

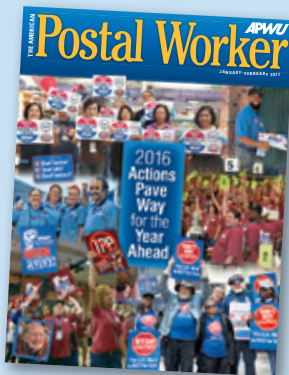


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P R E S I D E N T M A R K D I M O N D S T E I N

Some Thoughts on the 2016 Election and Beyond

I want to commend all the members who engaged in the political process of the 2016 election season, those who registered voters, knocked on doors, phone banked, distributed materials, worked the polls and helped get out the vote.

Now that the election is over, many are contemplating what the future holds. Past APWU President Moe Biller gave us the answer, “the struggle continues...!”

I do want to share a few thoughts on the election and beyond.

Historic Upset

What a shocker it was for the pundits, the media, the pollsters, the elites and certainly many voters when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States in one of the biggest political upsets in modern U.S. history.

A “coronation” was planned before the election even started. Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton would be the nominees of the two major parties. One of these dynasty family members would then be crowned as U.S. President. It would be that satisfactory and simple for the Wall Street financial oligarchy.

It did not work out as the two corporate controlled parties planned. They failed to understand that the 99%, especially the working class, are fighting mad. We, the workers, have been kicked in the gut by a rigged system. We suffer from downward mobility, a loss of manufacturing jobs to rotten trade deals, tax structures favoring the wealthy, an infrastructure crumbling around us, our water poisoned, an economic “recovery” going to the top 1%, glaring and growing income inequality, and unaffordable health care and college education.

Yes, there were many negatives in this election. We were once again stuck with the “lesser of two evils” choice. There was no independent political party accountable to us, the workers. The two major party candidates were the most disliked and mistrusted in modern history. Voter suppression was widespread, largely directed at African-Americans, the working class and the poor. Massive gerrymandering through redistricting had politicians picking voters rather than the other way around. Libertarian and Green party candidates were kept out of the debates by the two major parties. Billionaire money spigots opened wide in the buying of elections. The undemocratic “Electoral College” overrode majority rule of the popular vote. Trump and his campaign promoted bigotry and division, attacking immigrants, women, the disabled, Muslims and Gold Star parents. Clinton labeled millions of Trump supporters “deplorables.” Anti-worker and anti-union politicians now hold the majority of Congress as well as the White House, a development that bodes ill for postal workers and our families.

“Elections come

and go, but the

struggle for social

and economic justice

always remains.”

Mark Dimondstein

But let me focus on what I believe are two very positive aspects of the 2016 election season.

First, many state-wide pro-worker ballot initiatives, dealing with raising minimum wages, supporting public education and establishing paid sick leave passed with strong support across the political spectrum. Going forward, I hope to see greater focus at election time on referenda issues that make life better for working families and unite us across political divides.

Second, this election was truly a revolt against the status quo, against the elites and against “politics as usual.” While we have many terrific friends in Congress, and will continue to work to elect worker-friendly candidates, the fundamental policies of both the Democrat and Republican parties over the last few decades have undercut and failed the working class. Such policies have resulted in huge tax breaks for the wealthy, support for trade deals like NAFTA, the bail-out of Wall Street and ignoring of Main Street, bloated military budgets and unjust wars that drain our economy and deprive us of needed social services, the school to prison pipeline, the undermining of civil liberties, a health care policy aimed at enriching Big Pharma and the insurance companies, and a poverty minimum wage.

The pro-worker, anti-Wall Street campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders, calling for living wages, free college tuition, getting corporate money out of politics, taxing the wealthy, stopping the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and promoting a “political revolution,” electrified millions, especially the young voters from all backgrounds.

At the AFL-CIO Council meeting last March, I predicted that if Sanders was not the Democratic Party nominee, Donald Trump would be the next President. Lo and behold, once Sanders was pushed out of the way by the mainstream Democratic Party forces, Trump, with his rhetoric, stepped into the void.

The hope that a billionaire businessman, who believes the minimum wage is too high, will help workers will undoubtedly be dashed, but the reason Trump won is fairly simple. If one is in pain and suffering and the prescribed medicine is not providing relief, trying experimental treatment is most tempting, even if the known side effects can be dangerous.

APWU’s great friend, Texas populist and well-respected commentator Jim Hightower said last July, “The real story, however, is not about the two maverick candidates, [Sanders and Trump] but about the waves of ordinary people who’ve created and lifted their campaigns... These voters are hurting today, distressed about tomorrow, and fed up with the two-party indifference to ‘people like us...’ The rebellion is on.”

Next Steps

The APWU leadership approached the 2016 election understanding that we represent 200,000 workers with varying political beliefs. We gave our guidance based on what we believed was best for the well-being of postal workers, always respecting that your vote was a personal choice.

Now that the election is over, we cannot allow ourselves to be divided by politics, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or hate. We must stand together and oppose any force that seeks to divide us for *In our Unity, Lies our Strength*.

We will diligently work with elected leaders to defend the public Postal Service and the well-being of postal workers. The right of the people throughout the country to have timely and exceptional postal services should never be framed as a Democratic or Republican issue. It is non-partisan, for the benefit of all people from every walk of life.

Always remember it takes movements of workers and people to motivate Congress and politicians to do the right thing, not the other way around. The great gains of the labor, civil rights and women’s rights movements all flowed from powerful, unstoppable crusades for positive change.

Elections come and go, but the struggle for social and economic justice always remains. Arm in arm with the people of the country, our sister unions and many allies, we will continue to strive to defend our national treasure, expand postal services, protect our jobs, build our union, improve our standard of living and build a more just society.

Onward in 2017! ■

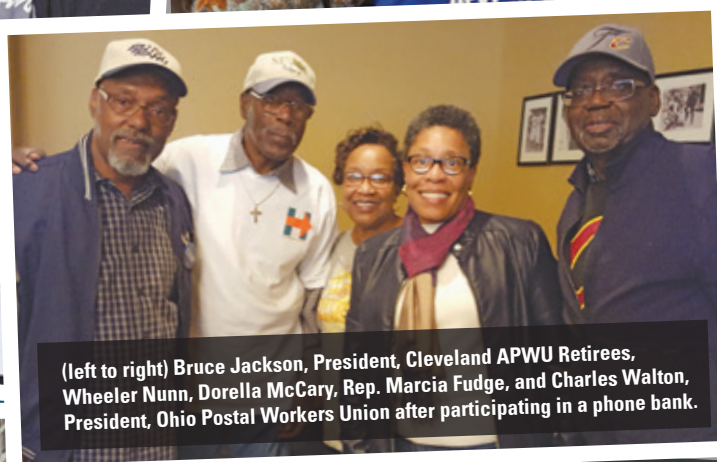


Participating in the fight against the pharmaceutical industry’s greedy price gouging, President Dimondstein was a speaker at a rally organized by the Physicians for a National Health Program, on Nov. 18. He is pictured at the rally with Director of Industrial Relations Vance Zimmerman.

APWU Gets Out the Vote!

"We appreciate all of the work our release staff and volunteers put into the election both on the national and state level," said Legislative Director Judy Beard. "Victory was not achieved in every race, but this should not discourage political involvement amongst our members. Stay focused and involved in the political and legislative process on all levels. Let us use the results from this election as motivation to mobilize for the future."

APWU active and retired members across the country were busy mobilizing voters this fall. Check out some photos of their efforts in action!



A Grand Alliance Goes to Farm Aid

A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service (AGA) was part of Farm Aid 2016's HOMEGROWN Village. The AGA booth demonstrated the importance of maintaining a public Postal Service that connects Americans at every income level in cities, towns and villages across America, including rural areas with few other communication options.

At the HOMEGROWN Village, in Bristow, VA, concertgoers viewed the AGA video featuring Willie Nelson, took their picture with Ben Franklin and brainstormed on new ways the Postal Service can further serve the community. Ideas include:

- Access to high-speed internet service
- More staff and longer hours at neighborhood post offices
- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Letter carriers checking-in on seniors and people with mobility issues
- Delivery of fresh produce directly from farms to households

Farm Aid, whose mission is to create a vibrant family farm system of agriculture in America, is a founding member of A Grand Alliance, along with more than 130 labor, civil rights, faith and community organizations.

"The universal, public Postal Service is an essential link for farmers and rural residents," said populist radio commentator Jim Hightower, who appeared with Nelson in AGA's video. "There are places where UPS or FedEx or other private companies just won't go. But, the U.S. Postal Service delivers everywhere – in every community, no matter how small or large."

"Many rural communities are bank deserts with few if any financial services available," said APWU President Dimondstein. "Services like ATM withdrawals, electronic fund transfers and even small loans could save rural families thousands of dollars in fees. That's the kind of lifeline we need in these small town, farm communities."

Postal Services: Essential to Rural Communities

For many years, those aimed at dismantling the Postal Service pointed to the rise of internet access to proclaim the coming of the end of mail. However, a new report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) casts serious doubt on the idea that first-class mail will continue to decline.

In October 2016, the GAO issued a report on the relationship between broadband use and the use of postal services. While households with broadband access send less "transactional mail," such as bill payments, in recent years broadband use may not have had a statistically significant effect on "correspondence mail," including greeting cards and letters.

The GAO found residents of rural areas generally put a high



AGA advocates speaking with Farm Aid concertgoers. Over one hundred attendees signed the pledge to 'Save our Public Postal Service.' Sign the pledge today at agrandalliance.org/pledge.

value on postal services. Importantly, correspondence mail volume remained the same, regardless of broadband access. Additionally, post office visits remain higher in rural areas compared to other areas, regardless of broadband access. This might be due to the valuable role the local post office has in small communities.

Their findings also suggest concerns over privacy and the security of internet communications may be a factor causing consumers to go back to using first-class mail.

Understanding the relationship between postal services and new technologies is critical. "There's simply no substitute for the vital service our post offices provide—even as we continue to make important advances in rural broadband," said Senator McCaskill of Missouri, who, along with Senator Heitkamp of North Dakota, requested the study. "We've got to preserve and improve that service for the folks who rely on it the most." To read the survey, go to www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-811. ■

SAVE OUR PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE

A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service is a broad coalition of national, state and local organizations, including Vote Vets, Jobs with Justice, National Council of Churches and Rainbow PUSH. These groups have come together to take a stand against the unprecedented assaults on the Postal Service, including efforts to dismantle and privatize it. To join A Grand Alliance, visit www.AGrandAlliance.org.

NLRB Judge Orders Staples

Backroom Deal with Postal Service Violates Labor Laws

The Postal Service's deal with Staples is indeed dirty.

On Nov. 8, 2016, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Administrative Law Judge Paul Bogas upheld all of the APWU's charges leveled at the Postal Service's Staples *Approved Shipper* program. The ruling came almost two years after the APWU filed an unfair labor practice complaint in November 2014, against the USPS for its actions in illegally transferring work to Staples.

"The Postal Service provided the union with incomplete and misleading information about its retail partnership with Staples, resisted the union's requests for additional information that likely would have revealed that its plans included the diversion of bargaining unit work," Bogas said.

