

THE AMERICAN

Postal Worker

APWU

MARCH-APRIL 2017

We Did It!



STAPLES
STOPPED



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PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

The Stop Staples Fight:

Unity and Activism- Key to Victory!

AFTER A DYNAMIC THREE-YEAR CAMPAIGN, WE HAVE WON THE STOP STAPLES fight! Postal management informed the APWU in writing that the “Approved Shipper” program in Staples stores would be shut down by the end of February 2017. The boycott against Staples is now over.

The Staples struggle and victory shows what we can accomplish when we stand up and fight back. Within weeks after I assumed office in November 2013, my administration was faced with the implementation of a USPS “pilot program” placing full-service post offices initially into 82 Staples stores -- “postal” counters run by low-paid, non-union and untrained Staples workers.

The Staples pilot program was a direct assault on our jobs and an acceleration of the privatization of retail services. Management’s claim that the Staples deal was just to expand customer access was bogus. Its goal was to reduce and replace postal union jobs. It was time for the APWU to draw a line in the sand.

We wasted no time swinging into action. I met with then Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe to voice our concerns. I raised that the APWU could possibly support the initial one-year pilot if USPS postal clerks staffed the Staples counters. He answered that the intention was to rapidly expand the Staples “post offices,” staffed by non-postal employees, into over 1,500 Staples stores nationwide. I immediately sought and gained the full support of the APWU National Executive Board to take on the Staples-USPS deal, including the necessary funding and human resources. We knew this would be a long but necessary fight.

We wrote to then Staples’ CEO Ron Sargent asking for a meeting. He refused. Local APWU delegations visited hundreds of Staples stores, voicing our concerns to local managers followed by a National Day of Action. Under the slogan “The U.S. Mail is Not for Sale,” over 56 protests were held in 27 states. After this, the APWU launched the official Staples Boycott.

If Staples was going to take our work and jobs for their private profit, we were going to hit back and affect their bottom line. Targeting six key areas (San Francisco Bay Area, Atlanta, Boston, Pittsburgh, New York City and

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we stayed the course,
stuck together and
kept the activist
pressure on, we
would win this fight.”***

Mark Dimondstein

“I salute and commend our members

Philadelphia) our APWU activists distributed leaflets in front of Staples stores on a regular basis, turning away customer after customer, year after year.

We reached out to our labor allies. The large teacher unions, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), gave us vital and strong support. Our sister postal unions enthusiastically supported the campaign. The Mailhandlers' magazine put the Staples fight on their front cover. The NALC demonstrated at a Staples store during their 2014 convention. The 12 million worker-strong AFL-CIO added Staples to their official boycott list. UNI Global Union, an international union association, endorsed the Staples Boycott and urged all of its affiliated unions to put pressure on Staples in the 26 countries where the company does business. Dozens of state AFL-CIO federations, local unions, Central Labor Councils, Labor Notes, community allies (many of whom belong to A Grand Alliance to Save our Public Postal Service) and city councils took actions endorsing the boycott.

Our 2014 National Convention, the highest APWU authority, reaffirmed the *Stop Staples* fight, authorizing all the resources necessary, and took to the streets in front of a downtown Chicago Staples store. We had spirited protests at Staples' annual shareholder meetings. We launched *StopStaples.com*, where tens of thousands pledged to join the boycott. We engaged in a postcard campaign resulting in over 100,000 postcards delivered to Staples' CEO. We also talked to our co-workers, family, friends and neighbors about staying away from Staples as long as it stayed in the "postal" business.

When Staples reached a \$5 billion deal to purchase Office Depot, it was the APWU who sided with consumers and played a major role in blocking it. This forced Sargent to resign and cost Staples a \$250 million penalty they had to pay to Office Depot.

We carried out investigations proving Staples was shortchanging the Postal Service in revenue, undermining the security of the mail and trashing the United States Postal Service brand. A USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation, that we requested, further proved these facts. We won a series of cases before the National Labor Relations Board culminating in a recent Administrative Law Judge's decision that the USPS failed to bargain with the APWU over the subcontracting of postal work to Staples. Throughout the long campaign, we obtained substantial and positive press coverage.

This is not only a victory over the Staples' dirty deal. The many retail chains planning similar deals with the USPS largely backed off and got the message – mess with postal workers and customers and you will have to tangle with the APWU family!

Our *Stop Staples* success is an important advance in the fight against ongoing efforts to privatize retail and other postal services. Under our new union contract, we secured a minimum of a one-year moratorium on the expansion of Approved Shipper programs, Village Post Offices and Contract Postal Units. Discussions with postal management regarding the "future of postal retail" are ongoing. With the Staples deal out of the way, there is a fresh opportunity for postal management

"Retailers largely backed off and got the message – mess with postal workers and customers and you will have to tangle with the APWU family."

and the APWU to consider the future expansion and improvement of retail operations without these misguided privatization schemes that undermine good service, good jobs and a strong postal brand. We call on postal management to use these ongoing discussions with the APWU to change direction. Together we can build a great retail experience for customers with a strong and expanded public retail network.

As your President, I never doubted if we stayed the course, stuck together and kept the activist pressure on, we would win this fight. I believe in you. I believe unity and activism builds power. I believe workers can take it "to the streets" and win!

I salute and commend every member and supporter who made this victory possible. Many local and state organizations joined in the fight. Our retiree and auxiliary chapters stepped up with enthusiasm. National officers and staff stayed the course (a special shout-out to Rich Shelley who was our national union's coordinator of the Staples fight). Our attorneys ably assisted us along the way. The many *Stop Staples* activists, active and retired, career and non-career, who worked day-in and day-out to see this victory through, were the heart and soul of this campaign.

A job well-done Sisters and Brothers! The struggle continues, but this victory helps strengthen and steel us for the battles ahead! ■

and friends who made this victory possible."



We Stopped Staples

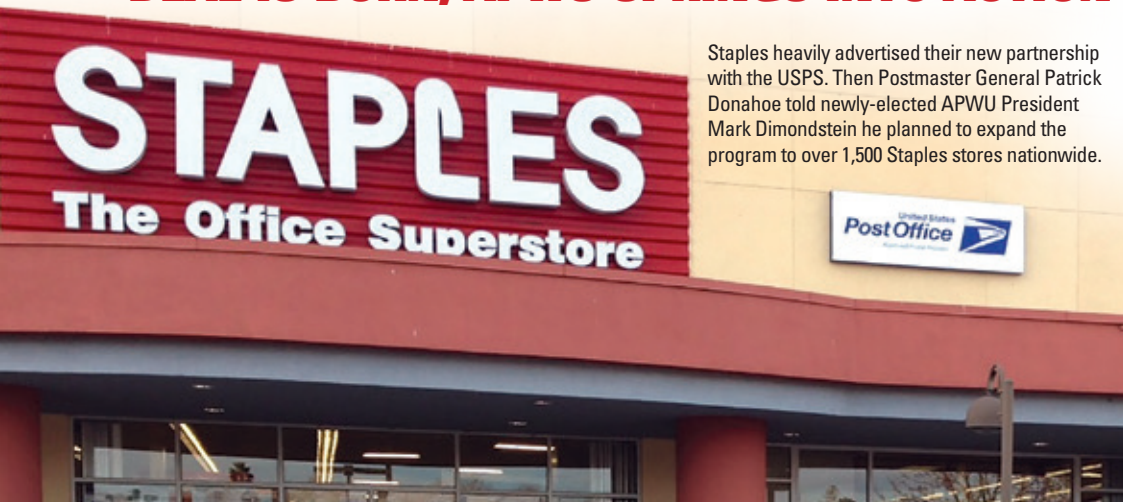
After three years, the *Stop Staples* campaign concludes with a huge victory. By the time this issue of the *American Postal Worker* is in mailboxes, the USPS will be out of all Staples stores nationwide. Gone are the Postal Service counters and signs in Staples stores, put in to take away good paying postal retail jobs from the dedicated members of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU).

If the deal was successful, there would be mini-post offices across the country in many major retail stores. All APWU positions were in danger, as public post offices faded away.

Seeing the original Staples “pilot program” for what it was, just another way to start privatizing the USPS, APWU members and supporters hit the streets. Throughout the entire campaign, support grew monumentally. It was an exciting and empowering time that many APWU members and activists will never forget.

Hundreds of thousands participated in the *Stop Staples* campaign in some way. The solidarity seen with other union members and community allies was overwhelming and inspiring.

DEAL IS BORN, APWU SPRINGS INTO ACTION



Staples heavily advertised their new partnership with the USPS. Then Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe told newly-elected APWU President Mark Dimondstein he planned to expand the program to over 1,500 Staples stores nationwide.



On Jan. 28, 2014 the first *Stop Staples* protest was held in downtown San Francisco, CA.

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

On April 24, 2014, APWU members staged a National Day of Action with *Stop Staples* protests in 27 states. Newspapers and TV stations nationwide covered the events. The protests started the process of educating the public about the fight and, most importantly, sent a strong, clear message to postal management that the “U.S. Mail was Not for Sale!”



UNI Global Union Congratulates the APWU

Shortly after the victory over the USPS/Staples deal was announced, the General Secretary for UNI Global Union, Philip Jennings, wrote to President Dimondstein to congratulate APWU members and activists.

“Your union’s fighting spirit has shown that working people can win when we stand up and fight together for

what’s right for our members,” wrote Jennings. “This victory will be an example for our many affiliates who share in the struggle to defeat postal privatization... I can assure you that you can count on the support and the solidarity of UNI Global Union and your sister unions around the world in the struggles to come.”

"THIS IS WHAT SOLIDARITY LOOKS LIKE"

The entire labor movement showed great solidarity with the APWU. All four postal unions came together on this issue. Many national unions endorsed the boycott, including the large teacher unions, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA). The 12 million worker-strong AFL-CIO

added Staples to their official boycott list and UNI Global Union passed a resolution supporting the boycott.

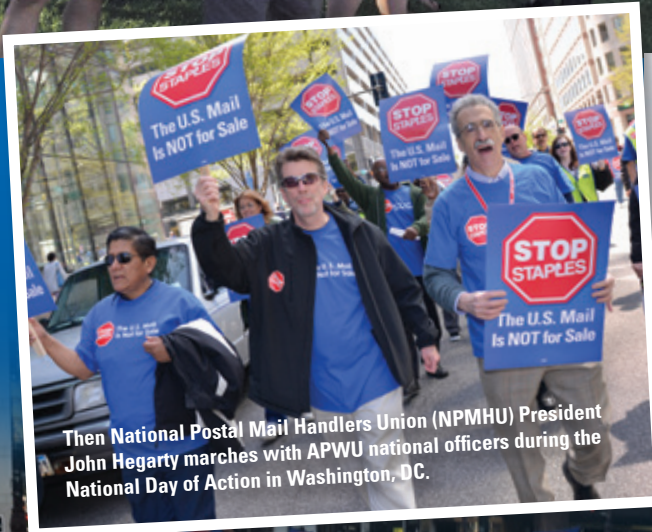
Dozens of other labor groups, community allies, student organizations and city councils passed resolutions and joined the APWU in their struggle to preserve the public Postal Service.



AFT members protest at their 2014 convention. USPS changed their partnership with Staples to "Approved Shipper" after delegates of the AFT convention passed a resolution to support the Staples Boycott. The APWU was not fooled and the campaign continued.



