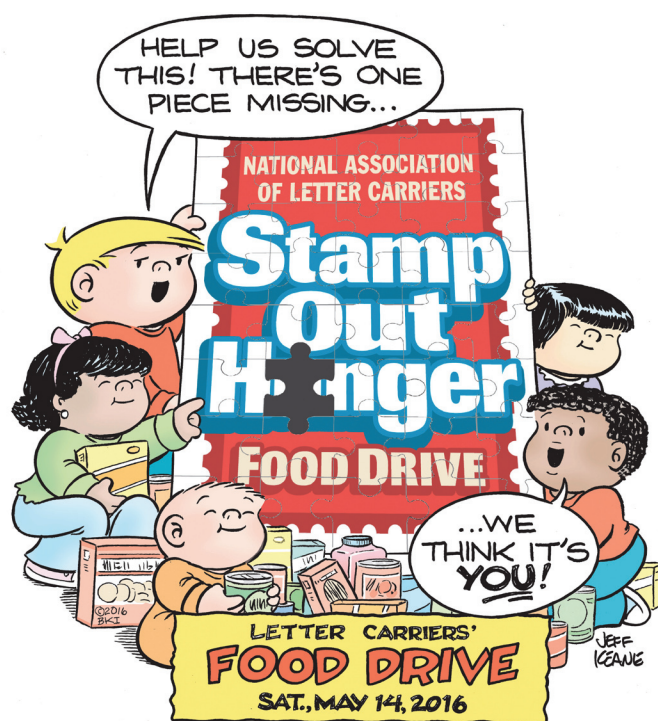
“This benefit is a step forward, especially for those who need self-only coverage,” Dimondstein said. “This stop-gap measure will improve conditions for PSEs who need insurance for their first year.”

“This benefit applies to all PSEs, regardless of the number of hours they work,” Dimondstein pointed out. This is significant because the Affordable Care Act requires employers to cover only those workers who work a minimum of 30 hours per week.

After the first 360-day appointment, PSEs can switch to the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan, where the Postal Service pays 75 percent of total premium costs for self-only, self-plus-one and self-and-family coverage.

To find out more, visit <https://liteblue.usps.gov/benefits> or call 1-877-477-3273 and select option 1; TTY 866-260-7507. To enroll by mail, complete the *PostalEASE* worksheet available on LiteBlue and mail it to: HRSSC Compensation/Benefits, PO Box 970400, Greensboro NC 27497-0400.

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