"It was the correct decision to mobilize our members and initiate the Stop Staples campaign and boycott."

— President Dimondstein

"We said from day one this was a dirty backroom deal that was bad for postal customers and postal workers," said President Mark Dimondstein. "Customers expect and deserve to have their mail handled safely and securely. And, the USPS has a contractual obligation to negotiate with us before moving our work to a private company with low standards."

The ruling stated the USPS intentionally ignored its legal obligation under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to bargain with the APWU over the Staples deal and its effects on members of the union.

Stop Staples Goes Global

UNI Post and Logistics World Conference passed a resolution, brought forward by President Dimondstein, in support of the Staples boycott and the APWU's *Stop Staples* campaign.

"The UNI Post unions encourage their members and sister unions to refrain from doing business with Staples, *Quill.com* and any Staples subsidiaries," the resolution said. For more info, see page 17.



Members of the Western Pennsylvania Postal Workers Solidarity Committee protested in front of a location on McKnight Road in Pittsburgh, PA on Oct. 16. All APWU crafts attended, along with letter carriers, retired mail handlers, and allies.

Shady Deal

During the discovery process, the APWU found that the USPS was actually paying Staples between \$4,000 and \$5,500 per store to provide these substandard services. It was further revealed that the goal was to secretly and illegally divert as much as 40 percent of mail services from local post offices to Staples and other retailers.

An internal Postal Service report, dated Sept. 12, 2012, made clear the goal of the expansion of its "retail partnerships" was about "migrating [the] majority of volume to retail partners (new and existing)." The judge ruled the USPS failed to inform the union of this report "at any time prior to it being subpoenaed in this litigation."

"Judge Bogas called this one exactly right," President Dimondstein said. "It's time to get the U.S. Mail out of Staples and back to neighborhood post offices where it will be handled properly."

"It is clear from the Postal Service's own documents and testimony, the real goal for their 'Retail Partnership' program was to eliminate APWU members' jobs and to close post offices," he added.

Voluminous additional evidence was cited proving postal management hid their true intent – the privatization of postal retail operations – from the union. One document noted a USPS consultant's question to Brian Code, then

to Stop Handling U.S. Mail

“The Postal Service provided the union with incomplete and misleading information about its retail partnership with Staples.”

– NLRB Judge Paul Bogas



Members of the Boston Metro Area Local and allies held a rally in front of a bustling location in Revere, MA, on Oct. 20.

head of the USPS Retail Partnership Program. The consultant asked whether they will “decrease [bargaining unit clerks] and will have to shut down P[ost] O[ffice]s to finance the program.”

Code replied, “You are right.”

“It is clear we were right to challenge the Staples deal,” President Dimondstein explained. “It was the correct decision to mobilize our members and initiate the *Stop Staples* campaign and boycott. The campaign continues to be a key part of the battle to maintain the public Postal Service against management’s privatization scheme.”

Among other remedies, the decision went on to instruct USPS to “discontinue its retail partnership with Staples.”

“The Postal Service will probably appeal this decision, but we call on them to do the right thing and immediately end the Staples dirty deal,” President Dimondstein said. “In the meantime, the *Stop Staples* campaign and boycott continues full speed ahead! The U.S. Mail is not for sale!” ■

‘BOYCOTT STAPLES IS OUR CALL’

The Bay Area Stop Staples Team (BASST) poets submitted the following poem:

We’ve got a protest way out west
We boycott Staples and do not rest
The boycott continues until we win
And Staples postal work is in the bin

Staples took jobs from you and me
Some folks said just let it be
But postal workers said no no no
We’ll get ‘em back from this corporate foe

Don’t let our USPS go away
We need our free mail delivery to stay
Union brothers and sisters around the bay
Tell us we’re with you as they turn the other way

Security guards come and act real tough
We stand our ground and call their bluff
Boycott Staples is our call
Explaining to customers one and all

Some will listen and turn around
Others hurry by giving us a frown
Five Bay Area Staples stores have closed
Staples’ postal deals are being exposed

Come join us in this historic fight
After three years we begin to see the light
With Alan as our leader and Darla by his side
We’ve had ups and downs but ride the tide

We’ve endured a lot over these years
Going through illness and shedding some tears
It seems this protest will continue on longer
But staying together our team becomes stronger



Newly elected APWU officers take their oath of office, administered by the Honorable Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. The new term started Nov. 12, 2016 and will end in November 2019.

NATIONAL OFFICERS INSTALLED

'Continuing to Move Forward'

The American Postal Workers Union's elected officers were installed on Nov. 5, 2016 in Washington, DC.

National President Mark Dimondstein, National Vice President Debby Szeredy and National Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell took their oath of office along with almost 80 other elected officers.

Members of the Executive Board, Craft Division Directors, Craft Division Assistant Directors, Department Heads, and National Business Agents (NBAs) all raised their hand and pledged to "uphold the Constitution and Bylaws of the [APWU]" and "perform the duties of [their] office to the best of [their] ability."

"We face the daunting challenges of protecting our jobs, retirements, and the public Postal Service," said President Dimondstein during his second inaugural speech. "We are on the march in solidarity with others. So let us continue to rise and build *A Grand Alliance to Save our Public Postal Service*, and beat back the privatizers. Let us continue to rise and *Stop Staples* and other subcontracting schemes. Let us continue to rise, and defeat the divisive multi-tier wage system and reverse the race to the bottom."



President Dimondstein addresses the audience, summarizing the accomplishments in the last three years and the challenges of the future.



Vice President Debby Szeredy introduces President Dimondstein's second inaugural speech.



Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell served as the evening's Mistress of Ceremonies. She was escorted by her son, Greg Harris.

First Meeting of Young Members Committee



The newly formed National Young Members Committee had their first meeting on Nov. 5, 2016. Its creation is a result of the resolution passed at the 23rd National Convention. It called for a committee comprised of one young member and one alternate from each of the union's five regions. President Dimondstein appointed ten members the Regional Coordinators recommended to serve a 14-month term from Nov. 1, 2016 to Dec. 31, 2017.

The first serving committeemen and committeewomen are Joshua Gray from the Western Michigan Area Local, Courtney Jenkins from the Baltimore Area Local, Sabrina Larsen from the Salt Lake City Area Local, Quanisha Mcneal from the New York Metro Area Local, and Ephrem De Hoyos from the San Antonio Alamo Area Local. The alternates are Latia Johnson from Kansas Kaw Valley Local, Zach DeRuyter from the Rochester Area Local, Matt Thomas from the San Jose Area Local, John Santos from the Puerto Rico Area Local, and Courtney Agee from the Birmingham Area Local. All the members and alternates met with President Dimondstein, Vice President Szeredy, Secretary-Treasurer Powell, Central Regional Coordinator Sharyn Stone, Eastern Regional Coordinator Mike Gallagher, Northeast Regional Coordinator John Dirzius, Southern Regional Coordinator Kenneth Beasley, and Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez to review the committee's goals and future mission.

"There is a direct correlation between the weakening labor movement and the weakening of standards for working people

across this country," said President Dimondstein as he addressed the group. It is his expectation the members will work with local and national officers to talk with new hires about becoming active APWU members.

President Dimondstein discussed the future of the APWU and the tremendous opportunity for growth and activism. Right now, 25% of the union's bargaining unit were hired since 2011 and 53% of the bargaining unit is eligible for retirement. The APWU must encourage all new career employees and PSEs to join the union and have a voice in their workplace.

"We cannot have a powerful movement without people," explained President Dimondstein, speaking about the major fights ahead, including the constant efforts to maintain a public Postal Service. "We will have to win [the big battles] in the streets."

The committee members then met with the Regional Coordinators to brainstorm strategies for how to get young workers involved. Together, they identified action items, discussed an official mission statement and goals for the coming year. The strategies included ways to work with the local leadership in their areas as well as utilizing the available national and state resources.

The committee members stressed to each other the need for unity, to not turn anyone away and not separate into generational groups. "We can work together, longer and better," said Larsen.

The National Young Members Committee with National Officers. (L-R) (front row) Courtney Jenkins, Sabrina Larsen, Ephrem De Hoyos, Quanisha Mcneal, Joshua Gray (back row) Zach DeRuyter, Matt Thomas, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, President Mark Dimondstein, Vice President Debby Szeredy, Courtney Agee, John Santos and Latia Johnson.





EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

Organize to Fight Consolidations!

IT IS TIME TO ASSESS OUR GOALS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS. WE STILL have to work hard to stop the consolidations and restore the service standards. It is time to up the fight against the reason for delayed mail. It is hurting the Postal Service's brand and lowering the public's trust in us.

We must get legislation to change the service standards back to where they were on July 1, 2012. Mail delay is rampant throughout the country, especially in areas where there were either partial or total consolidations. The new members of Congress need to know if consolidations have occurred in the areas they represent. We must stress the need for their support to restore the service standards.

Recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) reports illustrate a serious problem. The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) continues to address in its annual report that the USPS fails to meet even the degraded service standards.

Consolidations

Twelve sites were consolidated totally last year: Asheville, NC; Athens, GA; Elko, NV; Florence, SC; Houston, TX; Kalamazoo, MI; Kokomo, IN; La Crosse, WI; Lafayette, IN; Northwest Boston, MA; Pendleton, OR, and Salina, KS.

There are 52 sites that have gone through partial consolidations since 2012, and 17 sites are in a hold pattern, "To Be Determined."

In the July 8, 2016 interest arbitration award for our National Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), the arbitrator established a moratorium on consolidations till April 2017. The arbitrator stated the parties must engage in meaningful discussions on future consolidations, serving the interest of both parties. He stated the moratorium, should not, however, be viewed as a start date. If plant closings or consolidations should occur, the Postal Service is to perform new feasibility studies prior to implementation.

We must start building our coalitions as well as our relationships with the public and media to have them in "ready mode" when a public meeting is held. Remember these coalitions are not just an asset for the consolidation fight, but for all the future battles we face with the Postal Service.

Service Standards

If the service standards are changed back to July 1, 2012, the partially consolidated sites should regain the Delivery Bar Code Sorter (DBCS) and Advanced Facer-Canceller System (AFCS) equipment they lost.

***"We must work
hard to stop the
consolidations
and to restore the
service standards...
Let's build activists
from the workroom
floor to help save
the plants!"***



APWU members and allies hold a protest to save the Duluth, MN, processing plant.

The delayed mail surge has a big enough effect on the public. It is a problem that must be taken seriously by the USPS. We must push to ramp up the 64 consolidated sites and bring back the equipment and employees.

External First-Class Mail (EXFC) measurement scores declined more than 51% in 2015 compared to 2014. EXFC scores for two-day and three-five day first class mail delivery are declining, failing to meet even the degraded service standards. An OIG investigation found mail consistently arrives late to mail processing plants.

Mail would not be late if the consolidations had not occurred. The 81 sites are strategically placed to ensure overnight service could be managed easily.

The OIG offered a remedy with air transportation. However, due to high costs, USPS cut their use of it and focused on more ground transportation. Air transportation is not the answer. Restoring service standards and mail service back to those 64 sites where a partial or total consolidation occurred, is the answer.