National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) President Sal Rosselli (center) and NUHW members joined the first Stop Staples protest in San Francisco, CA.



Then National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU) President John Hegarty marches with APWU national officers during the National Day of Action in Washington, DC.



APWU protests with participants of the 2014 Labor Notes Conference on the streets of Chicago, IL.



Delegates to the 2014 National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Convention held a Stop Staples protest in front of a location in Philadelphia, PA.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NALC



Members of the Boston Metro Area Local protest in front of Staples headquarters in 2014.



Stop Staples activist recruits a veteran to the campaign in front of a Philadelphia location.



Delegates at the 2014 National Convention protest in front of a Staples in downtown Chicago, IL.

Never Let Up

APWU members, activists and supporters kept the public pressure up on both the USPS and Staples. Delegates at the APWU's 2014 National Convention voted to authorize all necessary resources for the campaign and then took to the streets to protest in Chicago, IL. APWU members from the Boston Area Local protested in front of Staples headquarters in Framingham, MA. In March 2016, *Stop Staples* activists in New York City staged a protest in front of the NASDAQ building on the day Staples executives rang the opening bell. The campaign continued to escalate, putting more and more pressure on Staples.

Behind the scenes, the APWU carried out investigations proving Staples was shortchanging the Postal Service in

revenue, undermining the security of the mail and trashing the USPS brand. The union requested a USPS Office of Inspector General investigation that further proved those facts.

Relentless pressure against Staples and the Postal Service was maintained by APWU members and activists. Six key groups in Atlanta, Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and the San Francisco Bay Area continued constant protests, informational meetings and leafleting. Most groups were out daily informing consumers. "Many *Stop Staples* activists, active and retired, career and non-career, worked day-in and day out to see this struggle through," said President Dimondstein. "They were the heart and soul of the campaign."

"A job well-done, Sisters and Brothers! The struggle continues and this victory helps strengthen and steel us for the battles ahead." – President Dimondstein



Members of the New York Metro Area Local protest on the steps of the General Post Office.



Activists organized informational booths across the country, like this one in the San Francisco Bay area, and educated thousands about the campaign.



Stop Staples activists protesting in front of store in Atlanta, GA.

Below: Activists protesting in front of Staples store in Pittsburgh, PA.

Consumer Protections Under Attack

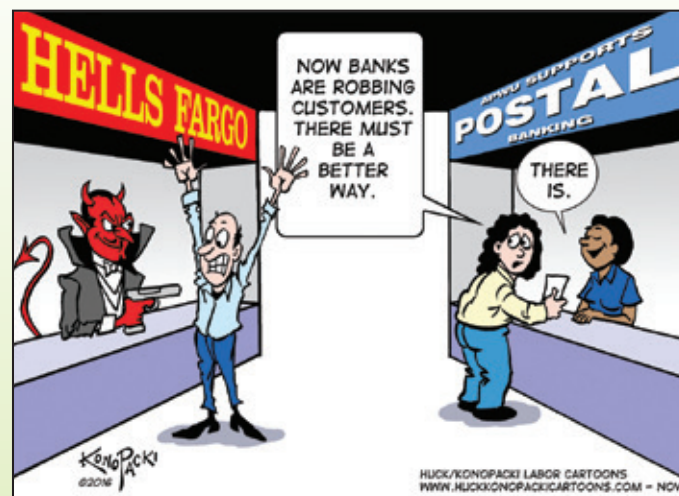
After the devastating 2008 financial crisis, Congress passed the Dodd-Frank Act that led to creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The Bureau has had a significant impact protecting consumers and holding big banks accountable. The CFPB recently fined Wells Fargo \$100 million for the illegal practice of secretly opening unauthorized customer accounts. Since the Bureau's inception, it returned nearly \$12 billion to consumers who were cheated or misled by payday lenders, pawn shops and other financial predators. It has taken particular aim at companies that target service members and veterans.

Not surprisingly, Wall Street is not happy. "For years, the big banks and their allies have launched one shameless attack after another trying to gut the CFPB," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) who helped create the agency.

Proposed legislation to significantly weaken the CFPB is now pending in both houses of Congress. Also, Steven Mnuchin, Treasury Secretary nominee, is in favor of destroying at least certain aspects of the Dodd-Frank Act, which could eliminate the agency itself, according to the *Washington Post*.

Payday Lenders on the Run

With proposed rules to curb the abuses of payday lending under attack in Washington, many states and localities are stepping up. In the 2016 legislative session, 25 states addressed legislation regarding payday lending, according to the National Council on State Legislatures. Four of those states – Florida, Louisiana, Michigan and Utah – enacted legislation. On Election Day, 75 percent of South Dakota voters approved a ballot measure to cap payday, car title and installment lending



rates at 36 percent annually. The average rate in the state was 574 percent.

The most expensive payday loans in the country are in Ohio, according to a new report by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The typical annual percentage rate (APR) is 591 percent. One in ten Ohioans have used a payday loan, which is nearly twice the national average. Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers in Ohio are planning to renew efforts to curb the abuses in 2017.

Wells Fargo Leads in Overdraft Fees

Wells Fargo is in the news again. The bank leads the industry in overdraft fee revenue. Across the entire banking industry, third quarter 2016 revenue generated by overdraft fees was up by 2.4 percent. At Wells Fargo, overdraft revenue was up 7.5 percent from a year earlier. The CFPB is scheduled to issue rules on overdraft charges in 2017.

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.



Postal Banking: A Win-Win

"The financial industry's attempt to gut an agency that exists to protect consumers, as well as the recent scandals at Wells Fargo, shows the need for real financial reform and an alternative to the big banks and, of course, postal banking," said President Dimondstein.

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.

A Positive Step Forward

On Jan. 31, the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2017* (H.R. 756) was introduced by Representatives Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Mark Meadows (R-NC), Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Dennis Ross (R-FL) and Stephen Lynch (D-MA).

“This legislation is a necessary step to solving the disastrous pre-funding mandate that is dragging down the Postal Service,” said President Dimondstein. “We are encouraged by the bipartisan effort to fix the financial problems currently facing the USPS while preserving good union jobs and public postal services.”

There are many components of the new postal reform legislation, including the restoration of half of the postal rate increase and removal of a provision lobbied by the USPS’s private competitors. The portion of the bill that concerns many APWU members is the Medicare integration for postal retirees.

‘Medicare Integration’

H.R. 756 addresses the pre-funding mandate through “Medicare integration.” A “Postal Service Health Benefit Program” will be created within the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), managed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). It would place Medicare-eligible postal workers in Medicare Parts A and B. In addition to expanding Medicare’s role as a primary payer, FEHBP plans would be given access, through the law that created Medicare Part D, to discounted prescription drugs subsidized by an Employer Group Waiver Plan (see box for more information).

Employer Group Waiver Plan (EGWP)

Each Postal Service Health Benefit Program plan, within the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, will have access to prescription drugs that will be subsidized to the plan provider by an Employer Group Waiver Plan (EGWP), a federal funded program that comes under the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS). EGWP’s allow:

- Plan retirees over 65 to keep the same pharmacy benefits without interruption or additional costs, while the plan provider realizes significant cost savings.
- The overall costs for the postal FEHB plans should decrease, with the costs of prescriptions subsidized by Medicare funding, leading to possible premium savings for plan participants.
- The savings would help reduce overall postal FEHB costs, and prefunding costs for the USPS.

At this time, approximately 80 percent of Medicare-eligible postal workers and retirees are voluntarily enrolled into Medicare A and B. Many APWU members say that having a FEHBP plan and Medicare saves them money in the long run.

The bill achieves the following goals of the union:

- The program remains part of the FEHBP;
- The Medicare integration is part of the comprehensive reform bill, not a stand-alone measure;
- Prescription drug coverage results in no additional costs to employees and retirees;
- The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act’s (PAEA) required payments to pre-fund future postal retiree health care will be virtually eliminated by Medicare integration because it will create a huge reduction in the current unfunded liability costs.

Whether or not they enrolled, postal employees have long subsidized Medicare, paying over \$30 billion in Medicare taxes since 1983. Postal employees, retirees and the Postal Service can realize the benefit of those contributions through Medicare integration. The APWU believes, although not perfect, this bill provides a workable route to achieve a robust future for America’s Postal Service.

H.R. 756 is expected to finish being “marked up in committee,” where the bill can be amended and advanced to the full House of Representatives, by the beginning of March. As the legislation continues work its way through Congress, the APWU will stay engaged in the process with lawmakers and staff to improve the bill every step of the way.

Stay informed about the progress of H.R. 756! Sign up for legislative updates (<http://bit.ly/2jmnE3>) and check the Legislative & Political Department’s webpage regularly. ■

‘Medicare is Second to None’

At the 2016 National Convention in Orlando, FL, Byron Denton, the retiree delegate representative from the Western Region, spoke out in favor of Medicare integration.

“I’m on Medicare and it’s great and I love it,” Denton said. “[It] really protects all of us.

“Medicare is second to none,” he continued. “I support this.”





EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

Will You Get Involved This Year?

We Need Everyone to Be a Union Activist!

IN 1970, MEMBERS ON THE WORKROOM FLOOR WALKED OFF THE JOB AND took a stand to fight back, risking it all for a better career. Are workers today willing to walk off the job and to stand up and fight back?

We are heading into difficult times that call for strategic actions. How important is it to you to keep your wages, rights and benefits? Are you willing to forfeit all the gains previous postal workers fought for? We need to prepare now for the attacks various local, state and the federal government bodies are planning to launch on the working class.

Right to Work for Less

Before President Trump took office, our rights were under attack by state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. Right now, states are passing so called “Right-to-Work” (RTW) laws that will in reality cause workers in these states to work for less.

With the weakening of unions, workers in RTW states earn significantly less than workers in non-RTW states (over \$1,500 a year, on average). The anti-worker legislation also weakens safety standards and job security. As wages remain low around us, it will be harder to negotiate raises in any union contract. All workers are together in this fight against the “race to the bottom.”

Most workers today do not have a contract. Others have a contract, but lost their pensions or health care benefits. Without a contract, non-union workers do not have a protected voice or rights in their workplace.

In our country, just 11 percent of jobs have any form of union representation. As unionized postal workers, we have a lot to be grateful for. APWU activists and leaders continue to work to maintain our benefits, but we need more members to become activists.

The struggle to keep good paying jobs with benefits and good services is still ongoing. Not only are we constantly fighting, but our postal sisters and brothers in the United Kingdom and Canada are as well. Postal workers in Britain were forced to go on strike during the 2016 Christmas Season in order to stand up and fight back.

Over the next four years, we need to empower our APWU members and build community movement to assist in the struggle to retain everything we have fought for and gain the improvements we still need to preserve our good union jobs.

*“It is time to
empower APWU
members and our
communities to
take ownership of
the public Postal
Service.”*



The success of the recent contract is due to the coalitions built on the workroom floor during the 2015 *Good Service, Good Jobs, Good Contract* campaign. Pictured are members from the Omaha Area Local wearing their union gear.

Making a Difference on the Workroom Floor

Our locals can create a strategy to accomplish APWU's goals to work with union members on the floor for a better work environment. Together, union workers will become a powerful machine to fight the attacks from rich corporations and politicians who want to privatize the USPS.

Union stewards and officers need all APWU members to participate. If you truly want to win more, you must be active in your local and state union.