Prior to consolidations, postal employees very rarely worked overtime. Now members work overtime nearly every week. Productivity is lost when you over-work employees, causing more stress, turnover and injuries. It is not right for workers to be unnecessarily put in danger.

The USPS has more mail sorting at fewer facilities. The facilities are short staffed and there are higher transportation costs. Why can't the Postal Service just agree that the last group of 81 planned consolidations were a miscalculation that adversely affected services? The Phase 2 consolidation plan was too deep of a cut. It degraded service standards and delayed mail service nation-wide.

The argument has been made time and again, don't



Members of Area Local 960 gathered petition signatures at a Redding, CA, farmers' market to keep the local mail processing plant open.

slow down mail delivery when trying to build service to the public. Once service standards are brought back, we will have fewer complaints at our call centers and negative stories in the media. Congressional members will also get fewer calls regarding mail service delays.

Organize!

We have an urgent need to organize our members and build coalitions. We must protect one of the cheapest and most secure communication vehicles in the world. The APWU's survival depends on how we can mobilize to change the tide of consolidations.

Let's build activists from the floor to help us save the plants. The April 2017 moratorium will come upon us soon. We must strengthen our ranks.

Look for upcoming activities to help locals build their connections with members, community organizations and the local media. We also want to help you to build your relationships with congressional and legislative members in your area.

If you need to find and train more union activists for your local, go to the Vice President's page on apwu.org under "Departments & Divisions." There are "Resources" available for you in the column on the right. You can download the information and/or request copies be sent to you. Do not hesitate to utilize them.

The union will be stronger when everyone is involved. Other unions work hard to build a member-to-member network and have found success. It does take time, but you have nothing to lose by trying new organizing techniques.

Thanks to all the members, stewards and officers willing to step up and help build our union. ■



SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Let's Get the Year Started Right

“The start of the New Year is an excellent time to put in place procedures and policies to help local and state union officials comply with their legal and financial responsibilities.”

THE START OF THE NEW YEAR IS AN EXCELLENT TIME TO PUT IN PLACE procedures and policies to help local and state union officials comply with their legal and financial responsibilities. To assist our local and state unions, local and state officials are urged to consider the following recommendations.

Financial Training: Local and state presidents and secretary-treasurers should plan to attend one of the three national training sessions in the coming year. The training program offers classroom training on all areas of union finances and administration, as well as QuickBooks training. This training can also be beneficial for local trustees and other executive board members. Check the events calendar on apwu.org or call 202-842-4215 for more information on training dates and registration information.

Authorization for Salaries and Expenses: Make sure there is authorization for officer and employee salaries, allowances, and expenses. Although the Office of Labor Management and Standards (OLMS), the division of the Department of Labor that enforces the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA), does not recommend one best policy for authorizing officer and employee salaries, allowances, expenses, and/or paid leave, it strongly recommends a written policy approved by the governing body or constitutional language to ensure compliance with

the LMRDA and to safeguard union assets. The authorization for dues rebates, car allowances, or any payments or compensation to union officers must be documented in at least one union record. Payment of reimbursed expenses must also be documented and a record of such documentation must be maintained.

In some unions, officer and employee salary levels and allowances are authorized in the local union constitution or by-laws; in these cases, salaries may be tied to USPS pay levels or other key job classifications under a collective bargaining agreement administered by the union. A record of the applicable rates must also be maintained.

If the local union compensates retired members for work performed for the union, there must be specific language either in the constitution, or in a written policy or motion, authorizing the payment and rate of pay for that work.

Treasurer's Reports: There is a common practice at regular membership meetings to make a motion to approve the treasurer's report.

Although there should be a financial report made at every executive board and membership meeting, the financial report does not have to be approved because the figures relied upon to compile the report have not been audited. Just like your bank statement is just a statement until it is reconciled, a report at a meeting is just that, a report. The proper motion is to hold the report for the audit report, which does have to be adopted by the membership. That is why there should be regular internal and external audits of the local funds.

Large and Unusual Transactions: Establish a policy and practice that requires prior authorization to be obtained for large or unusual transactions by the union. Many times these large and unusual transactions – such as computers, copiers, fax machines, building repairs, or furniture – are placed under a budget category and presumed to be preapproved. The membership has the right to be informed and have input when large sums of local funds are disbursed. Many unions require membership approval for certain expenditures, such as all expenses over a stipulated dollar amount. Remember, if new equipment or furniture is purchased, make sure it is added to the union's fixed assets inventory.

Routine and Recurring Expenses Consider introducing a standing motion to authorize payment for recurring expenses, such as telephone, rent and utilities, as well as per capita payments and taxes. A number of unions have adopted standing orders or policies that authorize payment of recurring expenditures. If such a standing order or policy has been adopted, the union must maintain records of authorizing such a policy or standing order in at least one union record. All such authorizations obtained during union meetings must be documented in the minutes.

Amended Constitutions: Federal law, LMRDA Section 201(a), requires



Courtesy of NNU

"As long as we collectively work together, stand together and fight together, we can do any doggone thing we want to do!" said Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell at the Rally for Social and Economic Justice and Equality. For more info, see page 16.

a union to submit a copy of its revised constitution and bylaws with its LM report when it makes changes to its constitution or bylaws. If your local constitution has been amended, make sure an updated copy is filed with your next annual LM report.

Disposing of Union Property: The DOL specifically requires union officials to account for all union property, and to not dispose of union property without the knowledge of the membership, whose dues were used to purchase the item(s). One of the questions that must be answered on the union's annual LM report is, *Did the union dispose of any asset other than by sale?*

Item 13 on the LM-2 and LM-3 reports asks, *During the reporting period did your organization acquire or dispose of any assets in any manner other than by purchase or sale?* A recent audit of an APWU local illustrates this issue. The DOL agent stated the local union should have answered, "Yes," to item 13 because the local gave away t-shirts and watches totaling at least \$800. The type and value of any property received or given away must be identified in the additional information section of the

LM report along with the identity of the recipient(s) or donor(s) of such property. For reporting purposes, each recipient need not be itemized.

Recipients can be described by broad categories, if appropriate, such as "members" or "new retirees." Also, if property of the union is disposed of, it should be in the form of an official approved motion to dispose of the property rather than local officials simply stating that they disposed of the property because it was broken or obsolete. ■

Full-Time Officers and Full-Dues Retirees National Per Capita Dues

If the local or state union treasurers are collecting the national per capita dues of full-time officers and full-dues paying retirees, those dues must be forwarded to the National Office no later than each quarter in order for these members and officers to maintain good standing in the union. Inquiries should be directed to Merika Smith, Secretary-Treasurer's Department, 202-842-4244 or MSmith@apwu.org.

Labor Unites at Rally for Social & Economic Justice and Equality

Hundreds of labor union members gathered outside of the U.S. Capitol building on Nov. 17 for the Rally for Social and Economic Justice and Equality.

The rally was originally called to protest the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), but it evolved into a rally promoting workers' rights and the fight for social and economic justice for all after Congressional leaders announced there would be no vote on the TPP.

"We are proud to be in the struggle," said Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell to the hundreds gathered. "As long as we collectively work together, stand together and fight

together, we can do any doggone thing we want to do!"

"There is a lot of pain in America. Capitol Hill doesn't understand it, but we do. And we are going to reach out to those brothers and sisters and work with them until they do," Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) said at the rally. "When we stand together and keep our eyes on the prize, when we focus on social, economic, racial and environmental justice... nobody can stop us. Let's go forward together!"

For more information on the status of the TPP, visit apwu.org and stay tuned for more stories in the next edition of *The American Postal Worker*.



Hundreds of union members and allies rallied outside of the U.S. Capitol on Nov. 17.

Jim Beam Workers Win Contract After Strike

After a nearly week-long strike, Jim Beam workers in Clermont and Boston, KY, ratified a new contract on Oct. 21.

The workers, represented by the United Federation of Culinary Workers (UFCW) Local 111D, went on strike to protect seniority, jobs, and to create a better work-life balance. Some workers were forced to work 60-80 hour weeks on a regular basis.

"Money is not what [we were] unhappy about," said Local Union 111D President Janelle Mudd. "All through negotiations, we tried to make the point that what we were trying to change is the atmosphere."

"We [were] trying to get our life back," Jim Tucker, another UFCW member agreed. "You [would] go to work, and never know when you [would] get to go home."

The contract included a cap on temporary workers and an official commitment to hire 27-30 additional full-time workers by the summer of 2017. The new workers will limit the amount of overtime required by the current workforce.

In the end, the company "really addressed everything that we asked them to do," Mudd said.



Jim Beam workers in Kentucky win a contract after a week-long strike.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UFCW



Philadelphia transit workers on strike.

After Week-Long Strike, Philly Transit Workers Win Big

The City of Brotherly Love slowed down for a week in November as transit workers went on strike, but their efforts paid off in a big way.

Members of Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local Union 234 "made gains in pensions and wages," according to Local President Willie Brown. "[We] minimized out-of-pocket healthcare expenses at a time when health care costs are soaring, while maintaining excellent medical coverage for our members and their families."



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE BRUSKY, CREATIVE COMMONS

Members of the Chicago Teachers Union went on strike for a day in April 2016 to pressure the school board. This and other actions led to the recent agreement.

Chicago Teachers Avert Strike, Win Contract

After a series of job actions and just before a strike deadline, members of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) approved a four-year contract with Mayor Rahm Emanuel's administration. The agreement will be retroactive to the 2015-2016 school year.

CTU members worked for almost 500 days without a contract before the agreement on Oct. 10. The Board of Education (BOE) stalled negotiations and rejected all contract proposals made by the union.

The CTU announced the agreement was ratified on Nov. 1 with over 70% of the membership voting in favor of it. The contract secured a 4.5% pay increase over the life of the agreement, maintained class sizes, and provided layoff protections, among many other things. For more information, go to ctunet.com.

"This is not a perfect agreement," said CTU President Karen Lewis. "But it is good for the kids. And good for the clinicians. And good for the teachers, and paraprofessionals."

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

UNI Post and Logistics World Conference Endorses Staples Boycott

The *Stop Staples* campaign has gone global. In October 2016, the UNI Post and Logistics World Conference passed a resolution, brought forward by President Dimondstein, in support of the APWU's *Stop Staples* campaign and boycott.

The main goal of the "Delivering the Future" conference was to strengthen the power of postal workers worldwide through combating privatization and expanding postal services by tapping into the potential of e-commerce. "The struggle in the USA to prevent privatization of retail services is part and parcel of the broader international struggle to protect and defend public postal services in all countries," said the resolution, noting Staples does business in 26 other countries.

"The UNI Post unions encourage their members and sister unions to refrain from doing business with Staples, *Quill.com* and any Staples subsidiaries," the resolution continued. "Where sister unions represent Staples workers, [members will] use the union relationship to encourage Staples management to cease performing postal work in the USA."

A copy of the resolution was forwarded to Postmaster General

Megan Brennan, Staples interim CEO Shira Goodman and the Staples Board of Directors.

"Passing this resolution is a sign of solidarity and a testament that no matter what country we live in, we all face the danger of greedy corporate privatizers," said President Dimondstein. "The dirty deal between Staples and the Postal Service is a prime example of stealth privatizing. It takes stable, living-wage positions and replaces them with hourly, low-wage jobs."

President Dimondstein was asked to participate on a panel about combating postal privatization. He shared the APWU's efforts against privatization of the U.S. Postal Service with the building of *A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service*, the *Stop Staples* campaign as well as efforts to expand postal services through the fight to win postal banking.

"The future of public postal services worldwide is in our hands," President Dimondstein said. "Now is the time for postal unions around the world to band together in our common fight against those who are determined to take away public postal services and decently paid unionized postal work across the globe."



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Let's Work Together to Strengthen

"We must come together as a union in order to better the working conditions of our fellow brothers and sisters and the labor movement as a whole."

Vance Zimmerman

I WANT TO WISH YOU A HAPPY AND SAFE NEW YEAR AND THANK YOU FOR being a member of American Postal Workers Union. I am excited to start 2017 as your newly elected Industrial Relations Director. It is an honor.

I am very grateful for the confidence you've placed in me for the next three years. I am humbled by the outpouring of support from national officers, local officers, and members on the floor. I want to personally thank all the brothers and sisters who worked very hard on my behalf. Whether you supported me or not, the election is in the past. I look forward to working together with all of you in 2017 to protect and increase the rights of members of this great union, the American Postal Workers Union.

Before I share my APWU New Year's Resolutions, for members that may not know me, I want to spend a few sentences to tell you a little about myself. I worked for the USPS for 30 years. The Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union allowed me to provide for my family. That is an opportunity I want to ensure continues to be available for many more generations of postal workers.

I am a proud father of four, and "Papa" to four grandsons. I have been married for 29 years to the love of my life, Tammy, whom I met on the workroom floor. She is a former postal worker and is from a union family. She serves as the current secretary of her local chapter of

the Ohio Association of Public School Employees. She supports my work with the APWU each step of the way.

I am so thankful for what the union has done for me and my family. I have worked as a clerk and a maintenance employee. As a union representative, a position I started in my early twenties at the local level, I represented all four crafts: Clerk, Maintenance, Motor Vehicle Service and Support Services.

I had the privilege of serving this great union as a Maintenance National Business Agent (NBA) in the Central Region for 15 years. Before being an NBA, I served as Vice President, Maintenance Craft Director and Assistant Clerk Craft Director for the Greater Cincinnati Area Local. Through these roles, I gained experience preparing, presenting, and testifying in national arbitrations. As an NBA, I worked on the last two contract negotiations and handled over 30,000 grievances. I put millions of dollars back in the hands of our membership. I look forward to using this experience as the Director of Industrial Relations.

New Year's Resolutions

My primary New Year's resolution for 2017 is to hold management responsible

gthen Our Union!

for violating the National Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). To do this, we must work to get a faster grievance procedure at the national and regional level. To accomplish this goal, we must work together to address the grievance backlog. If we cannot get timely resolutions to contract violations then our contractual rights are weakened.

As I traveled, this was a primary concern for our members throughout the regions. I heard your concerns and will be working with the other officers to address this issue. It will take all the officers at every level of this union working together to achieve this goal. By the time you read this, the first step should be accomplished, filling all the district contract and discipline arbitration panels with arbitrators.

Another important New Year's resolution is to require management to comply with every settlement and arbitration award. I will work vigorously to achieve this goal, as resolutions to grievances have no meaning if they are not complied with.

My third New Year's resolution as Industrial Relations Director is to improve communication and provide a flow of information to the members between the Industrial Relations Director and the other officers, stewards and members of this great union. One step toward that is to make the Industrial Relations Director



New Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman with NBA Pete Coradi, Queens Area Local President Ron Suslak, local leaders and activists.

website page more user-friendly for the members.

A fundamental right of a worker is to go to work and return home alive and in one piece. Safety is a priority of mine. It is an issue that starts on the workroom floor. I will work with the members to find solutions to safety hazards. Together, we will improve the working conditions and safety programs in the APWU.

Although the union had a successful contract campaign in 2016, and this is just the beginning of 2017, I will start working with the other officers to prepare documentations and strategies in order to strengthen your rights in the 2018 contract negotiations.

You, the members, took a stance

and voted for a change in the Industrial Relations Department. It is now time for me to work diligently in 2017, take the trust you gave to me, and find a way to strengthen this union, the contract, and the grievance procedure to better the working conditions for all APWU members.

The union plays a role in the life of 160,000 current members on the workroom floor. We must come together as a union in order to better the working conditions of our fellow brothers and sisters and the labor movement as a whole.

Future generations of workers are counting on us. I challenge you to make your own resolution to increase your union involvement and strengthen our great union! ■



New APWU members from PAE's Mail Transport Equipment Service Center in Urbandale, Iowa.

APWU Organizing Victory!

The APWU is celebrating an organizing victory! In October 2016, workers at the Pacific Architects & Engineers' (PAE) Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) located in Urbandale, IA, voted to join the Des Moines Area Local. The MTESCs are run by postal subcontractors, servicing the sorting and palletizing of mail trays, bags and other equipment. The favorable vote was over a two-to-one margin of 18-8.

"The treatment at the plant was really bad. That's why I wanted to organize and become union," said new APWU member Gloria Gonzalez, noting that PAE employees were required to meet "impossible" quotas. Now that she is part of the APWU, she feels "a lot better about protections that I have."

This organizing campaign is an example of the effectiveness of the APWU's partnership in *A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service* (AGA). The PAE employees initially contacted Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI), looking for ways to improve their working conditions. CCI's

national affiliate, National People's Action, is a member of AGA.

CCI's organizers started meeting with the workers and linked the MTESC workers to the American Postal Workers Union. Des Moines Area Local President Mike Bates and Organizing Director Lonnie Matticks swung into action with the rest of the local's members. They worked with the CCI and the PAE workers to win the union drive.

"This is living proof of the Grand Alliance," Bates said. "By working together we can unionize any company that touches the mail."

"We join in welcoming our newest members into the APWU family and salute the workers in their courageous actions to win their union," said President Dimondstein. "Hats off to the CCI organizers and the Des Moines Local for standing with these workers in their fight for workplace justice."

The next step is securing a collective bargaining agreement to meet the needs and concerns of the workers. By taking a strong stand for their union, they are off to a great start!



Gloria Gonzalez (left) and her co-worker proudly display their APWU membership cards.



PAE workers joining the APWU.

Wells Fargo Scandal: A Labor Issue and One More Argument for Postal Banking

The recent Wells Fargo scandal, involving the nation's third largest bank, revealed more than two million accounts and credit cards were opened largely without the knowledge of its customers. When questioned, Wells Fargo Chair and CEO John Stumpf put the blame on "rogue" employees.

What really happened is the bank created a corporate culture of sales goals and quotas. It drove workers to open fraudulent accounts or risk losing their jobs. When workers could not meet the goals, "they were coached, disciplined and terminated," according to the Committee for Better Banks. "Fear of discipline and termination became a significant sales motivator, and bank employees suffered from high levels of stress, anxiety and physical ailments related to high-pressure workplace practices."

Wells Fargo employees tried to blow the whistle on the fraudulent practices. For the past three years, they organized with the Committee for Better Banks, a project of the Communications Workers of America and other organizations. As the Committee's Erin Mahoney put it, "when bank workers came together as an organization in a collective way, they had more power." The employees are largely credited for the recent crackdown at Wells Fargo.

Stumpf resigned on Oct. 12 because of the scandal. Wells



Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) accused former Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf of "gutless leadership" during a Senate Banking Committee hearing.

Fargo settled with the government for \$185 million and will possibly face additional investigation. But, much more needs to be done to stop the abuse of bank customers and workers.

Eight states and at least seven cities including Chicago, San Francisco and Seattle voted to curtail or end business with Wells Fargo. The Committee on Better Banks and the Take on Wall Street campaign (of which APWU is a part) is launching a nationwide effort to pass state

and city resolutions to end business with Wells Fargo. Take on Wall Street continues to pressure Congress for real financial reform to prevent future scandals.

For more information on the Committee for Better Banks, visit <http://betterbanks.org/>.

Large Portion of U.S. Population Remains Unbanked

A new report by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) finds that 24 million households are underbanked – they have a checking account but must rely on services such as payday and title loans, checking cashing stores, and pawn brokers. About seven percent of households – 9 million Americans – have no bank account at all.

The number of bank branches is declining. Low-income neighborhoods have been hardest hit. Since 2008, 93 percent of closings were in neighborhoods with a median income below the national average. Another FDIC survey found only 43 percent of banks actively develop products and services for the underserved.

"What the Wells Fargo scandal reveals, is that when big banks don't abandon these customers, they are likely to fleece them," journalist Katrina vanden Heuvel wrote in the *Washington Post*.

Postal Banking: A Win-Win

The Wells Fargo scandal shows the need for an alternative to the big banks. Consumers want, need and deserve access to fair, non-profit and affordable financial services. With more than 30,000 locations across the country, a mission to serve the public and accountability to the people of the United States – rather than shareholders – the U.S. Postal Service can do the job. ■

Campaign for Postal Banking

The Campaign for Postal Banking is a coalition of consumer, worker, financial reform, economic justice, community, civic, and faith-based organizations calling for low-cost, consumer-driven financial services via the Postal Service. Products and services could range from check cashing to bill payment to savings accounts to small-dollar loans. Postal Banking will benefit consumers who do not have access to traditional banks as well as those who would prefer a more public option. The expansion of services would also strengthen our public Postal Service. To learn more, visit www.CampaignForPostalBanking.org.





CLERK DIVISION

Keep the Clerk Craft Strong

THE CLERK CRAFT CONTINUED TO GROW WITH A NET GAIN OF approximately 5,500 new employees in the last year. Nearly all of this growth has been to career jobs. If we continue forward with increased organizing, the APWU can create even more living wage jobs for our communities.

However, 2017 will bring challenges to continued growth. The moratoriums on plant consolidations and the expansion of private retail operations will both end this summer. We must prepare for the potential ending of the moratoriums.

Plant Consolidations

The moratorium on plant consolidations ordered by Arbitrator Stephen Goldberg in his interest arbitration award on our Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) ends in April 2017.

The Postal Service went from 528

mail processing facilities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 to 307 in FY 2015. Most of the consolidations occurred prior to 2013. The Postal Service acknowledged problems with mail delays where mail processing facilities were consolidated.

The APWU hopes with the moratorium in place, both parties will be in a better position to have a rational discussion regarding possible future consolidations. There are many in management who oppose delay of mail because it goes against the stated mission of the USPS.

Nevertheless, we must prepare for a scenario assuming the Postal Service

The Number of Clerk Craft Employees 2005 - 2016

	7/25/2005	9/11/2009	8/26/2011	9/20/2013	9/18/2015	10/28/2016
Total	232,465	189,808	157,284	140,841	151,055	156,570
FTR	177,381	151,184	126,847	101,369	99,606	103,254
PTF	42,398	25,103	21,846	12,706	17,024	18,319
PTR	3,947	2,732	2,461			
NTFT				7,818	8,950	9,007
Casual	9,189	2,879				
PSE			5,932	20,662	25,474	25,987

Source: USPS Active Employee Statistical Summary
Available at www.prc.gov/usps-reports.