Sometimes, it is hard for a member to really understand what "getting involved" means. When you look at the local union's paper, under officers and stewards, you will see that there are often positions open in the local, some on the executive board and others out at stations and associate offices. Many times, interested members do not step up because they do not know what the vacant position does and whether they may be able to help.

Many members do not mind helping in small ways and would jump at the opportunity if asked, especially if they knew they will receive training for the position they are interested in. The majority of officers and stewards we have on board today were asked by a union officer in the local to step up.

Communication from local officers and stewards to members interested in getting involved must be one-on-one. That only happens when you set a strategy plan for your local to inspire volunteers in each section and/or office, to help educate and motivate members to take part in what goes on.

The APWU has been through many campaigns over the years. We must focus more on organizing our members on the workroom floor into a network of activists. It is up to all of us to reach out to other APWU sisters and brothers in order to build coalitions that give our community strength to save our national treasure.

In-plant and in-office direct actions by the workers will make a difference. It will build confidence that working together we can turn our workplace around. It happens with one small win at a time.

Answer the Call

The following are examples of important activities and actions APWU members can participate in with their union officers and stewards:

- Union worker committees in each section,
- Representing and educating each other about issues concerning workers and USPS customers,
- Filing 1767's on safety violations instead of letting unsafe work environments continue,
- Meeting with the Manager of Distribution Operations (MDO) or the postmaster to work together against a discriminatory or hostile supervisor, end mandatory overtime and engage in activities to get more staffing,
- Fighting to keep plants open and reverse the first-class mail being worked in other locations,
- Backing up workers who are harassed and unfairly disciplined,
- Fighting retaliation against a sister or brother for union activity, participating in rallies, attending town-hall meetings, communicating with state and federal legislative members, protesting in front of elected officials' offices and creating petitions.

This call is to all our members and their locals to work together on a strategy to build strength in their own local as well as in their community. It is time to empower APWU members and our communities to take ownership of the public Postal Service. It is time to support the union's goals to protect our rights and enhance our services.

The APWU's goals for 2017 include building strength in our local unions. We need to start utilizing deep internal and external organizing programs to build an activist network in every local. There are no shortcuts. We must start organizing. The 2017 Women's March is just an example of what can be done when people organize.

If you are ready to get started, contact my office for assistance (202-842-4250). We are in this movement together.



SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Working Together to Reduce the Arbitration Backlog

*“The union always
needs capable
activists to assist
in the enforcement
of the contract
and to help build
the union.”*

PRESENTLY, THERE IS AN ARBITRATION BACKLOG AND THE REASON is simple. The grievances appealed to arbitration are usually caused by management, resulting in the issues and problems being grieved by the union. With this system, management generally does not care if arbitration cases are heard and unless there is specific language to require the arbitration cases are heard, as per the negotiated time limits, there will continue to be a backlog.

Unfortunately, each one of the cases appealed directly affects an employee and justice delayed is justice denied. The backlog also gives management an excuse to not resolve blatantly unfair discharges, discipline cases or important contract issues which are clearly in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

The Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 (the law which created the current USPS and permitted postal unions to negotiate wages, hours and working conditions) did not require the negotiation of a grievance arbitration procedure, but the parties were free to agree to such a system. The parties did adopt grievance

Grievance Review and Arbitration Scheduling MOU

Below are key provisions of the Grievance Review and Arbitration Scheduling MOU:

- Representatives will be assigned by the parties on the national and regional level to monitor compliance with the MOU.
- All arbitration appeals and Step 3 grievances will be reviewed.
- Cases that can be heard without witnesses will be identified.
- APWU and USPS will jointly determine arbitration dates and locations prior to soliciting arbitration dates.
- There will be time limits for scheduling letters, identifying advocates and pre-discussion of cases.
- When time permits, multiple cases will be heard on each hearing date.
- Advance approval will be required to refer an expedited case to regular arbitration.
- Arbitration awards and settlements shall be complied within a timely manner.

arbitration language in the first contract.

Arbitration is the use of an impartial third party to resolve a dispute. In U.S. history, labor arbitration was used to settle industrial disputes between labor unions and employers. Primarily promoted by the government during World War II, arbitration was seen as a way to resolve labor disputes without having to contend with strikes that could possibly interrupt war production. Arbitration clauses were then regularly negotiated in future labor contracts to limit work stoppages by disgruntled, abused or exploited employees. In postal arbitration, the parties agreed to be bound by the decision of an independent third party who renders a final decision on their disputes involving discipline as well as contract interpretation and application.

In an effort to make the negotiated grievance arbitration language work more effectively, the APWU and the USPS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding Grievance Reviews and Arbitration Scheduling Procedures (*see box on previous page*).

The memo requires a review of all cases appealed to arbitration and Step 3 (the last grievance step before arbitration) to determine if the discipline or contract issues can be resolved. Since the implementation of this MOU began in December, 177 Letters of Warnings were rescinded and purged as per the 2015 contractual MOU, hundreds of cases have been settled/resolved and 212 discipline cases, including removals, were scheduled for hearings in the month of January and February, in addition to several contractual issues.

All cases unresolved during the review process will be scheduled for arbitration under the revised scheduling and hearing procedures in addition to the arbitration

scheduling done by the APWU Industrial Relations Department.

The APWU will continue to monitor the progress to determine if there is a substantial impact on the arbitration caseload and reports will be made known to local and regional officials.

Welcome Assignment

Normally, I report on the administrative function of handling union funds, but we as union officials must always remember the core duties of this union which are enforcement of the collective bargaining agreement as well as promoting the interests of postal workers by building and maintaining a strong, functioning union. In enforcing the collective bargaining agreement, national and local officers are charged with holding management accountable for the contract language, memorandums and letters of intent signed by the parties.

During my tenure as Northeast Regional Coordinator, one of my primary responsibilities was to oversee arbitration scheduling for that region

by working with the National Business Agents and locals, to insure their cases were heard in a timely manner. A few months ago, I was assigned by President Dimondstein to be the lead officer at the National Level for implementation and enforcement of a new MOU concerning grievances and arbitration of disputes between the USPS and the American Postal Workers Union.

I welcome this new assignment, and would encourage other officers to not limit their work with their local or state union to just their elected positions and duties. As important as the finances of the union are, we must assure that our primary mission to represent our members is accomplished.

The union always needs capable activists to assist in the enforcement of the contract and to help build the union. Union officials who have the knowledge and talent should not hesitate to work or be assigned to assist in other areas of union work. So when you can, and where you can, work for your union *in every way* that you can. ■

Honoring Women's History

The APWU National Executive Board in February adopted a proclamation to honor the women of the APWU throughout March, in celebration of Women's History Month. The proclamation reads:

Whereas, the great contributions of American women in shaping our nation are observed in March, during Women's History Month;

Whereas, March 8th is International Working Women's Day celebrated the world over;

Whereas, women of every race and ethnic background have been in the forefront of every major progressive movement for social change;

Whereas, women have played and continue to play a key role in the labor movement;

Whereas, women have played a unique and powerful role in the American Postal Workers Union, therefore be it

Resolved, we encourage all locals and state organizations to pay tribute to women during Women's History Month for the contributions they have made in our continuing struggle, and be it further

Resolved, we encourage all locals/states to organize and participate in International Working Women's Day events.

Pro-Privatization Groups Continue Attacks on Public Postal Service

Like clockwork, when USPS finances are announced each quarter headline after headline claim the Postal Service is irrelevant, in financial trouble or a monopoly that needs breaking up. These critics compare the USPS financial situation to the sinking of the Titanic. They say the USPS should remember its core mission is to deliver the mail, not expand services. They also say the USPS needs business-savvy leaders on its Board of Governors.

Time and again, the APWU, our sister postal unions and A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service respond to the attacks with the facts. Those facts include the explosion in package delivery making the Postal Service even more relevant in the digital age, the three consecutive years the Postal Service operated at a profit (excluding non-cash transactions), the Congressionally-manufactured financial crisis and the obligation to universal service.

So who are these “experts” and the groups they represent? Why do they not have anything nice to say about the public Postal Service? After all, it is the most well-liked and trusted of all federal agencies.

One frequent commentator, Brian McNicoll, is a former senior writer for The Heritage Foundation, an organization that has a long history of turning out reports and analysis advocating a privatized Postal Service. The group is funded by multi-million dollar corporations. One of their donors, UPS, has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years.

Privatization advocates are on their way to being major players in the new Congress and Presidential administration. According to In the Public Interest, A Grand Alliance signatory, at least 32 members of the transition team or nominees for top agencies either have ties to pro-privatization groups or expressed their support for privatization. One transition team member is former Heritage Foundation President Ed Feulner, who, as early as 2000, wrote against the postal “monopoly.”

As David Dayen in *The Nation* reports, if pro-privatization policies take hold “America’s schools, roads, air-traffic-control systems, prisons, immigrant-detention centers, and critical social-insurance programs will soon fall into private hands.”

Warning from Royal Mail

To anticipate what postal privatization might bring to the United States, we need look no further than Britain’s

venerable Royal Mail. Three years after the British Post Office was split from Royal Mail, the result is the loss of 13,000 jobs, the shuttering of 20 percent of delivery offices, increased workloads and threats to the pension fund.

“It’s sad to say, but the story of Royal Mail’s privatization is a story of our times: the loss of democratic control; the transfer of wealth and power to the richest in society; and the growing pressure on working people to work harder,” said Clive Lewis, Labour MP (Member of Parliament).

Where to Go from Here

“Privatization, or corporatization, of our public services, including postal services, means lower wages and benefits for workers,” said President Dimondstein. “Our communities suffer as well. Services are diminished or eliminated, and a ripple effect negatively impacts local economies.”

The influence of pro-privatization groups like the Heritage Foundation, R Street Institute and the Cato Institute on our politicians is growing. Many cabinet picks support handing over control of the public good to private corporations. It is more important than ever for A Grand Alliance to join with and organize our allies to beat back the privatization push and keep the Postal Service in the hands of the people. ■

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.

BIG VICTORY FOR WORKERS Together We Stopped the TPP!!

APWU members rallied against the TPP at the 2016 National Convention.

The 114th U.S. Congressional session is over and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is officially dead. This victory comes despite it being a signature effort of the Obama administration and Republican-controlled Congress, supported by business lobbyists and the Chamber of Commerce.

“The TPP was killed because workers stood up and fought back,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “It was very impressive that every labor union came together to fight this rotten trade deal designed to benefit the multinational corporations and big banks at the expense of workers everywhere.”

The “free trade” agreement was with 12 countries along the Pacific Rim, including Canada, Japan and Vietnam, and was intended to reduce restrictions on trade. The deal was aimed at helping multinational corporations outsource even more jobs to low-wage countries. It would have accelerated the global ‘race to the bottom’ in wages and benefits for working people.

Specifically for APWU members, the TPP would have opened the doors for the U.S. Postal Service to be permanently outsourced and privatized. If passed, it would have eliminated postal jobs and lowered wages.

There were several articles in the deal that targeted postal services. They were included at the request of the USPS’s private competitors, including UPS and FedEx. One specifically “direct[ed] targets on how postal systems are permitted to operate.” Another provision was included “to address the unique challenges private suppliers face[d] when competing with national postal entities in express delivery.”