Assistant Director Lynn Pallas-Barber,
Director Clint Burelson and Assistant Director Lamont Brooks.

will attempt to restart consolidating our mail processing facilities. There are powerful corporations with allies in Congress pushing the Postal Service to further serve them, at the expense of the general public.

The argument of the large corporations is simple and selfish. Many bypass mail processing facilities by dropshipping their mail at the end facility where it will be delivered. They have no interest in paying for mail distribution networks they do not use. They do not care that mail consolidations delay the mail for tens of millions of Americans. The consolidations create second-class service for a first-class stamp. The mail is delayed and postage remains the same.

We must renew our efforts to build coalitions in our communities, win government representatives to our side, utilize media to educate the public, and coordinate with other areas undergoing consolidations.

Information on the APWU's fight to end consolidations is available at apwu.org under, "Campaigns." Vice President Szeredy goes in-depth into the issue in her column on page 12.

Privatization of Retail

Arbitrator Goldberg placed a 12-month moratorium on any new contractual agreements between USPS and private businesses regarding the Approved Shipper Program, Contract Postal Units (CPUs), and Village Post

Largest Number of Approved Shippers by Company

COMPANY	NUMBER OF STORES
UPS.....	3,513
Office Depot	941
Staples.....	541
PostNet.....	217
Goin Postal	164
PAKMAIL	177

Source: USPS

Offices (VPOs). It is scheduled to end on July 8, 2017.

The moratorium on private retail expansion provides the APWU and the USPS with the opportunity to have healthy discussion on the future of retail. Clerk Craft officers have had multiple meetings with USPS to primarily address the Approved Shipper Program and CPUs.

Our face-to-face meetings were productive and USPS representatives indicated they plan to improve existing Postal Service retail operations. However, the Five Year Strategic Plan released by USPS in late October 2016, indicates their plan is to expand "alternative access," USPS-speak for expanding private retail operations. As this column goes to press, we are waiting to hear if they truly intend to expand private retail operations or not.

Given the USPS Strategic Plan and the history of outsourcing postal work, the APWU must be fully prepared for the end of the moratorium. A postal transaction at a private business is one less transaction done by an APWU member. A job at a private business is one less job providing a living-wage. By stopping the Postal Service from utilizing private businesses to replace post offices, the APWU preserves good service and union jobs for our communities.

The APWU successfully stopped Staples from expanding postal services to over 1,000 planned stores. The successful *Stop Staples* campaign also discouraged other large retail companies from performing postal work.

Unfortunately, in the last three years, UPS dramatically increased their Approved Shipper stores. UPS regularly lobbies, in the broad sense of the term, to further privatize the Postal Service for their own profit.

We are working to convince the Postal Service to keep the sacred duties of providing secure, safe, and timely delivery of the mail with public postal workers earning a living wage. If the Postal Service continues to transfer work to private companies, we will boycott those companies and picket in front of the stores. The APWU is serious about preserving a public post office and good jobs for our communities. ■



MAINTENANCE DIVISION

Moving Forward

WE ALL BEGIN A NEW YEAR WITH HOPES FOR IMPROVEMENTS ON THE past year. Even if the past year was a really great one, for instance, one in which the Cubs won the World Series. It is human nature to always want the next one to be better. This year, I think it is safe to say we are all waiting and watching what our new President-elect will do next.

Your Maintenance Officers at headquarters, Director Steven Raymer, Assistant Director A Idowu Balogun, and Assistant Director B Terry B. Martinez, will continue with the fight to better your working lives. Along with the Maintenance Division Council, which includes all the Maintenance Craft National Business Agents (NBAs), we are up to the task. We do welcome aboard our two new NBAs, Dave Sarnacki in the Northeast Region, covering ME, VT, NH, CT, MA, RI and parts of NY and NJ, and Craig Fisher in the Central Region, covering OH, IN, IL and KY.

We always engage in outreach from headquarters to our local and rank-and-file members looking for assistance with issues as they come up. Whether it is helping as a national staffing advocate or coming in to aid in testimony at an arbitration hearing, we recognize where within our own Maintenance membership it is best to acquire information and “subject matter experts.”

On the other hand, there continues to be plenty of changeover in the local ranks of those stepping up to help in Maintenance Craft representation. We are going to do our best to ensure you

get all the “tools of the trade” we can provide you with. Generally, this has to do with information, education and direction. The desire and effort is always there to bring you the best and most current information we can.

Increase Training Options Through Webinars

We intend to increase our use of webinars, and to broaden the scope of items covered. This can be both a convenient forum, as there is no travel to attend, and a problematic one because of interruptions and time constraints. For example, at a state seminar we can present an in-depth class for three to four hours and be immediately responsive to questions. Webinars rarely exceed two hours, meaning the session is not as complete and the time for feedback and Q&As is less.

The feedback we received over the years was positive. There are requests for more of this method of disseminating information. Webinars certainly do take some time and preparation, but we will be able to increase our number of sessions and topics.

We will use both email and the APWU website to let you know when



Assistant Director Idowu Balogun, Director Steven G. Raymer and Assistant Director Terry B. Martinez

the next Maintenance Craft webinar is scheduled. Please check back frequently on apwu.org and/or send your email address to MaintStaffing@apwu.org to get on our email list.

Subcontracting

Without a doubt, contracting out our work is the biggest ongoing challenge facing all of us. This strikes at the heart of our job security and our very livelihood. We continue to take strides in improving our ability to fight this scourge. Many of you in the field are quite adept at processing this issue.

Whenever you come across a contractor performing Maintenance Craft work, it is quite likely a violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). It may be work you and your occupational group should be performing or it may be work that others should be doing. The point is, please get it investigated.

One of the more significant changes in Article 32 occurred in the 2006 negotiations with the addition of language which is now Article 32.1.C, “When a decision has been made at the Field level to subcontract bargaining unit work, the Union at the Local level will be given notification.”

The precise meaning of this language was covered in the national arbitration case Q06C-4Q-C 08228294. Arbitrator Das held,

“Accordingly, the Union’s position in this case that Article 32.1.C requires

notification to the local union of decisions to subcontract bargaining unit work at local installations made at the local, as well as district or area, level is sustained. As the Union acknowledges, Article 32.1.C does not require notification before a decision to subcontract is made, and where work is subcontracted pursuant to a master agreement the local union need only be notified when the master agreement is entered into, and not when each service is to be performed thereunder.”

This means a couple of things. One is, as long as the decision is made below the national level, notification to the local(s) where the work is to be performed, is required. When questioned, the Postal Service frequently responds with, “It’s a national contract.” As we are all familiar, you need to be very skeptical of assertions such as this. Your request for information should include a copy of the contracting out notification to APWU headquarters.

The second thing to glean from the award is notification is made “when” a decision is made, so prior notification is not required. That word, “when,” means just that – at the point in time the decision is actually made. It’s when the decision is made and not when the work has started.

Lastly, about the service contracts, or “master agreements,” as Das referred to them. These are contracts for

performance that are repeated over the term of the contract. In Maintenance, an example could be snow removal or window washing. The local is to be notified when any such contract is renewed. At that time the local can proceed with an investigation and, if they so determine, file a grievance challenging the contracting out of our work.

“Any contracting out that is done in your local’s jurisdiction without any notice to the local is clearly in violation of the CBA.”

Article 32.1.C is a commitment the Postal Service cannot be allowed to ignore. Any contracting out that is done in your local’s jurisdiction without any notice to the local is clearly in violation of the CBA.

When sending contracting grievances up to Step 3, please be sure to include the names, job titles, EINs and amount of compensation for each employee you believe should be covered by any possible remedy. The compensation could be the number of hours or a monetary amount and also include the rate of pay, i.e. – straight time, overtime, or penalty time.

We all need to protect our right to perform our work. The Postal Service would like nothing better than to contract us out of existence.

Be sure to say “Hi” to your steward. ■



SEAM Challenged in National

AS WE TRAVELED ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WE BEGAN TO HEAR STORIES AND concerns from our members concerning the new program Solution for Enterprise Asset Management (SEAM), including the obvious shifting of work between the occupational groups and supervisors. We heard the difficulties Vehicle Maintenance Facility (VMF) employees experienced performing the work they previously were able to do in their daily duties.

The MVS Division appeared before Arbitrator Stephen F. Goldberg on October 12 – 13 to challenge SEAM's application in the VMFs.

The USPS presentation on SEAM included this description; SEAM is an Oracle web-based application designed to improve inventory tracking and visibility in the VMFs. SEAM has many roles in the VMFs. One of the primary functions is to capture data in real time as work is performed and parts are issued. The Postal Service started implementation of the program in February 2012. The APWU was not in agreement with the USPS description or the functions of this program.

The APWU Files Dispute

After the Postal Service began implementing SEAM throughout the country in 2012, the Motor Vehicle Service Division began receiving information from its members in the field that this new program created numerous violations of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). While the primary complaints from the field were centered on the shifting of work from one occupational group to another, the Postal Service's failure to provide adequate

notice of the impending changes was a violation of the CBA as well.

On May 13, 2013, the APWU initiated a national dispute citing several violations, such as those of Article 7.2. Since occupational groups are part of work assignments and are clearly encompassed in wages, hours and working conditions, they are therefore the subject of mandatory bargaining.

Furthermore, the Postal Service violated Article 19. They stated the SEAM program was implemented to replace the Vehicle Management Accounting System (VMAS), which is part of Handbook PO 701. The SEAM program consequently falls under the provisions of Article 19 of the National CBA, as part of a handbook, and the MVS Craft was never given the appropriate notification required for a change of this nature, nor does it meet the fair, reasonable and equitable standard of Article 19.

The APWU started a series of communications attempting to better understand the SEAM program. Management's responses were vague and incomplete.

When we were engaged in the 32.1.B attempts to contract out Postal Vehicle

Arbitration

Service (PVS), we found that SEAM was being utilized to track various components of PVS. Much of the information concerning the labor cost per hour of both PVS and the VMF employees is being challenged at the national level.

In this dispute we claimed the USPS arbitrarily changed the accounting system that was in place and went to SEAM without notifying or bargaining with the union, because these changes certainly impacted wages, hours and working conditions.

We claimed SEAM shifted work from the general clerk to lead automotive technicians, storekeepers, and supervisors among other jobs impacted by SEAM.

We were assisted by MVS APWU members Valerie Streety from the Houston Area Local, Dave Cook from the St. Paul Area Local, Michael McDonald from the Boston Metro Area Local, and Larry Tynan from the Tampa Area Local.

The Future of SEAM

A USPS manager testified at the arbitration hearing that he envisions SEAM to continue to evolve as the Postal Service moves forward into a technology-based operation. He stated the future applications for this system are far-reaching, as plans include the potential replacement of the kiosk with hand-held tablets.

The APWU is concerned with the USPS implementing numerous changes to SEAM without any notice, discussions or notification to the union. We will address this issue before Arbitrator Gold-

berg in the SEAM post hearing brief.

The Postal Service envisions instead of the automotive technician or mechanic using a terminal at one of the kiosks to input the work and the parts needed to repair a vehicle, the technician would use a tablet with Wi-Fi capabilities to go around the vehicle as they perform a PMI. The technician would enter the same information into the hand-held tablet as they would onto a work order or at a kiosk.