Millions ‘Stood Up and Fought Back’

The Anti-TPP movement was composed of not just union members, but also human rights, health care and environmental activists. All campaigned together to put public pressure on Congress to stop it.

With the support of workers and activists across the country, Senator Bernie Sanders made the issue a key part of his presidential campaign. Soon all Democratic and some Republican candidates were declaring themselves against the trade deal.

After the primary season was over, public pressure did not let up. On August 23, 2016, the APWU led an Anti-TPP rally in Orlando, FL. The APWU also participated with almost 90 organizations in a National Call-in Day to stop a vote on the TPP.

The presidential candidates from both major political parties, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, said they were against it. It was clear the majority of voters did not want it to pass. This led to the TPP’s swift death after the 2016 election.

New Trade Agreements on the Horizon

“The struggle is not over,” warned Dimondstein. “There are proposed trade agreements right now being discussed and negotiated, like TiSA [Trade in Services Agreement] and TTIP [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership], which could end up being as bad for workers as the TPP.

“We will continue to watch these deals as they develop,” Dimondstein continued. “If they threaten the rights of workers or the public Postal Service, we will be in the streets opposing them, just like we did with the TPP.” ■

Q & A with Quanisha Mcneal

From time-to-time, the American Postal Worker interviews union leaders to learn why they got involved in the American Postal Workers Union. In this issue, we talk with Quanisha Mcneal, a 25-year-old member of the New York Metro Area Local. She started working at the post office in November 2014 as a clerk, and was appointed last year to be a part of the Young Workers Committee. As a Postal Support Employee (PSE) her experience represents over a quarter of the employees the APWU represents.



Q: What made you want to get involved in the APWU?

“The supervisors in my station were just being unfair. I felt like certain things that they were doing weren’t right. Then when I joined the union, I got the contract and I started reading it. [I saw that] what they were doing was wrong.”

Q: What was the process like to join?

“[New York Metro Area Local Clerk Craft Director] Diane Erlanger would come to my station every week and she would say, ‘Oh, you need to join the union, you need to join the union. We need young activists. We need you to stick up for your rights. Join it, I am telling you, join it.’ At first I was skeptical, because I am shy, but she pushed me to do it. So, I just gave it a try.”

Q: How did you feel after joining?

“I felt good about myself. Even though I was skeptical, I thought about it, I did it and I got people on my side...I am not alone. If I need help, I can go to someone in my union office or go to other people that I met at the convention to help me.”

Q: How did you find out about the Young Members Committee?

“I found out about it when I came to convention in August. I went to the [young worker] caucuses where they were talking... I sat down with [fellow Young Members Committee member] Courtney [Jenkins] and he started explaining it and I became interested and I liked what they stood for. It just went from there.”

Q: What’s it like to be the voice for PSEs on the Young Members Committee?

“It feels good because although some members are converted and some are officers, they can hear it from my side because I’m still a PSE, and I can let them know what’s going on with the PSEs.”

Q: What’s next for the Young Workers Committee?

“We are working hard and we’re still looking for anyone who is willing to step up in their union offices... We can speak to [other young members who want to get involved] more on how to start a young workers committee in their local.”

Q: Any advice you would like to share with someone hesitant to get involved?

“I was in their shoes before. Only thing I can say [to them] is, I know you’re hesitant and you’re a little scared because it’s something new, but once you get the knowledge and information and you meet everybody around you who is willing to help you, it’s a good feeling.

The union is a good thing. It’s good to have people by your side who believe in the same things you believe in.” ■

Correction

In the January-February 2017 issue of the *American Postal Worker*, the alternate for the Young Workers Committee from Kansas Kaw Valley Area Local, Stephanie McGhee, was misidentified as Latia Johnson.

Why Wait for News?



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Q & A WITH MARK DUDZIC

Labor Campaign for Single Payer Healthcare

The U.S. health care system is broken. The Labor Campaign for Single Payer Healthcare (LCSP) calls for a total revamp. The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) supports their goal of health care for all. The union spoke with LCSP National Coordinator, Mark Dudzic, about how the single payer system will better the lives for all Americans and what APWU members can do to grow support.

What is the mission of the Labor Campaign for Single Payer Healthcare?

"Health care is a human right. To secure that right, the United States needs to establish a national health care system with cradle-to-grave coverage like the rest of the industrialized world has done. We focus our efforts on the labor movement because unions should advocate for all working class Americans and they have the resources and organizing capacity to take on a big, bold project like this. The high cost of health care is the biggest cause of strikes, lockouts and concessionary bargaining. We need to take health care off the bargaining table by making it a right for everyone in America."

What do you mean by "single payer?" Is "Medicare for All" (popularized by the Bernie Sanders campaign) the same thing?

"Single payer is a social insurance system that, like traditional Medicare, allows patients to freely choose their health care providers while the expenses are paid by a 'single payer' — the government — which collects premiums through payroll and other taxes and pays health care providers through standard negotiated rates. The system would be universal ('everybody in, nobody out'), with no financial barriers to care and a single standard of care for everyone. Sen. Bernie Sanders' proposals clearly fit this model."

Why is this an important issue for unionized postal workers?

"Federal employees enjoy some of the best health care benefits that working class Americans can expect. Yet even here, workers and their families are faced with significant co-pays, deductibles and a rising share of higher premiums and their choices are often limited by insurance company restrictions on access to care. Moreover, these benefits are under attack by political forces that seek to use the 'politics of resentment' to undermine postal workers' wages, benefits and conditions."

Canadian postal workers often share with us the attributes of their health care system, of which they are very proud. Any lessons for us?



Mark Dudzic

"APWU members work and live in every zip code in America. They can be powerful messengers for health care justice."

"Canadian workers have succeeded in taking health care off the bargaining table. Their lives are much better and secure because of it. Very few Canadians would trade what they have for the dysfunctional and wasteful system in the United States."

What can APWU members do to win health care for all?

"APWU members work and live in every zip code in America. They can be powerful messengers for health care justice. There are excellent educational materials on the websites listed below that you and your coworkers can use.

APWU members can:

- Invite speakers to their union meetings and urge their local labor councils and other organizations to take up these issues...
- Attend national and regional conferences hosted by the LCSP...
- Reach out to others in their communities, faith based and civic organizations...
- Let their political representatives know how important this issue is to themselves and their union."

For more information: LCSP, www.laborforsinglepayer.org; Physicians for a National Health Program, www.pnhp.org; Healthcare NOW, www.healthcare-now.org



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Starting 2017 with a Bang!

*“The solidarity
our members,
other unions and
the community
showed by standing
together is
inspiring.”*

Vance Zimmerman

I WAS NEVER A MORE PROUD MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS Union (APWU) than when news broke that together we secured victory in the long and hard fought battle with Staples. It is inspiring to reflect on the unity displayed from coast to coast. Our union sisters and brothers waged a steady, forceful and diligent pressure campaign on both Staples and the USPS, leading to the stoppage of the subcontracting of our retail work.

For three years, you reached out to the general public, spoke with Staples managers and attended community events where you garnered support for our *Stop Staples* campaign. Through those efforts, many other unions, local governments and other organizations joined the Staples Boycott. There is no doubt your actions, such as participating in demonstrations, asking the public to take part in the postcard signing campaign (as well as mailing your own postcard) and speaking to people about why they should not shop at Staples, helped bring this program to a halt.

The solidarity our members, other unions and the community showed by standing together is inspiring. I want to thank all the union brothers and sisters who supported the Staples fight. You made a difference! Although the American working class still faces many struggles, the unity I saw over the last three years makes me confident that the APWU is up for any challenge we will face presently and in the future.

LMOU for Members-at-Large

On Dec. 22, 2016, the APWU completed negotiations and secured an agreement on the *Local Memorandum of Understanding* (LMOU) for APWU Members-At-Large without a local union structure. These are members who work in small offices and are not represented by a local, district or state Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU).

For these members, the same items a local can negotiate with USPS management are discussed and agreed to at the national level. Your union successfully overcame some of the challenges members who work in these offices face. The agreement helps define that stand alone Associate Offices, as well as Administrative Post Offices (APOs) and their Remotely Managed Post Offices (RMPOs), will be considered one installation.

This is important for many reasons, especially for the choice vacation selection and requests for incidental leave. Now for the choice vacation period no less than one person, but at

least 15% of all APWU bargaining unit positions by craft in the installation, will be allowed off.

Excluding the month of December, incidental leave will also be granted in accordance with the same percentages, including anyone already scheduled off for the choice vacation. Requests for incidental leave must be acted upon and returned to the employee within 72 hours of receipt by management. If not, the leave is to be considered approved.

It was a team effort by your APWU officers to secure this successful agreement. President Dimondstein, multiple Regional Directors, Division Directors and other craft officers advised, gave input and contributed.

Decreasing Grievance Backlog

We are all working together on the goals for 2017 that I wrote about in my last article. One goal we are taking significant steps forward on is decreasing the grievance backlog at all levels. The first thing that needed to be addressed is completed. With input from the National Officers, Regional Directors and National Business Agents, arbitration panels are now set both regionally and nationally. With panels set in all areas, we can begin moving your grievances through the process and getting final resolution on your cases.

The second step to reduce the backlog is going through the grievances and seeing which ones can be resolved without being arbitrated. President Dimondstein reached an agreement with the Postal Service to address this issue by reviewing the outstanding cases we have in the system. There

"The unity I saw over the last three years makes me confident that the APWU is up for any challenge we will face presently and in the future."

is an ongoing effort to review where backlogs exist and prioritize what areas of the country need attention. Various officers are tasked with this important assignment. As areas are identified, teams from the union and the USPS are trying to resolve as many grievances as possible. Multiple locations are identified and the reviews are already scheduled. Where an agreement cannot be reached, cases are scheduled for arbitration.

Right now, there is a particular focus on removal cases. Members have been out of work for a long period of time and they deserve to have their cases heard. We are progressing towards completing this goal.

By both filling the arbitration panels and reviewing the backlog we believe that we can successfully reduce it. Doing so will give all of you who filed grievances the justice you deserve.

Leave to Participate in Caucuses

In December 2016, the APWU intervened in a grievance the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) was arbitrating at the national level. The NALC challenged the denial of a carrier's request for administrative leave to attend and vote in his Nevada Caucus (the APWU has a similar case regarding the Iowa Caucuses).

Under the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), the USPS

grants leave for employees to vote in primary or general elections as part of a broader policy encouraging employees' civic engagement. The Postal Service claims this policy does not apply to employees attending political caucuses. Their case focused primarily on the ELM language that the Postal Service interprets to being limited to secret ballot elections. They also argued caucuses are time intensive, can involve other party issues and are political parties' private affairs, which are not regulated by law.

In response to these claims the NALC focused on the language of the ELM, specifically how the USPS's reading conflicts with the broader policy of encouraging employee engagement in elections. The APWU presented evidence demonstrating how caucuses must meet state law and requirements in the U.S. Constitution. The evidence also showed when management granted administrative leave for caucuses in the past and it explained how this change in policy may potentially have an unfair impact on thousands of bargaining unit employees who live in states where the caucus system is utilized. We also presented testimony about the Iowa Caucuses, dispelling several misconceptions about how the political meetings work. The union is currently awaiting a decision. ■

Arbitration Victory Creates Full-Time Assignments

THE CLERK CRAFT WAS SUCCESSFUL IN A RECENT ARBITRATION REGARDING the USPS's handling of the Sales Retention Team (SRT) program. The Postal Service blatantly violated the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in utilizing injured employees, mostly carriers, to staff the Sales Retention Teams, without first posting the jobs for bid in the Clerk Craft.

Currently, there are roughly 400 SRT jobs that are utilized to retain existing business customers. They are in 12 sites, performing Clerk Craft work during preferred hours and days off. The USPS has clear obligations to assign the work to the Clerk Craft under Article 1.5 and to post the jobs for bid per Article 37.3.A.1.

The arbitrator ordered the USPS to “(1) cease and desist from the violations of the National Agreement found in this case; (2) assign SRT positions to Clerk Craft employees; [and] (3) post SRT work assignments for bid by clerks without delay.” The arbitrator also ordered the parties to meet and discuss the financial aspect of the remedy, which we are currently doing as this issue goes to press.

Many thanks go to APWU Clerk Craft witnesses Linda Moss from the Dallas Area Local and Lorinda Miller from the 480-481 Local, who testified on the nature of SRT and call center work. Also, thanks to Assistant Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, for carefully setting the case up for success from the beginning.

Improving Lives with Full-Time Career Jobs

Returning administrative and technical work from management, the conversion of Postal Support Employees (PSE) to career positions and increasing the hours for Part-Time Flexibles (PTF) as well as employees in Non-Traditional Full-Time (NTFT) duty assignments is a high priority for the APWU. It is difficult to live on part-time wages and retiring on part-time wages is practically impossible.

As our most vulnerable sisters and brothers, PSEs have significantly lower wages, lack of job security and no retirement benefits. Not surprisingly, PSEs had a turnover rate in Fiscal Year 2016 of 36.2 percent. For comparison, the turnover rate for career employees was about 1 percent.

The APWU encourages and works for the conversion of PSEs to career as soon as possible in order to bring significant salary and benefit improvements to these workers and their families. Negotiated provisions allowing conversions to residual vacancies play a major role in converting many PSEs to career status.



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

In addition to filling vacancies, members can also push for the creation of new and/or more desired duty assignments. Many locals and state organizations have been successful utilizing Article 37.3.A.1, which considers “all available work hours,” to create new full-time jobs and get the jobs posted. This gives more opportunities to employees in NTFT duty assignments to bid, PTFs to secure full-time jobs and PSEs to be converted to career.

Utilizing MDAT to Create Full-Time Jobs

However, there is much room for improvement. Absent other provisions (like Article 37.3.A.1), the 2010 CBA allowed the USPS to use 20 percent PSEs per district in the Clerk Craft. Although aggressive use of Article 37.3.A.1 in a few districts pushed the PSE percentages below 15 percent, most districts are near 20 percent.

PSE Average Hours Per Week

(Excluding Holiday Peak Season)

Range of PSE Hours	Percentage of PSEs
Less than 30	23%
30 to 35	12%
35 to 40	26%
40 to 49	25%
50 to 59	11%
Over 60	2%
*40 and Above	38%

Source: USPS

The USPS’s own charts showed approximately 38 percent of PSEs were averaging over 40 hours per week, which indicates many duty assignments can be created.

The Max Duty Assignment Tool (MDAT), which utilizes the Postal Service’s own data, significantly helps create duty assignments per Article 37.3.A.1. It is important that grievances demonstrate the number of 40 hour a week jobs available without tying the duty assignments to particular time frames.

It is also essential that the best cases go forward, with National Business Agents (NBAs) handling the cases so we can establish a positive precedence

in arbitration. This makes it easier to settle cases in the future without going to arbitration. NBAs are encouraged to discuss well documented grievances with the National Clerk Craft officers for consideration of placement at the top of the arbitration docket.

By working together to create more full-time career duty assignments, we can significantly improve the lives of our fellow workers who are currently PSEs, PTFs or in NTFT duty assignments. Creating more full-time duty assignments improves staffing levels, which also improves the working conditions for all employees and improves services to the American public. ■

Staples Kicked Out!

The APWU victory over management’s attempt to increase privatization of the Postal Service through the transfer of work to Staples is significant and historic. Here are a few points to consider:

- The fight to stop job loss is important for existing workers. A conversion process for Postal Support Employees (PSEs) to become career would become meaningless without good career jobs to be converted to.
- The USPS-stated goal is to transfer Postal Service work to private interests. The victory over Staples slows down their plans.
- The fight against Staples, even before the final victory was won, discouraged other corporations from attempting to take postal services away from the American public.

Perhaps most importantly, the victory over Staples shows that a small, dedicated and organized group of people can take on a large corporation and win significant changes for the APWU and the good of the country.

USPS Testing New Machine to Automate Craft Work

THE NEW YEAR CERTAINLY STARTED WITH A BANG! WHILE WE ARE, OF course, very proud of the efforts of the Maintenance members involved, all the members of all American Postal Workers Union (APWU) bargaining units are deserving of praise and congratulations for a hard won success on the Staples issue. Everyone, regardless of craft, came together to press for what was right.

Whether you actively walked a picket line, talked with family, friends, etc., or just supported the effort by simply respecting the boycott, this was a significant event demonstrating that the force of the APWU is with the membership.

USPS Management Meets R2D2

Around Oct. 16, 2016, we received notification that the USPS will be testing two different robots from two different manufacturers at two different locations in 2017.

The proposed test sites are Margaret Sellers Processing & Distribution Center (P&DC) in San Diego, CA and Phoenix, AZ P&DC. Postal management gave the APWU only a few days notice, and the Maintenance Officers were unable to make the site visit in San Diego, although the local union did participate.

In mid-December, Assistant Maintenance Craft Director A Idowu Balogun was dispatched to Phoenix for the site visit with management to view this recent attempt by USPS to automate

our work. National Business Agent Jimmie Waldon and members of the Phoenix Metro Area Local were also in attendance.

The equipment being tested are robotic cleaners, approximately the size of R2D2, the famed droid from the *Star Wars* movies. The Postal Service looked into robotic cleaners before and none measured up.

The robots are programmed to automatically clean the perimeters of the workroom floor, based on mapped memory or historical data memory from a previous assignment. They have dozens of sensors all around them and will stop in a matter of micro seconds if and when they are obstructed. Then the robots will try to find a way around the fixed obstacle.

They also will have the ability to call and ask for help if unable to proceed, according to the Postal Service's presentation to the APWU.

The Postal Service and vendor representatives were quizzed by Maintenance representatives about



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

safety issues and work performance. The concerns raised by the union ranged from how deaf/hard of hearing employees will be aware a machine is approaching (or around the corner) to how they can complete the cleaning required after maneuvering. We thank the Phoenix Area Local representatives for their invaluable assistance.

The actual experiment in Phoenix started on January 30 and is planned to end about 45 days later, on March 10. The USPS was not prepared to provide us with what their criteria might be for objectively rating this concept. They did, as usual, want to use the employees to assist in evaluating the performance. We are sure very few are interested in evaluating how to eliminate their work.

Critically, when asked about impact on the bargaining unit, the Postal Service stated it was yet to be determined. Obviously, your Maintenance Officers believe the Postal Service would not engage in any kind of experiment unless the end result is a reduction of employees. For them to give such a non-responsive answer for what their goals and real intentions are, is unfortunately, all too typical nowadays.

Contracting Out Hearing

Briefs were submitted at the end of January on case Q00C-4Q-C 04003182. The issue in this matter is whether the Postal Service violated the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) when it



An example of a Postal Service idea for a new custodian.

subcontracted the upgrade of local area wiring networks in 62 mail processing plants. Since the grievance was filed, this subcontracting action was subsequently expanded from the 62 Phase I sites to include 122 Phase II sites and finally another 170 locations in Phase III.

The evidence presented established that the installation for upgrading the Mail Processing Infrastructure (MPI) wiring at these sites would be performed by a contractor. The Postal Service once again asserted in their Step 4 denial that this was not bargaining unit work.

At the hearing, your employer put into the record, through testimony, that postal Maintenance employees (including “network technicians or technicians at the sites”) could not have installed this MPI network upgrade. The Postal Service statements made it clear they believed the overwhelming majority of the Maintenance staff did not possess the knowledge, skill or demonstrated experience to install the network upgrade. They also were of the

opinion that we did not have the skills to be able to test copper terminations to Cat 6 MPI gigabit standards. Then the Postal Service used their same old, tired complaint that time was of the essence (even though this project ended up taking several years) and that we had other work to do.

Your Maintenance Officers believe it is a self-fulfilling prophecy to try to justify stealing our work by claiming we do not have enough people when it is management who is causing the unnecessary staffing reductions and involuntary reassignments in the first place.

Not to mention it is categorically not true that our bargaining unit members could not perform this work. We proved it. We presented testimony from two current Electronic Technician (ET)-10s, Wayne Greenside (Boston Metro Area Local) and Judy Stocker (Chattanooga, TN Area Local) and one, now retired, ET-11, George Potts (Northern VA Area Local).

We acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of these fine members. They represented you well. The Postal Service scrambled by offering their belief these skilled members were not representative of the ET population at large. The USPS presenters should be ashamed of themselves. Besmirching all members of the Maintenance Craft did nothing for their case or position.

With the case put to rest, it is in the hands of Arbitrator Das. ■



Lawsuit Against Arbitration

THE NATIONAL STAR ROUTE MAIL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION'S LAWSUIT against the Postal Service over the American Postal Workers Union's (APWU) arbitration award regarding Highway Contract Routes (HCRs) was denied by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

In an effort to prevent the USPS "from taking any action to implement the portion of the Aug. 18, 2016 APWU-USPS arbitration case No. Q06C-4Q-C 11182451 (Das), in which the arbitrator ordered the Postal Service to terminate 110 HCR routes to PVS," the Star Route Association filed a lawsuit against the USPS on Nov. 30, 2016. On Dec. 2, 2016, they requested an expedited hearing upon their Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction.

The USPS entered into a motion to dismiss the complaints of the Star Route Association, and the APWU, as the intervenor, also entered into a motion to dismiss.

The case was filed before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

"Upon considering of the pleadings, the relevant legal authorities, and the record as a whole, the Court GRANTS Defendant's and Intervenor's Motion to Dismiss and DENIES Plaintiff's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction... Lacking jurisdiction over the matter, the Court does not address Plaintiff's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction on

the merits, as it lacks the authority to grant such relief.

Finally the Court shall DENY WITH PREJUDICE in this court Plaintiff's Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction...

Because Plaintiff has failed to establish standing in this matter which is not yet ripe for adjudication, the Court finds that it would not be in the interest of justice and accordingly shall not transfer this matter to the Court of Federal Claims."

As we reported in our November-December article, the Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) Craft scored an important victory in this Aug. 18, 2016 ruling by Arbitrator Shyam Das, in which he stated, among other points, that the Postal Service must convert 110 Highway Contract Routes (HCRs) to Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) within six months of the date of the award.

The HCR association's argument was based on the grounds that they would incur serious monetary damages with the termination of their contracts, and the MVS Craft bargaining unit employees would not suffer equivalent damages without these contracts, as they



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster.

Award Dismissed

were not previously performing the work.

The union immediately pushed back against this motion, which sought to overturn Arbitrator Das' decision and prevent the Postal Service from returning work to the MVS Craft. We have fought for years to bring the USPS in compliance with Article 32 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), as our members continued to suffer loss of work to outside contractors.