SEAM is nothing more than a sophisticated program used to reduce

MVS administrative positions: the general clerk, the tool and parts clerk, and the storekeeper, further impacting the different occupational groups through a system that is shifting work and violating the CBA.

If the information captured by the SEAM program is corrupt, the information coming out from SEAM is corrupt as well. It is like the old adage, "junk in, junk out." Ultimately, transparency is the key to determining if SEAM can work correctly within the requirements of the contract. ■



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster.

Merlie Bell Retires, Wright Elected

Central Region Motor Vehicle Division National Business Agent (NBA) Merlie H. Bell retired on Nov. 10, 2016, after 15 years of dedicated service. Bell began his career as a Motor Vehicle Operator at the Chicago, IL, post office and quickly rose through the ranks to become the local MVS Director. He became a fierce fighter for the MVS Craft and a regional arbitration advocate.

One of his most significant awards for the MVS Craft was the April 20, 1993 decision C0V-4G-C 10706 out of Fort Wayne, IN, before Arbitrator Belshaw. It gave a practical example of bulk quantities of mail.

Bell was elected as an NBA in 2001 when he unseated the incumbent in a landslide victory.

A wonderful family man, Bell is looking forward to spending time with his devoted wife Sharon, his children and grandchildren.

The Motor Vehicle Division Council congratulates Bell on a long and successful union career. Keep on trucking.

William Wright was elected MVS Central Region NBA to replace Bell. He is a proud member of the Indianapolis Area Local.

"W.W.," as he is fondly known, has a long career in the MVS Craft, starting as the local MVS Craft director and also serving as the local president.

Welcome aboard, "W.W."



Merlie Bell



William Wright



REGIONAL COORDINATORS

John Dirzius, Northeast Region; Kenneth Beasley, Southern Region; Sharyn Stone, Central Region; Omar Gonzalez, Western Region, and Mike Gallagher, Eastern Region.

EASTERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Sharyn Stone

ILLINOIS
INDIANA
IOWA
KANSAS
KENTUCKY
MICHIGAN
MINNESOTA
MISSOURI
NEBRASKA
NORTH DAKOTA
OHIO
SOUTH DAKOTA
WISCONSIN

This Too Shall Pass, We Must Persevere

AS I AM WRITING THIS ARTICLE, OUR NATIONAL ELECTIONS HAVE JUST FINISHED. THE candidate our union endorsed for U. S. President did not prevail, and there were few gains in the House and Senate.

Beyond being extremely disappointed on many levels, I am concerned about the future of workers in our country and the future of the Postal Service, in particular. We all should be. It's time to double down. Clearly, we did not elect a lot people who champion our issues or even some of our causes. Our fight is now more difficult, but just as compelling as before.

If anyone is up to the challenges ahead, it is the American Postal Workers Union. Union is "u" and "i," together. We do not have much of a choice. We have numerous battles ahead and we can't be discouraged. Rest and recover if you must, but never quit. *We must persevere!*

Congratulations to All

Our installation of national officers was Nov. 5, 2016. Congratulations to all elected, re-elected, and unopposed officers. I am looking forward to the next three years. Much love, thanks and appreciation to all outgoing and retiring officers.

Article 12

As we celebrate all of the Postal Support Employees (PSEs) who have converted to full-time, we must be mindful of employees with retreat rights. Employees who were

excessed – in many cases several years ago – still have active retreat rights to their former office. Some were reassigned 10 years ago.

Many times, local officers change and the Postal Service is not aware. You cannot count on management to always keep track. We have always told employees to keep a copy of their retreat rights and provide a copy to the local, as well as management. You must be vigilant to ensure you are provided your retreat rights.

Employees excessed outside of the installation request (by form) retreat rights at the time they are reassigned. Employees excessed across crafts within the installation are retreated automatically by seniority. The two groups are combined locally and the seniors of the group are returned. Employees excessed outside the installation have an option to return. Employees excessed outside the craft but within the installation do not have an option unless they were reassigned to the Maintenance Craft. For those cases, their automatic return can be waived.

If someone feels their rights have been violated, they should contact their local and, if necessary, their regional coordinator for assistance.

There are no new excessing/reassignments impacts right now in the Central Region.

There are, however, some unresolved issues. We are dealing with those. There is no action on the cancelled/deferred Area Mail Processing (AMP) study, which is good news. The USPS still has major concerns meeting service standards and minimum staffing.

In some cases, installations where excessing has occurred are being “repurposed” (a USPS word). Equipment is deployed or built and now excessed employees will be offered retreat – in some cases after two years. In most cases, the AMP was never completed, but the employees were reassigned. The USPS does not seem to be able to decide what to do, and while they experiment employees pay the price.

Climate Control

Complaints from offices about workroom harassment and mistreatment of employees are at an all-time high, including sexual harassment. Some offices are being investigated and workfloor environment surveys are being performed.

We are in contact with way too

many offices with similar complaints. The issues were discussed at the area level. Locals that are unable to resolve these issues should reach out to their regional coordinator. My compadres, Omar Gonzalez in the West, John Dirzius in the Northeast, Mike Gallagher in the East, and Kenneth Beasley in the South, and I will assist you in your efforts.

All About Us

President Dimondstein recently stated that over 50 percent of our membership is eligible to retire. That is a very sobering thought. Our survival as a knowledgeable and effective organization depends heavily on our ability to get others involved. Even on a small scale, we all have something to offer.

Coordinator Gallagher addressed activism in our last issue, but it cannot be said enough. Maybe someone reading this will get involved. I started out as a child (okay, maybe not). I became a member of our local’s entertainment committee and after some time I became chairman of that committee. I thought I had

arrived. After the recording secretary of our local left I was appointed to that position, which meant I had to be at meetings to take the minutes. I learned from our local president and from being involved. The rest is history.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the education and support I received from Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER). Ultimately, I was elected local president when our then-president decided not to run again. I was trained and served as an advocate, until becoming Central Region Coordinator in 2001.

Every member should be involved. Take part in a one-time event or come to a local meeting. There should not be a member who has not been on at least one picket line. There is a place and a purpose for all, no matter how small or how limited your time may be. Everyone bring one. We are all good at something. It is critical to our growth and survival. We cannot allow ourselves to be threatened by someone’s knowledge, ability, or interest.

It’s your union, too. ■

Recent Clerk Craft NBA Retirements

In 2016, three National Business Agents (NBAs) from the Clerk Division retired. “The APWU holds itself to the high standards that Sister Merow, Brother Taff and Brother Barron regularly met,” said President Dimondstein. “Together, they gave over 40 years of their lives serving the membership of this great union as National Business Agents. We wish them a healthy and happy retirement and welcome their successors.”



Marilyn “Mo” Merow was the National Business Agent for the Denver Region, (A). She served for 18 years.



Dennis Taff was the National Business Agent for the St. Louis Region, (B). He served for 12 years.



Marty Barron was the National Business Agent for the Northwest Region, (A). He served for 12 years.



Dena Briscoe, speaking at the memorial



Joan Jackson, sister of Joseph Curseen, was moved by the monument.

On 15th Anniversary of Anthrax Attacks, Workers Recall Those Who Died

A Monument to the Victims is Unveiled

Fifteen years after their deaths from exposure to anthrax-laden mail, APWU members Joseph P. Curseen, Jr., and Thomas Morris, Jr., were remembered by their co-workers at a reflective ceremony on Oct. 21, 2016.

A monument to the two victims was unveiled at the memorial outside the Joseph Curseen Junior and Thomas Morris Junior Processing and Distribution Center in Washington, DC. Over 100 USPS employees and managers attended the service, including Curseen's sister, Joan Jackson, and brother-in-law.

Morris, a 28-year USPS employee died on Oct. 21, 2001. Curseen, a 15-year employee, succumbed a day later. They were only 55 and 47 years-old respectively. After coming in contact with letters containing the deadly toxin, they succumbed to respiratory ailments. The tainted mail was bound for Capitol Hill.

"Many workers' lives were shattered," said APWU National Capital/Southern Maryland Local President Dena Briscoe at the memorial. "We all have a story." She recalled the fear and grief that gripped the country.

The Brentwood Road mail processing center closed for decontamination until December 2003. Workers were reassigned to other facilities. "Despite the danger, postal workers continued to perform their duties," Briscoe said.

Some members chose not to return to the renamed mail processing center in 2003, but most "bravely walked together back into the building," recalled Briscoe. Today

"Despite the danger, postal workers continued to perform their duties."

— Dena Briscoe, APWU National Capital/
Southern Maryland Local President

workers are calmed by the safety and security measures put in place following the attacks.

Other speakers included NPMHU L.U. 305 DC Branch President Calvin Vines, USPS Capital District Manager Salvatore Vacca, USPS Vice President of Capital Metro Area Operations Linda Malone, and postal workers Minnie Stokes and Otis Frazier, Jr.

Bitter Battles

Throughout the crisis, there were bitter battles between management and the four postal unions. The unions charged that the USPS management did not take the anthrax outbreak seriously enough.

"This tragedy underscores the fight for safe workplaces, so no postal worker dies or is injured at work," said President Dimondstein. "We will not allow their deaths to be in vain."

The contamination was not limited to the mail processing center in Washington, DC. There were 18 confirmed anthrax cases in late 2001, including three other known fatalities. Hamilton Township facility in New Jersey was contaminated. Traces of the deadly powder were also found at mail processing centers in Wallingford, CT, and New York, NY. ■

Labor History Milestones

January 5, 1869 – The nation’s first labor convention of black workers was held in Washington, DC, with 214 delegates forming the Colored National Labor Union (CNLU). It was less than four years after the end of the Civil War and black workers were barred from being members of other unions. Nevertheless, they sought to improve their working conditions.

The union consisted of a variety of occupations, including mechanics, engineers, artisans, tradesmen and tradeswomen, all seeking equal representation in the workforce. Notable members included Frederick Douglass, who was elected union president in 1872. His newspaper, *The New Era*, was the official publication of the CNLU.

January 11, 1912 – The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organized the “Bread & Roses” textile strike of 23,000 workers, including immigrants from many different countries, in Lawrence, MA. A new state law changed the work week from 56 hours down to 54 hours per week. The mill owners docked the pay of the workers for the lost two hours, while at the same time speeding up the looms to make up for lost production. Textile workers walked off the job shouting “Short pay!” when they realized their weekly pay was cut.

Workers demanded a 15% wage increase, double pay for overtime work and a promise of no retaliation against the strikers.

The community rallied around the strikers. The story of the “walkout went viral in newspapers around the country, American laborers took up collections for the strikers and local farmers arrived with food donations,” wrote author Christopher Klein (*The Strike that Shook America*, History.com).

To help sustain the strike and its mass picket lines, families sent hundreds of their children out of Lawrence to New York and other states, where they stayed with family members or sympathetic working families.

Almost two months later, on March 2, a Congressional committee began hearing testimony about the strike after U.S. President Taft was compelled by the determination of the strikers to investigate. The testimony of the men, women and children about their brutal working conditions and small pay moved the legislators.

The mill owners settled shortly afterward, on March 14. Strikers received all they asked for, and with their victory raised the standard of living for workers across the country. By the end of the month, 275,000 textile workers in New England saw increases in their pay as other industries followed to avoid strikes from their own employees.



Strikers marching during the 1912 “Bread and Roses” textile strike.

February 16, 1926 – Twelve thousand New York furriers belonging to the International Fur and Leather Workers Union began a 17-week strike. Strikers varied in background, including people of Italian, Jewish, Greek and African-American heritage, but they knew that by acting together they were in a better position to bargain and fought together for a 5-day work week with no reduction in pay.

Through the leadership of Ben Gold, strikers joined with members of various unions and allied organizations, including the New York State Federation of Labor, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union.

With the strikers’ unity and support from allies across the state, the employers saw they could not win and finally agreed to a new contract on June 11. The contract gave an unprecedented benefit package to the workers, including an end to overtime from December through August, time-and-a-half overtime pay for half-days from September to November, a 10% wage increase, 10 paid holidays and a ban on subcontracting.

It was also the first contract the union negotiated that included a 5-day, 40-hour work week, which in turn created more jobs and less unemployment. The strike strengthened the unity between the New York City and state-wide unions for decades to come. With that solidarity, they would all soon win the benefits the furriers had gained in their collective bargaining agreements. ■

Sources: *Union Communications Services*, *ILR School*, *Cornell University*, “*Labor’s Untold Story*” by Richard Boyer and Herbert Morais, History.com, and Peoplesworld.org.

New Congress, Same Goals

The 2016 election is over. It is time to revamp our efforts to secure legislation to benefit the working class and protect the public Postal Service. The results of the election have caused a divide in this nation. It is a divide we must work to end. It is now more important than ever to stand up and fight for what is right.

The APWU Constitution calls for our legislative efforts to go beyond just postal issues. We will continue to work on stopping the decline of the middle class, increasing the national minimum wage, making college more affordable, combating climate change, fighting for racial justice and increasing women's rights.



There were some victories won by the labor movement and allied organizations. In four states, ballot initiatives backed by the APWU were passed to raise the minimum wage. Colorado, Maine and Arizona voters raised the minimum wage to \$12 an hour. Washington residents voted to raise its minimum wage to \$13.50 an hour. Citizens in Virginia also said “no” to amending its state constitution to include so-called “Right to Work” language.

In the Senate and House of Representatives, we welcome new allies and congratulate APWU supporters who kept their seats. Notable victories include newly elected Senators Catherine Cortez Masto (Nevada), Maggie Hassan (New Hampshire) and Tammy Duckworth (Illinois). Cortez Masto will be the first Latina Senator and Duckworth will be the first Thai-American woman to serve in the Senate.

With the Senate leadership unchanged, we will need to continue our discourse to ensure nominees to the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors are champions of a strong public Postal Service.

With the Senate leadership unchanged, we will need to continue our discourse to ensure nominees to the U.S. Postal Service Board of Governors are champions of a strong public Postal Service.

Get Involved

It is critical that we increase our participation in the legislative process. On your 2017 membership cards is the phone number for the Capitol Hill switchboard, 202-224-3121. While we will continue to fight here in Washington,

DC, it is imperative members of Congress hear from their constituents.

We ask APWU members to contact their representatives on both sides of the aisle. Educate them about our issues. Explain to them how their vote for or against a piece of legislation will impact your life.

While our legislative agenda may not be in line with those in control of the 115th Congress, our priorities remain the same. We will continue to fight for:

- Removal of the pre-funding mandate for retiree health costs,
- Restoring overnight mail service standards for local mail,
- Appointing postal leaders who champion a strong, public Postal Service,
- Expanding affordable financial services at the post office.

We will advocate for vote by mail so every eligible voter can cast their vote without barriers. We will work towards postal reform, which lets us keep our federal health insurance. We will stand against the privatization of Social Security and Medicare.

COPA

With a new President and a new Congress in 2017, it is more important than ever for our voices to be heard. Maintaining a vibrant public Postal Service impacts people in every corner of our country and should not be a partisan issue. Our goal, as always, is to support those who stand with us and to oppose those who seek to destroy our jobs.

To achieve this goal I am asking for your help. If you already contribute **COPAmatically**, I thank you for your ongoing support. If you have not yet enrolled, I urge you to sign up today.

Recently a COPA sign-up form for automatic payroll deduction was mailed to active members not currently signed up. If you did not receive it, have misplaced yours, or have questions, please call the Legislative and Political Department today, 202-842-4211, and a form will be mailed.

Remember, no amount is too small or too big. TOGETHER our voice will be strong. ■

New Employee, New Union Member

Missed opportunities to strengthen the APWU are happening every day. Each orientation for new hires, new career employees and PSE enrollment into Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB), is a chance for organizers and local union leaders to reach out to possible new members. Each of you can make a big impact by simply taking advantage of the language in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). We must jump on these crucial minutes to provide education, outreach and empowerment.

The language in Article 17.6 states:

“During the course of any employment orientation

program for new career or non-career employees... a representative of the Union representing the craft or occupational group... shall be provided ample opportunity to address such new employees.

“In addition, at the time non-career employees become eligible for health insurance, the APWU will be provided ample opportunities to

address such employees on this subject...

“Health benefit enrollment information and forms will not be provided during orientation until such time as a representative of the Union has had an opportunity to address such new employees.”

The APWU and Postal Service reiterated and elaborated on the language in a recent Memorandum of Understanding. It is a waste of valuable opportunities to not speak to new career employees and PSEs at their orientations. They are a captive audience, wanting to know more about their new job. An APWU brother or sister can show how the union connects to the other aspects of the prospective members' new job. It is easy to see how the CBA weaves into the pay scale, benefits and safety requirements for their position.

Resources Are Available

The national office does not expect you to do this on your own. We have numerous resources available for you to develop an orientation training program for prospective members.



Prospective members at orientation training by the Phoenix Metro Area Local.

The *Welcome to the APWU* book is geared to help guide you through the new employee orientation. Topics include the mission, structure, legislative efforts and history of the APWU. It also provides insight into the union's safety standards and general benefits in the CBA. Information for all crafts and positions represented by the APWU is listed.

If you are presenting to PSEs, the recent *PSE Brochure* will guide you through the orientations. As the organizer, try to cover each bullet point in the brochure, but expand on the subject(s) that fit your local.

For organizers or local union leaders speaking to a group outside his/her own craft, see the *Benefits At a Glance for Career Employees* brochures. These pamphlets are craft specific.

All these materials are on the APWU website under the Organization Department, as part of the “Organizers’ Tool Kit,” www.apwu.org/organizers-tool-kit. If you want a print copy for the local or state organization, the order form is also available on the website.

Everyone Can Be An Organizer

Organizing is a daily responsibility. It is shared by everyone. There are moments in everyday activities where each of us has an opportunity to reach out and talk with prospective members about what it means to be union. We must put a face in others' minds, so the words “the union” is made up of brothers and sisters, not a third party.

Let it start with you and others will follow. Consider the last time you stood up and clapped at an event. Were you the first person to stand, or did you follow suit? All it takes sometimes is one person standing up, and the whole room will join. ■



Priorities Trump Should Set for Vets

President-elect Donald Trump made veterans, trade and jobs the cornerstones of his campaign.

Many veterans supported his candidacy, while many others spent the majority of last year actively campaigning against him. Love him or hate him, the voters have spoken. It is time to move forward. Trump will be inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States. As the transition process is starting many of us, including the AFL-CIO Union Veterans Council (UVC), are anxious to hear what concrete plans and policy proposals

more than any public acknowledgment or praise: good jobs,” he continued. “It’s only through having access to a good job that a veteran is able to return to society and live a life with dignity. It’s only through having access to a good job – a career – that a veteran is enabled to live out the American Dream we fought to protect and defend.”

Fischer listed five simple steps the Trump Administration can take that would help veterans:

- Kill the job-killing Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). It will send jobs overseas and rip employment opportunities away from veterans.
- Heavily invest in our nation’s infrastructure to connect hundreds of thousands of veterans, who are journeymen/women and apprentices, with good jobs.
- Heavily invest in job training programs for veterans preparing to leave active service.
- Fully-fund and fully-staff the Department of Veterans Affairs which not only provides excellent healthcare and benefits to our veterans, but has a workforce largely comprised of veterans.
- Respect veterans and the rights of all Americans to collectively bargain and negotiate fair wages for the work they do.

Veterans reflect a diverse cross-section of America. Veterans are the spectrum of race and religion. They are men and women, straight and gay. Some are single, others married, many are parents. Veterans are native born and immigrants. Brother Fischer reminds us it is now Trump’s duty, as President of the United States, to protect, defend and preserve our democracy – a democracy which includes the diverse faces and needs of our veterans.

The UVC, labor and veterans organizations are prepared to work with President Trump if he’s serious about following through with his promises to pursue policies that improve the lives of working people and veterans.

As we move forward, Fischer asks that we “focus on the successes veterans, the working class and President Trump can have in the future, by working together.”

To learn more about the Union Veterans Council and its initiatives, or to sign up for communications and alerts, visit unionveterans.org or find them on Facebook. ■

Source: The Hill, “Five Priorities a Trump Presidency Should Set for Veterans,” Nov. 11, 2016

“The UVC, labor and veterans organizations are prepared to work with President Trump if he’s serious about following through with his promises to pursue policies that improve the lives of working people and veterans.”

the new leadership has in store to support our veterans and improve the lives of the working class.

There are 22 million veterans in the United States. You’ll find them working in factories, in building and construction trades, in hospitals, at the Postal Service and most other places of employment. While we’ve made strides in the past eight years, many veterans remain unemployed or underemployed. Many do not earn a living wage, are without benefits, lack job security and are, or are at risk of becoming, homeless.

Accepting the work that lies ahead, UVC Executive Director Will Fischer wrote an article in *The Hill*, titled, “Five Priorities a Trump Presidency Should Set for Veterans.”

In the article Fischer stated, “Veterans and the working class are ready to work with President Trump to make some of his campaign promises a reality, in the right way and in line with our belief system and values.”

“If Mr. Trump really wants to work with veterans, he should focus his energy on connecting veterans with what we need

Liberty and Justice for All

“**L**iberty and justice for all” is universally known in America. These are words we have said hundreds of times when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, but the phrase is far from ordinary. Together, these five words represent the cornerstone of American democracy. When we recite them, we reaffirm our dedication to the fundamental principles of that democracy. We are created equal and have certain inalienable rights, among them life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But do we as a nation really practice what we preach?

The Civil Rights Movement transformed American society in many ways by outlawing overt discrimination and making it socially unacceptable. But do all Americans enjoy liberty? Is everyone treated equal? Do we truly accept the diversities of others? If we are being honest, the answer is “no.” Two hundred and forty years, and we’re not there yet.