The APWU's argument against the preliminary injunction was strong. We stated not only does the D.C. District Court lack proper jurisdiction in such a case, but the outside contractor also had no legal recourse to demand renewal of their contracts with the Postal Service.

The APWU quoted a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision as further evidence:

"We think it plain that the bargaining unit is adversely affected whenever bargaining unit work is given away to nonunit employees, regardless of whether the work would otherwise have been performed by employees already in the unit or by new employees who would have been hired into the unit." (Mi Pueblo Foods, 360 NLRB No. 116 (2014))

It is very disturbing to the APWU to have an organization that is not part of the USPS or the CBA between the parties attempt to interfere with the parties' agreements or processes.

This is not the first time this HCR group tried to interfere with the union's collective bargaining efforts, as they previously attempted to stop the union from receiving the PS Form 7463A, the negotiated cost of HCR contracts, after the NLRB administrative judge ordered the USPS to provide this form.

Compliance with the Das Award

Early reports from the field indicated local management was attempting to negotiate some of the 110 routes for substitution, which Arbitrator Das allowed for, but not on the local level.

Arbitrator Das stated, "By agreement,

the parties may substitute other route(s) to be converted to PVS service pursuant to this order based on particular circumstances."

In response to the APWU's requests for information regarding these reports from the field, the Postal Service confirmed that "since this was a National level arbitration we would agree that the parties the arbitrator refers to are parties at the National level." Local management has no authority to negotiate the substitution of any routes from the original 110 named in the award.

We are still in the process of finalizing the list of HCRs to be insourced and will notify the membership once the list is complete. ■

Dynamic Routing Optimization Pilot Underway

The Postal Service began a Dynamic Routing Optimization (DRO) pilot at several locations, with plans for further testing and possible nationwide rollouts. According to USPS material on the pilot, DRO aims to:

- "Decrease surface transportation costs by reducing mileage using dynamic routes created by a Transportation Management System (TMS).
- "Replace the use of static trips with dynamically generated trips based on mail volume and mail availability forecasts from the Run Plan Generator (RPG).
- "Achieve savings through a combination of reduced mileage and reduction in related transportation costs (i.e. fuel)."

The union met with USPS to discuss this pilot, and we also sent a request for further information as to the possible impact to PVS drivers as well as to potential conflicts with the CBA. Any proposals and material considered prior to the application of the DRO pilot were also requested.

We have serious concerns and doubts about the Postal Service's rights under the CBA to implement this program and initiated a Step 4 dispute. We will continue to keep you informed about its progress.

Negotiations, Negotiations

WE ARE HITTING THE NEW YEAR RUNNING. WE ENDED 2016 IN THE MIDDLE OF contract negotiations for our Information Technology/Accounting Services unit, and are working under an extension to our 2011 agreement. The extension expires on Feb. 24, as this issue goes to print. We hope another extension is not necessary.

It is very disappointing, but I guess this is consistent with how the Postal Service deals with every other union and unit they are in negotiations with. I see a consistent theme. They have a saying, "We are committed to coming to a negotiated contract." All I can say to that is, actions speak louder than words. Stay tuned and check the website, apwu.org, to see when we actually come to a negotiated deal.



Director Steve Brooks

We are not expanding on a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that was established years ago, and we are not dealing with postal officials who negotiated union contracts for several years. It is an intense but important experience, as the APWU continues to grow into the private sector. Again, we will keep you updated through the website.

PAE's Mail Transport Equipment Service Center

We are excited to have a brand new unit. A Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) run by Pacific Architects & Engineers (PAE) (reported on in the last issue of the *American Postal Worker*) is now proudly represented by the Support Services Division.

Our first sessions with PAE opened in January. Starting from scratch with negotiations is a difficult task. Imagine entering the room with a blank piece of paper and now you have to fill the pages with every workroom rule, salary, efficiency rating, disciplinary procedure and benefit. It may not seem like it, but you have to keep in mind that you are dealing with a private sector company and their lawyers.

Salmon Companies

We have a private sector group of mail haulers for Salmon Companies whose contract expires on March 31.

We have some serious workroom, benefit and wage problems that need to be addressed in a new CBA. This company does not hesitate to bring in their high-buck lawyers, just to try to save a dime they may have to pay their drivers.

Postal Nurse CBA Negotiations

The first half of 2017 is going to be quite a busy time for the Support Services Division. Hopefully, we can get negotiated deals for the three units during the first half of the year so we can prepare to negotiate the Postal Nurse CBA expiring in September.

2017 is going to be one heck of a ride. All I can say is I am so glad I now have a new National Business Agent, Judy McCann, to assist me. ■

The Great 1970 Mail Strike That Stunned the Country

In March of 1970, the United States had been in a financial and commerce standstill for two weeks. Tired of poor working conditions and low pay, postal employees went on strike at 499 post offices in 13 states. Mail piled up and went undelivered while the eyes of the nation were focused on the strikers. *Time* magazine wrote that it was “the strike that stunned the country.”

“Being a union member, I told [everyone] it was my duty to join [the strike],” recalled APWU Northeast Region Retiree Convention Delegate and striker Dolores Young. “I said, ‘well if this means there’s going to be improvements and changes, I have to get involved.’”

‘We Were Hungry’

Postal workers did not go on strike lightly. The pay for the average worker was extremely low and working conditions were dismal. “When I first made regular, my salary was \$145,” said Young. That was “for two weeks, working 80 hours.”

“We were hungry,” added now-retired APWU clerk Eleanor Bailey. Many workers qualified for food stamps and other government assistance. Workers had no ability to negotiate for wages and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases.

At the time, career employees did not know how many hours they would work. Workers would wait in the breakroom, or “swing room,” off-the-clock for mail to arrive. It could take 11-12 hours to work a full eight-hour shift. “My father was a postal worker, and he sat around for possibly only two hours of work,” said Bailey. “He had to wait and be called.”

On March 12, 1970, Congress gave itself a whopping 41 percent pay hike and offered postal workers only a 5.4 percent raise. Outrage spread in postal facilities across the country.

Strike!

Irate letter carriers of New York City’s Branch 36 voted to strike on March 18. Members of the Manhattan-Bronx Postal Union (MBPU) refused to cross the picket line, and voted to join the strike on March 21. Many others followed and by



the end of the strike, over 200,000 workers had walked off their jobs.

“You got to have a goal,” said Bailey. “Our goal was for a better salary and a lot of changes in the workplace.”

In an effort to break the strike, U.S. President Richard Nixon sent more than 23,000 military personnel to New York City postal facilities with orders to transport, sort and deliver the mail. “We have the means to deliver the mail,” he claimed. The President’s words were false, as the strikebreakers could not perform the

tasks without training. Negotiations between the Post Office Department and the postal unions started on March 25.

The strike drove Congress to enact the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970. Postal unions won the right to negotiate with management over wages, benefits and working conditions. It also established the U.S. Postal Service as an independent agency, funded by postage sales and services.

‘Stick with the Union’

The following year, on July 1, 1971, five of the eight postal unions merged together to form the American Postal Workers Union. The members of the United Federation of Postal Clerks, the National Postal Union, the National Association of Post Office and General Service Maintenance Employees, the National Federation of Motor Vehicle Employees and the National Association of Special Delivery Messengers were now all APWU sisters and brothers.

Shortly after its founding, the APWU negotiated a contract with a significant pay increase, faster step increases, a COLA and ended the practice of waiting off-the-clock in a swing room. United together, the new union has continued to bargain collectively to achieve secure, safe and good paying jobs across the different crafts.

The improvements to postal workers’ salary and conditions “happened because of the union,” said Bailey. She urged today’s APWU members to recruit co-workers to “join the union, because it makes us so much more powerful.”

“Stick with the union,” added Young. “That’s the number one thing!”



REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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

WESTERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Omar M. Gonzalez

- ALASKA
- ARIZONA
- CALIFORNIA
- COLORADO
- OREGON
- WASHINGTON
- IDAHO
- MONTANA
- WYOMING
- NEW MEXICO
- HAWAII
- NEVADA
- UTAH
- AMERICAN SAMOA
- GUAM
- SAIPAN

Promises, Promises

I'M NOT REFERRING TO NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS MANY OF US ALREADY BROKE. I refer to what promises to be an interesting year.

Like millions of Americans, I, too, was devastated by last November's election results. However the election is over and we are into the first 100 days of radical changes in government and our lives.

January 19 was the Obama Administration's last day. I will not go into a litany of his accomplishments or failures. I want to focus on some events to come that promise to be – or at least have the potential to be – an impact on you in 2017. Please don't fall for "alternative facts" or fake news.

Consolidation Moratorium Expires in April

April 1 promises disruptions and forced employee migrations. It is time for locals to re-educate members on the *Principles of Seniority & Reassignment* in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). There are three basic elements (among many) when excessing occurs:

1. The USPS is required to give notice to the Region of the operational changes no less than 90 days in advance (six months whenever possible). Normally it includes a notice of withholding for residual vacancies to place impacted employees. To prevent erroneous information, local managers are not to discuss excessing from the craft or installation with employees until an Area/Regional Article 12 meeting is held.

- 2. To minimize impact to career employees, all Postal Support Employees (PSEs) working in the affected craft and installation will be separated to the *extent possible*, depending if separating PSEs will yield sufficient hours for a regular duty assignment. The sole criterion for selecting excess employees is seniority.
- 3. Affected employees get advance notice (not less than 60 days if possible) before involuntary details or reassignments are made from an installation. After attrition is applied, PSE hours are reduced, and volunteers are solicited, affected employees are issued a minimum 30-day notice that identifies their placement and report date. Employees need to be informed of their "Retreat Rights." The local union should ensure the Retreat Right process and change in seniority is explained. Excessing employees outside the installation cannot occur more than once every three calendar months and is currently restricted to 50 miles (check your craft Memorandums of Understanding for more information).

The simplified process above contains the basic information a member needs to know when consolidations and excessing occur. While the CBA requires new Area Mail Processing studies, there are no provisions that prohibit excessing (involuntary reassignments) so long as the principles

of reassignment and seniority are properly applied. You can access the Joint Contract Interpretation Manual in Article 12 of CBA at apwu.org.

Postal Reform & Lay-Offs

Management's legislative goals promise to impact your job. The GOP's stated mantra basically is "*the government works for the people, the people do not work for the government.*" In other words, cut back government employees.

USPS is an independent establishment of the Executive Branch of our government. It is important to remember how the management of the USPS operates, from the President of the United States down to your direct supervisor:

- USPS is under the direction of a presidential-appointed Board of Governors, which directs their powers through management.
- Management blames much of what hinders USPS on labor costs, price caps and product restrictions. They claim these are "*legislative restrictions*" on USPS's business model and seek to have Congress impose "postal reform."

This reform could affect our health benefits, our jobs through "right sizing" mail-processing infrastructure and transportation networks. This "leaning out" in reality is abolishment, excessing, consolidations and privatization of services including "optimization of retail services," through closing post offices (replacing them with postal "stores" and retail partnerships instead).

- The Office of Strategic Planning and National Performance Assessment programs align management's goals. With our government in the hands of corporate elites, such postal reform could possibly lead to the relaxation by Congress of the *Private Express Statutes*, which would have our Lay Off Protection Memorandum in the CBA expire. Would management allow our postal monopoly to be undermined? They promised to have fair employment practices, safe secure workplaces, effective training, fair supervision, honest/open communication, job security and performance recognition. So, you tell

me. Remember we are a part of the Executive Branch and as the recent hiring freeze exception showed, we can be impacted by White House whims by the stroke of a pen.

Worker Protections Weakened

The government agencies we rely on to ensure fair working and living standards will be directed by corporate elites. The new Department of Labor will tilt even further against workers. Regulations prohibiting manager's unfair labor practices will be undermined. Weakened OSHA safety standards will increase injuries and deaths. Veteran Appeal Rights will give way to agency rights. Even time on the clock for grievances can go away.

So much promises to change. What must not change is our *resolve to fight* for better working and living conditions.

Fighting for better economic and social conditions, as well as against unjust laws, is what I and my fellow coordinators, Sharyn Stone, John Dirzius, Mike Gallagher and Kenneth Beasley promise to do.

Join us and the APWU as we fight for our future! ■

APWU Communications Dept. Brings Home Five ILCA Awards

The APWU Communications Department brought home five International Labor Communication Association (ILCA) Awards from a reception held on Dec. 9.

"With more submissions this year than any other, the contest was extremely competitive," said ILCA President Howard Kling. "All the winners should be congratulated on their exceptional work."

AWARDS INCLUDE:

1st Place: Writing: Best Labor History: National/International

"A Look Back: The Charleston Five" – *The American Postal Worker*, January/February 2015

1st Place: Writing: Best Feature Story: National/International

"Young Postal Workers: Speaking Up, Speaking Out" – *The American Postal Worker*, September/October 2015

2nd Place: Visual Communications: Best Photo Essay or Gallery: National/International "Members

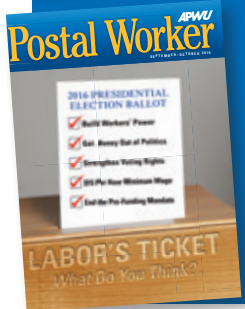
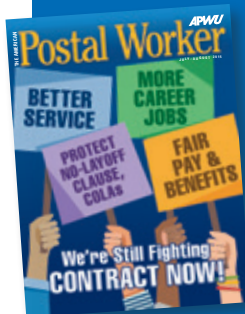
"Turn Up the Heat on May 14 National Day of Action" – *The American Postal Worker*, July/August 2015

2nd Place: Writing: Best Series: National/International

Stop Staples, – *The American Postal Worker*, all issues in 2015

3rd Place: Visual Communications: Best Design: Magazines: National/International

– *The American Postal Worker*, September/October 2015 Issue



Legislative Update

The 115th Congress convened on Jan. 3, and legislators wasted no time introducing bills and resolutions of interest to workers.

On Jan. 31, Representatives Chaffetz (R-UT), Cummings (D-MD), Meadows (R-NC), Ross (R-FL), Connolly (D-VA) and Lynch (D-MA) introduced *The Postal Service Reform Act of 2017*, H.R. 756, “to restore the financial solvency and improve the governance of the United States Postal Service in order to ensure the efficient and affordable nationwide delivery of mail.”

The bill addresses two serious key issues of concern: the pre-funding mandate and increasing postage

revenue. While we are continuing discussions with congressional representatives on improvements to the bill, at this time the APWU supports the current legislation. Please see page 11 for more information about H.R. 756.

Letter to President Trump

After the election, we (President Dimondstein and I) reached out to then President-Elect Trump’s transition team and met with a representative to inform them about the makeup of the Postal Service and urgent postal issues.

President Dimondstein followed the meeting up with a letter to President Trump and Vice President Pence. The letter provided information about the financial challenges facing the USPS and explained how they are a result of the unjust pre-funding mandate in the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), which required the Postal Service to pre-fund health care benefits of future retirees. It also pointed out that because of your dedicated work sisters and brothers, “the Postal Service is consistently rated as the most trusted government agency.”

The letter further emphasized how “the question of retaining and growing decent jobs was rightfully the crucial

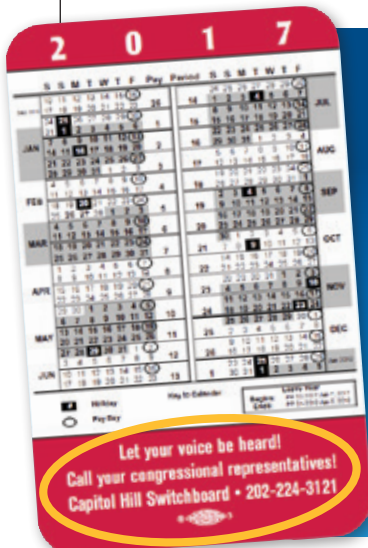
“We encourage you to build relationships with your lawmakers and express your opinions on issues before Congress.”

issue of the 2016 presidential election,” and went on to note “that the Postal Service is a source of good living wage jobs.” The Trump Administration will hopefully take all postal issues seriously, including filling the vacancies on the Board of Governors and Postal Regulatory Commission with strong advocates for the public Postal Service. To read the entire letter, go to <http://bit.ly/2kd8fXL>.

Stay Involved

We encourage you to build relationships with your lawmakers and express your opinions on issues before Congress cast their votes. We cannot sit on the sidelines and watch what was won for workers by the civil/human rights movement and unions disappear.

If you are not signed up to receive the APWU e-Team alerts, I urge you to do so (<http://bit.ly/2jmnE3>). Get involved by attending rallies, town-halls, Central Labor Council meetings or by sending letters to your elected officials’ local offices. Call your member of Congress, with the number on the back of your 2017 APWU Membership Card, and let them know where you stand on current legislative issues. You can also show your support by continuing to contribute *COPAmatically*. ■



Contact Your Member of Congress - It's Easy!

It's now simpler than ever to call and make an appointment with your representative in Congress! Look on the back of your 2017 APWU membership card to find the phone number for the Capitol Hill Switchboard. They will ask for your address and transfer you directly to your representative. Do not hesitate to voice your opinion!



Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER) members and their families, from locals across the country, participated in the Washington, D.C. rally with APWU national officers, staff and employees.



Grassroots Political and Legislative Coordinator Janice Kelble spoke about workers' rights at an event in Concord, NH.

Labor Participates in Women's Rights March

On Jan. 21, APWU members were some of the millions of people who participated across the country in the 2017 Women's Rights March. Protestors came out in droves, marching, chanting and carrying signs supporting various political issues, including women, human, immigrant and workers' rights.



Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell and Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard marched in Washington, DC with other national and international labor leaders, including BCTGM International President David Durkee, AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Shuler, CLUW President Connie Leak, IAM General Vice President Diane Babiniaux, AFGE President David Cox and IFPTE International President Gregory Junemann.



Maryann Medina and her daughter, Rebecca Ortiz in San Francisco.

Remember to Give COPAmatically!

COPA is the American Postal Workers Union's (APWU) Committee on Political Action. It was created to raise voluntary contributions from active, retired and auxiliary members to support the campaigns of pro-worker candidates and referendums. By supporting campaigns and candidates we believe in, we advance our goals and standing in the political arena.

Thanks to the generous, voluntary contributions of many active and retired members, the APWU has become a force to be reckoned with.

The challenges we face during each election cycle are great, and we must increase our COPA fund to help elect candidates who support a vibrant public Postal Service as well

as support the goals of working people. Every COPA contribution made by an APWU member, retiree or APWU auxiliary, no matter the amount, is vitally important. We must educate our elected officials on the importance of maintaining postal services accountable to the American people.

Contributing *COPAmatically* – via payroll deduction, OPM annuity, EFT or reoccurring credit card – is the easy, convenient way to support candidates that defend good jobs, benefits and retirement. A sign-up form was mailed a few months ago to all active members not currently contributing *COPAmatically*. If you did not receive it or have misplaced it, please call 202-842-4234 or message apwucopa@apwu.org to be sent your form.

International Working Women's Day

International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on March 8, in honor of women's social, economic, cultural and political achievements.

International Women's Day was first celebrated in North America and Europe in the early 1900s. Since those years, the movement has been strengthened by United Nations' (UN) women's conferences designed to build support for women's rights and equality.

The History of International Women's Day

1908 - In New York City, 15,000 female garment workers protested for better hours, higher pay, the right to vote and safe working conditions.

1909 - The first National Woman's Day was observed in the U.S. on Feb. 28. The Socialist Party of America designated this day in honor of the 1908 garment workers' strike in New York.

1910 - The Socialist International meeting in

Copenhagen established an International Women's Day to honor the women's rights movement and to build support for achieving universal suffrage for women. The proposal was approved unanimously by over 100 women from 17 countries.

1911 - International Women's Day was first held on March 19, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. More than one million women and men rallied that day, demanding women be given rights to work, vote, hold public office and receive vocational training.

On March 25, the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in New York kills nearly 150 working women. This disastrous event led to significant legislation to improve safety standards across the United States.

1912 - Provoked by a wage cut, the Bread and Roses strike in Lawrence, MA, shocked the country as more than 23,000 women, men and children demonstrated.

1917 - In protest of World War I, Russian women

marched for "Bread and Peace" on March 8. Four days later, the Czar granted women the right to vote.

1920 - On August 18, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave women the right to vote.

1975 - The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day on March 8.

1977 - The General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace to be observed on any day of the year by the Member States, in accordance with their historical and national traditions.

1995 - The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was signed by 189 governments. It focused on supporting women's rights to participate in politics, get an education, have an income and live in societies free from violence and discrimination.

1996 - The UN started adopting an annual theme for the holiday. The first theme was "Celebrating the Past, Planning for the Future."

2014 - The 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women addressed critical issues related to gender equality and women's rights.

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945, was the first international agreement to affirm the principle of equality between women and men. Since then, the UN has helped create internationally strategies, standards, programs and goals to advance the status of women worldwide.

Women of every race, class and ethnic background have made historic contributions to the world and continue to play a critical role in the workforce. As we honor these accomplishments, let us never forget that while progress has been made, there is still work to be done before women achieve true equality! ■

Sources: www.InternationalWomensDay.com; WomenWatch.UNWomen.org

The article that appeared in the November-December issue, "Understanding Climate Change" was mandated by a resolution passed by delegates at the 2016 National Convention in Orlando, FL.

Building on Our Success

We had an outstanding finish in 2016 with approximately 21,000 new members joining the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) family. Our success can be attributed to hard work and dedication at every level of our union!

The efforts to welcome new members in, while servicing our existing members, was not an easy task. Local leaders worked diligently to increase union presence at orientations when new employees came into the Postal Service. They encouraged our existing members to be actively involved in APWU events and took advantage of the organizing tools available.



State leaders also wasted no time taking advantage of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and settlements. They encouraged our coworkers in remote locations to strengthen our labor movement by joining the APWU. They did not let distance hamper their efforts,

conducting “road trips” to visit the distant post offices they represent.

At the national level, we constantly reached out to non-members, letting them know what we were achieving on their behalf and what we could achieve by standing together. The door was open for every member to be actively involved in organizing. Members followed up on correspondences sent by the National, utilized the tools produced by the Organization Department and welcomed our non-member coworkers to join in the fight.