Despite many advances, there are still many inequities. People of color are overrepresented in our prisons. Blacks and Latinos make up 60% of our prison population, but only account for 13% and 16% of America’s population, respectively. They are arrested and convicted more often than white people accused of the same crimes. They receive harsher penalties, especially black males whose sentences are nearly 20% longer than white men found guilty of the same offense. Black males are 25% less likely to get sentences below the recommended guidelines. Blacks and Latinos are three times more likely to be searched during traffic stops than whites. They represent 67% of all juveniles committed to public facilities nationwide –nearly twice their share of the juvenile population, and in many cases they are being killed without just cause.

There is also a significant gender gap in this country. Women earn 20 cents per hour less than men performing the same work. The difference is even greater

for Hispanic and Latina women who only make 54% of what white men are paid. Women are still discriminated against in the workplace, subjected to sexual harassment, and they are often overlooked for promotions despite being as equally qualified as their male coworkers.

Since 2008, states across the country passed voter suppression laws, making it harder for Americans, particularly black citizens, the elderly, students, and people with disabilities, to exercise their right to cast a ballot. Measures include cuts to early voting, ID laws, purging rolls and gutting the Voting Rights Act.

Members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community are incessantly persecuted based on their sexual orientation or how they identify. Since 2013, over 254 bills have been introduced across the nation aimed at restricting their rights. The discriminatory legislation runs the gamut from bathrooms to marriage, the right to adopt, access to health care and other pre-emptive measures. The LGBTQ are the most prevalent victims of hate-motivated violence in the U.S.

Muslims are wrongfully grouped as terrorists. Mexicans are unjustly called rapists. People with disabilities are flagrantly mocked. Immigrants are considered unworthy. When will the fear, hate and disparity stop? Seriously, are all white people murderers because Ted Bundy was a serial killer? Immigrants aren’t here to steal the American dream. Most of us are descendents of immigrants. Like our forefathers, they’ve come to America for a better life.

These issues reach beyond civil rights. They are human rights that are nonnegotiable. Our pledge “liberty and justice for all,” is a promise to humanity. It is time we mean what we say. America’s values are being undermined. Protect people from bullies, threats and injustice. We can be the problem or we can be the solution.

As Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “*Since we know that the system will not change the rules, we are going to have to change the system.*” Let’s get to work, together! ■

Develop a Home Fire Escape Plan

Fire can spread rapidly through your home, leaving you little time to escape safely. Your family's ability to get out depends on their knowledge of home fire safety and developing an escape plan that everyone is familiar with and has practiced.

Tips to Making Your Home Fire-Safe

You can make your home fire-safe by following these tips:

- Install a battery operated smoke alarm on each floor.
- Check smoke alarms monthly, remove dust and replace batteries annually.
- Purchase a fire extinguisher for each floor and contact the fire department for training on its usage.

- Install a fire sprinkler system.
- Avoid leaving candles unattended. During a power outage, use flashlights and not candles.

Provide smokers with large, deep, ashtrays and soak butts with water before discarding them. Keep

portable and space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn. Make sure children and pets stay away from heaters. Never leave them on when you leave home, and never leave cooking items unattended.

Developing a Fire Escape Plan

Hold a meeting with all family members, including small children, to develop a fire escape plan. Practice your escape plan at least twice a year with everyone in attendance. The family should:

- Assure that doors and windows can be opened easily and escape routes are kept clear.
- Outline two escape routes from every room.
- Purchase escape ladders and store them near windows.
- Choose an outside place to meet after escaping.

Ensure your house number is clearly visible for fire fighters. If necessary, assign two designees to assist infants, older adults or persons with mobility limitations. When a smoke alarm sounds, get out immediately. Stay a safe distance away from the home until it's safe to return.

Call the fire department from a neighbor's home and advise them if someone is missing. If you must exit through smoke, crawl low under it to your exit. When escaping through a closed door, feel the door before opening it. If it is warm, use another way out. If you live in an apartment building, take the stairs, not the elevator.

Testing Your Escape Plan

You should practice your home fire escape plan twice a year. Assign someone to awaken sound sleepers. When testing your escape plan, you should:

- Prior to holding a nighttime fire drill, advise children at bedtime to avoid frightening them.
- If your home has two floors, practice setting up a ladder from the second floor window to make sure everyone can escape quickly.
- Children should only practice with a grown-up.

During the fire drills, everyone should practice crawling low on their hands and knees, keeping heads low to breathe the "good" air that's closer to the floor. Never crawl on your stomach, as some poisons produced by smoke settle to the floor. Close doors on your way out to slow the spread of fire.

What to Do if You Cannot Exit

Smoke or fire may prevent you from exiting your home or apartment building, so practice "sealing yourself in for safety:"

- Close all doors between you and the fire.
- Signal for help, at the window, using a bright-colored cloth or flashlight.
- Use duct tape or towels to seal the door cracks and cover air vents to keep smoke from coming in.
- Open your windows at the top and bottom so fresh air can get inside.
- Call the fire department and tell them where you are.

It is my hope that this article has provided you with a basic knowledge of how to develop a home fire escape plan. To obtain additional information, visit the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) webpage at www.nfpa.org/public-education. ■



Fighting for Justice: Elder Financial Abuse

According to experts, financial fraud is the fastest growing form of elder abuse. “Financial elder abuse is when someone illegally or improperly uses a vulnerable senior’s money or other property,” explains Barbara Repa, legal writer and editor for *Nolo.com*. In many cases, the victim and his/her family does not know the crimes and/or abuse have occurred.

This is a personal issue for me. My aunt was a victim of financial abuse. The perpetrator entered her home and stole her passport, financial and personal records. He opened internet accounts in her name, used her bank and credit cards, and changed the addresses on her utility bills. He kept a note-

book that listed her family members’ names, addresses and SSNs.

Our family did not find out about the theft until the police called to say they found her information and valuables with other neighbors’ burgled possessions. The police stated her passport and utility bills were valuable in order to steal her identity.



Identify Elder Financial Abuse

To protect yourself or your loved ones from elder financial abuse you must learn what it looks like, ways to prevent it and what to do if you suspect that you or a family member are targeted.

Seniors who live alone, or with another senior, can become targets. Perpetrators could be anyone from strangers, to family members, friends, acquaintances or neighbors.

How do you know if a senior in your life is vulnerable to financial abuse? The following factors increase the chances of being victimized, says The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA):

- Isolation,
- Loneliness,
- Recent Loss,
- Physical or mental disabilities,
- Lack of familiarity with financial matters,
- Have a family member(s) who are unemployed and/or have substance abuse problems.

Start by protecting and securing any mail or documents containing your personal identifying information, for example, your passport, Social Security card, birth certificate, tax information, etc. Each month these documents should be stored away in a safe, out of sight, location.

Do not hide the documents from yourself! Make sure someone in your family knows your monthly routine for handling these documents. Also, use a shredder when you throw away mail or other documents containing personal identifying information. Even your recycling bin is not safe.

Warning Signs

Learn the warning signs of elder financial abuse in order to protect yourself or a loved one. Knowing the indicators can prevent abuse, but some can be explained by other causes, and no single clue is proof. Look for patterns suggesting a problem.

According to the NCPEA, indicators include:

- Unpaid bills, eviction notices, or notices to discontinue utilities,
- Unexplainable withdrawals from bank accounts or transfers between accounts,
- Bank statements and canceled checks no longer come to the house,
- New “best friends,”
- Legal documents, such as power of attorney, and/or checks the senior does not remember signing,
- The care of the senior is not commensurate with the size of his/her estate,
- A caregiver expresses excessive interest in the amount of money being spent on the senior,
- Belongings or property are missing,
- Lack of documentation about financial arrangements,
- Implausible explanations about the elderly person’s finances given by the senior or caregiver,
- The senior is unaware of or does not understand the financial arrangements made for him/her.

If you think you or a loved one is a victim of elder financial abuse, do not hesitate to learn more. Visit the site www.preventelderabuse.org, to learn what steps you can take. ■

Resources: *The National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA)*, *Forbes.com*, and *Nolo.com*.

Frequently Asked Questions

In October, the APWU Health Plan hosted our yearly Health Plan Seminar in Las Vegas, NV. The education of local and state leaders on health plan terminology, coverages and changes in our plans during an intense two-day training was a great success. I want to thank the APWU Health Plan staff for all the hard work necessary for the education of our Health Plan Representatives (HPRs), especially the care they took instructing the new HPRs enrolled in the beginner tract.

Separating the curriculum into a beginner and advanced tract was very well received. It allowed the instructors to focus their talents more narrowly on the subjects at hand. With this being the first year of the two-tract education model, we expect an even better conference next year as we navigate a course of continual improvement.



During this year's Open Season these trained HPRs, along with our professional Health Plan staff, participated

in federal and postal health plan fairs nationwide as we worked to expand the APWU family and the great service we provide our members. Yes, federal and non-APWU represented postal workers who choose our health plans choose to become associate members of the APWU and pay the dues commensurate to that representation.

Common Questions

While providing training at the fall training seminar in Ocala, FL, a couple of interesting questions arose concerning our health care plans and I would like to share the answers with you.

What about a couple who have been domestic partners for over 25 years but are not married? How do they cover their partner with health insurance?

The simple answer of "get married" was known by many, but it is not the only answer.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will accept certain legal documents besides a marriage certificate issued by a court. So if a community, county or state recognizes domestic partnerships and issues a document certifying as such, it may be enough for our members to cover their loved ones with Self Plus One or family health insurance. You can contact OPM on the specifics of this rule.

Do APWU Health Plans have a lifetime "cap" on coverage? In particular, is there some dollar amount that once reached, the APWU would stop paying benefits?

I am glad to say, no. The APWU Health Plans have no maximum lifetime benefit after which we stop paying for medical care of our members and their families.

When you need your health insurance, having a health plan you are part owner of and that you elect the director is the difference between being a number and being your insurance company's number one priority. All of us at the APWU Health Plan look forward to serving you in 2017. ■

THANK YOU

The deadline for this article is just days before national officers are installed for the term expiring in 2019. I would be remiss if I did not thank all of you for participating in the democratic process that elects our national officers.

I am deeply humbled and honored to have been elected as your Health Plan Director. I will continue to be focused on providing our members with comprehensive health care at the most affordable price.

I would also like to thank all of the candidates that participated in this year's election. We share the same goal of improving our union for the betterment of the membership, and now it is time for us all to unite in that goal.

APWU 2017 LEAVE CHART

BROUGHT FORWARD		PAY PERIOD BEGINS	EARNED THIS PERIOD							USED THIS PERIOD							BALANCE
ANNUAL	SICK		SAT	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	ANNUAL	SICK	ANNUAL	SICK	ANNUAL	SICK	ANNUAL	SICK
		Jan. 7, 2017															
		Jan. 21															
		Feb. 4															
		Feb. 18			FEB. 20 Presidents Day												
		March 4															
		March 18															
		April 1															
		April 15															
		April 29															
		May 13															
		May 27			MAY 29 Memorial Day												
		June 10															
		June 24															
		July 8															
		July 22															
		Aug. 5															
		Aug. 19															
		Sept. 2			SEPT. 4 Labor Day												
		Sept. 16															
		Sept. 30															
		Oct. 14															
		Oct. 28															
		Nov. 11															
		Nov. 25															
		Dec. 9															
		Dec. 23			DEC. 25 Christmas												
					New Year's Day JAN. 1, 2018												

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