Just Getting Started

While we finished 2016 strong, it is vital to keep in mind that in order to increase our membership strength, more must join with us than leave the APWU. Traditionally, for every three or four members who join, we only increase our overall membership by one. We will always have those who, for whatever reason, decide to quit being a member, as well as

those who retire, are terminated, find employment elsewhere or transfer to other crafts. We are also losing membership from privatization schemes and the forced consolidations of mail processing centers. It is an uphill battle, but we are moving in the right direction for the first time in many years!

When the Organization Department sends a mailing to non-members, we typically receive some excuses for why he or she is opting to not join. Ignore the excuses. Take the time to find out what the person’s real issues are. When speaking with the non-member, do not get into an argument defending who you are. Remember, you are the union!

“Organizing is not about what one person can do, but what we can achieve by working together.”

As I read the excuses, I cannot help but think how much a non-member thinks “the union” is a third party. Meaning, if you and the non-member were the only ones physically in a room, “the union” is some other entity doing all these negative actions, keeping them from joining. Set the record straight, right then and there. You are the union, and the APWU is what you and your sisters and brothers make of it.

There is no time for breaks. We must build on this momentum. As a member, take the time to reach out to a non-member. Ask them if they are ready for change. Encourage them to join with us. Organizing is not about what one person can do, but what we can achieve by working together.

We face some serious challenges ahead. Every day we must constantly work to make our union visible in order to let others know that we are not going to let anyone destroy what we fought to build.

Congratulations on a job well done to every organizer in the APWU. Organizing is the life blood of our union. By working together in solidarity, we will continue to grow for our future! ■



Presumption of Service Connection for Select Diseases Associated with Lejeune Water

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published new regulations establishing a presumptive service-connection for eight diseases associated with the once contaminated water supply at Camp Lejeune, NC. The amendment applies to all veterans, including former reservists and National Guard members, who served 30 or more days (cumulative) of active duty between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987 at the marine base or the USMC Air Station New River. Qualifying veterans are entitled to disability compensation benefits.

During this time, two of the water-supply systems for Camp Lejeune were soiled. More than 70 harmful chemicals were present in the water. The toxins originated from a variety of sources including an off-base dry cleaning company, underground fuel tanks, on-base industrial activities and a radioactive dumpsite located close to a camp's rifle range.

Poisoned water was pumped for nearly 35 years throughout the base and its satellite camps to family housing, barracks, administrative offices, schools and the hospital as well as to industrial and recreational areas. Many believe military officials concealed the problem and failed to take appropriate action to resolve the life-threatening issues.

Hundreds of thousands of base residents, military personnel and civilian employees who used or consumed the chemically contaminated tap water were exposed to toxins that were 240-3,400 times the levels permitted by safety standards. As a result, many who lived or worked on the base became gravely ill or suffered other maladies – far more than the VA opted to accept under its rule change. Victims also claim officials neglected to warn them of the health risks after being exposed.

Adding insult to injury, the VA is only recognizing adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Parkinson's disease as presumptive service-connected disabilities. They claim there is not enough scientific and medical evidence to support the inclusion of other

conditions. This is unreasonable when considering the extraordinary number of people with Camp Lejeune in their background who were diagnosed similarly with other conditions or who endured parallel problems such as infertility, miscarriages and birth defects.

Many veteran organizations and other interested parties voiced objections to portions of the 'presumptive' criteria - specifically the 30-day minimum requirement, the omission of amphibious vessels and the exclusion of many other conditions including those already *presumed* service-connected under the Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. The VA dismissed their concerns, but maintains relevant information will continue to be reviewed as it becomes available. This is likely little consolation to veterans and their families who already waited decades to be acknowledged.

The final rule is effective March 14, 2017. It can be found on the Federal Register entitled *Diseases Associated With Exposure to Contaminates in the Water Supply at Camp Lejeune*, dated January 13, 2017.

Veterans and family members who are experiencing health issues that may be related to the water contamination should contact their primary physician and are encouraged to file a claim which will be approved on a case-by-case basis. Individuals who do not qualify for compensation under the presumptive rules may still be eligible for free health care for 15 conditions covered under the Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket medical expenses and remaining medical costs for family members are payable by the VA only after health plan payments are applied. Surviving spouses and dependents may be entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits.

The VA established an online application process and helplines for veterans and their families. Veterans should call 877-222-8387 or visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply. Family members should contact 866-372-1144 or visit <https://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov>. To learn more visit www.va.gov.

New EEOC Disability Roles

The Rehabilitation Act is a federal civil rights law that prohibits federal agencies, including the United States Postal Service, from discriminating against job applicants and employees based on a disability or the perception of a disability. To strengthen the statute, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) published new regulations this year to reaffirm the government's commitment to otherwise serve as "model employers" for individuals with disabilities and explain what federal agencies must do to comply with affirmative action rules.



Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act requires federal agencies create affirmative action plans for the employment of people with disabilities, and to submit those plans to EEOC for approval. The term "affirmative action" was previously not defined nor were detailed standards provided to determine whether

an employer met its obligations. Before finalizing the new rules, the EEOC requested public input to clarify what an affirmative action plan must include and sought further public comment of its proposals.

The final regulations consolidate existing obligations from a variety of sources, which include current mandates for federal agencies to seek qualified job applicants with disabilities and to write reasonable accommodation procedures. Many skilled people with disabilities who desire work remain unemployed or underemployed, so new representation goals for employees within the federal workforce, at both higher and lower levels, were also set – 12 percent representation for individuals with disabilities and 2 percent for individuals with "targeted" disabilities. Targeted disabilities are those that pose the greatest barriers to employment, such as blindness, deafness, paralysis, convulsive disorders and mental illnesses, among others.

In addition, the new rules enhanced support requirements to enable more persons with disabilities to seek federal employment. These regulations require

personal assistance services be provided to employees who need them to perform basic human activities at work, such as eating and using the restroom. The revisions will allow individuals with significant disabilities to enjoy the opportunity and independence of paid employment while potentially reducing the amount of taxpayer dollars spent on public disability benefits.

The changes provide concrete steps and accountability mechanisms that clarify and strengthen anti-discrimination laws. They create more meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities to thrive. We look forward to the USPS making appropriate accommodations to aid injured workers in performing their duties, and embrace the opportunity to welcome more disabled veterans and people with disabilities into our workforce.

To give agencies sufficient time to come into compliance, the rule changes will become effective on Jan. 3, 2018. In the interim, the USPS is not relieved of its current obligations. The EEOC plans to provide agencies with training and technical assistance to support their compliance efforts and published more information including a series of question-and-answers addressing the changes online at www.eeoc.gov.

Members can stay connected with the latest EEOC news by subscribing to their email updates through the EEOC website or by visiting <http://bit.ly/2jFQhSn> to enroll. ■

Human Relations Conference

Bally's Atlantic City Hotel and Casino, Aug. 6-10, 2017. Featuring OWCP Federal Injury Compensation Specialist training, other HR issues and more. Appropriate for all representatives, beginner - advanced. Instructors include Sue Carney, APWU Human Relations Director, and Ed Duncan, former Deputy Director, OWCP.

Must book package through APWU. Deadline to register is June 1, 2017 (or when block is full). Space is limited so register early to avoid missing out. For more details or to register, visit apwu.org/events.

Success in Action!

The USPS and Staples deal is over! APWU retirees worked tirelessly on the *Stop Staples* campaign to help the union achieve a big victory. We must continue actions to achieve other successes for retired and active members.

The biggest challenge facing retirees and postal workers today is making sure our voices are heard on Capitol Hill by the 115th Congress. On Nov. 8, many of us took action by voting to elect the President of the United States as well as Congressional representatives and Senators from our respective states. The will of the people, state by state – from

Alaska to Florida, from Hawaii to New Hampshire, from sea to shining sea – comes together on Capitol Hill. It is the states who decide the make-up of our federal government, not the majority vote. Always remember that the states rule!

Retirees, it is *now or never!* We must tell our

representatives in the House and the Senate, no matter the party affiliation, to keep their hands off the retirement benefits we worked our whole lives to earn. Promises made must be kept.

Let Congress know we are opposed to privatizing Medicare and Social Security. Let Congress know that we want the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) either reformed or repealed. Let Congress know you want the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) calculated by using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for retirees



RETIREES IN ACTION!



Houston Retiree Chapter President Laura Provo working as a Holiday Clerk Annuitant for the 2016 Season.

based on CPI-E, the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly, instead of CPI-W, the Consumer Price Index for Workers. Let Congress know we want to vote by mail. Let Congress know you stand with the APWU on postal reform. Let your representatives know you intend to build a relationship with them.

As retirees, unionists and citizens we must be vigilant! When called upon to act, we must contact our representatives and senators on Capitol Hill. When and how do you contact them? What do you say and how do you say it?

- Check the website, apwu.org/departments-divisions/legislative-and-political, for updated information on current legislation.
- Contact your local retiree chapter president.
- Contact your state and local president.
- Contact the Retiree Department, 202-842-8584. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

May is Older Americans Month.
The theme is *Age Out Loud*.



The Retiree Educational Conference
will be held Oct. 2-4, 2017, at Bally's Las Vegas Hotel.

2017 Open Season Seminar

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Health Plan is pleased to announce that the 2017 Open Season Seminar will be held in beautiful downtown St. Louis, MO. St. Louis was the location of the first APWU Health Plan Seminar and we are thrilled to be coming back to the “Gateway to the West.”

Union owned and made up of a union work force, the APWU Health Plan benefits us all by having a positive impact on the lives of our membership and their families. As health insurance premiums take a larger and larger portion of our members’ paychecks, understanding how health insurance works, the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, the role Office of Personnel Management (OPM) plays and the details of our affordable health plans is critical for APWU local, state and retiree leadership. The APWU Open Season Seminar is not just



for Health Plan Representatives. We welcome everyone.

The seminar is two days of instruction with basic and advanced tracks. The advanced track has new courses to provide continuing education. The basic course will provide a sound foundation for understanding federal health care. If you are in an APWU leadership position, understanding FEHB Program and APWU health plans has never been more important. I urge all of you to attend this year’s seminar.

Centrally located, St. Louis offers a wonderful setting to build solidarity with your fellow union leaders. For those who are wondering, the date that OPM allows us to release the 2018 information for health plans made it impossible to have the APWU Health Plan Seminar adjoining this year’s All Craft Conference.

Reaching Out to PSEs

The APWU Health Plan is mailing packets of information out to PSEs as they get reappointed after

32nd Annual Open Season Seminar October 17-19, 2017

Early registration October 16, 4-6pm
Registration includes meals, breaks and materials
Holiday Inn Express Downtown Saint Louis



Courtesy of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, NPS/Wikimedia Commons

a 365-day term. That is when PSE’s become eligible for APWU Consumer Driven Option health insurance, with the USPS paying 75 percent of the premium. The APWU negotiating health insurance for temporary workers at the same cost as career federal employees was a game changer, and shows the strength of APWU solidarity.

Together with our locals and states, this mailing is an opportunity to reinforce to our PSE members the benefit of membership, and to the non-members, it is a great reason to join the APWU family. Eligible PSEs have 60 days from the time of their reappointment to enroll in the APWU Consumer Driven Option. In order to give these PSEs more time to take advantage of this union provided benefit, we are now mailing directly to the PSEs. Our staff is working to provide local leadership secure access to a list of the PSEs receiving the mailing and look forward to rolling that out soon. ■

LIMITED TIME OFFER...
Open Enrollment April 1ST - April 30TH, 2017!



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