

THE AMERICAN

Postal Worker

APWU

MAY-JUNE 2017

**FROM THE STREETS TO
THE HALLS OF CONGRESS**

The Struggle Continues

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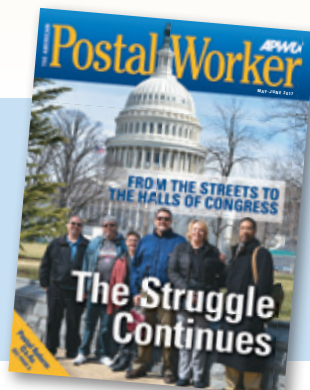
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PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

‘In Order to Form a More Perfect Union’

THE PREAMBLE TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION INCLUDES THE WELL-KNOWN and eloquent words, “in order to form a more perfect union.” The “union” here refers to the young country, born of the American Revolution – and wisely acknowledges that there should always be an effort to strive for improvement.

This sentiment applies to our “union” as well, for no organization or society can be perfect.

I recently sent a centennial celebration greeting to the San Antonio Area Local as their local of the National Federation of Postal Clerks (a forerunner of the APWU) was founded 100 years ago. Many other locals around the country have celebrated, or will soon be celebrating, their first century as well.

APWU Gains

With the many frustrations of working in an understaffed postal environment, frequently facing tyrannical managers and a grievance process that is too slow, it is easy to lose sight of the wonderful accomplishments of the APWU, and what postal workers gained over many decades of sacrifice and struggle.

Think about some of these highlights:

- **Collective Bargaining:** The right of postal workers through their union to negotiate with management over wages, hours and working conditions. Wow, talk about a true voice at work that has resulted in a wide array of union-won rights and benefits.
- **A Grievance Procedure:** The right of unionized postal workers to protest management actions that violate the union contract, meet with union representatives “on the clock” to address concerns and to file grievances when necessary.
- **Just Cause Protection:** Workers can only be disciplined or terminated for “just cause” – only for a legitimate reason – rather than at the whim of the boss. Now that is job security!
- **No Lay-Off Protection:** No lay-off protections for career employees with six years of seniority. In addition, those career employees on the rolls as of July 8, 2016, who did not yet have six years of employment, have no lay-off protection as well for the life of the contract.
- **Seniority and Bidding:** Career postal workers have the right to bid for jobs,

*“It is up to all of us
to work together and
make our union the
best it can be.”*

Mark Dimondstein



LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Editor's Note: President Dimondstein received many letters and emails of support after the Staples victory. A few were edited for space and reprinted below.

Dear Mark,

I wish to thank you for the kind appreciation letter for our work on the *Stop Staples* campaign. This victory would not be ours without your determination to win. I believe it to be the boldest and most courageous move by our union since the 1970 strike.

It wasn't always easy. There were those who thought it a futile effort, a waste of time and money. They were proven wrong.

We met the homeless, the mentally ill, working people, upper-middle class and the one-percenters. Each person had their story to tell and we listened. We learned from each other and this is a victory for all.

Sincerely,

*Juanita Boles, member of the California
Postal Workers Union Retiree Chapter*

Dear Mark,

I wanted to take a moment to congratulate you on APWU's tremendous victory over Staples. I and every AFGE member were proud to stand with you in this fight, and couldn't be happier to see organized labor strike a decisive blow against those looking to sell the people's government to the lowest bidder.

This was a bold, aggressive campaign that will no doubt better the lives of tens of thousands of union members and their families. I salute you and all our postal brothers and sisters for leading the way.

There will certainly be more fights like this in the coming months and years, and we will need to continue standing together in unshakable solidarity. Again, congratulations on a fight well-fought and a victory well-won.

In Solidarity,

*J. David Cox, Sr., President,
American Federation of Government Employees*

Dear Mark,

Well done to the APWU.

Great news about the success of your campaign at Staples against privatization.

The APWU can be very proud of this achievement and I know it would not have happened without your leadership.

Please pass on my congratulations to your team and members.

I will also make sure that this victory and the tactics you used to achieve it are publicized within our own union and through UNI.

Keep up the good work.

Yours in Solidarity,

*Dave Ward, General Secretary,
Communication Workers Union (United Kingdom)*

hours and off-days based on years of service, rather than be subject to the favoritism of postal management.

- **Negotiated Wage Increases:** All career postal workers receive regular negotiated wage increases, Step Increases and Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs). APWU-represented non-career postal workers also receive regular negotiated wage increases.
- **Conversion to Career:** A negotiated path for non-career to career positions resulting in over 45,000 conversions since 2014.
- **A Democratic Union:** The right of APWU members to elect officers at the local, state and national level, vote on proposed union contracts, run for union office and have full voice and vote at union meetings and functions.

These rights and benefits, and so much more, were won through the power and activism of the workers – most notably in the outstanding and historic Great Postal Strike of 1970.

All workers deserve real power in the workplace and a say over our working conditions. I am sure each of you has family members, neighbors and friends who do not work in a union shop, and lack the kind of rights and benefits unionized postal workers secured.

Wall Street, corporate America and far too many politicians would like to see unions, including the APWU, destroyed and with them our many gains over the last century. So, never take our union, or its future existence, for granted.

You are the Union

Our “imperfect” union belongs to you. It is up to all of us to work together and make it the best it can be. It is great that so many of you are already union active, but we need much more participation, for “In Our Unity, Lies Our Strength!”

We witnessed what union activism can achieve in our victorious *Stop Staples* fight and our successful grassroots *Good Service! Good Jobs! Good Contract!* campaign that helped win such positive results in our last round of contract negotiations with the USPS.

Come to local union meetings; join a local union committee (such as safety, legislative, education or any other that interests you); share your views, suggestions and talents (writing, music, art, social media, etc.); step up and serve as shop stewards; wear your union gear; visit/call your political representatives; sign-up non-members at your worksite; stand in solidarity with all workers; and talk to your families about what the union means for the betterment of our lives and communities.

I hope all of you are as proud as I am to be part of the American Postal Workers Union family as the struggle for justice continues into another century! ■

NPC Participants Take it to the Hill

The National Presidents Conference (NPC) of APWU state and local presidents, gathered in Washington, DC from March 11-14 for its first of three meetings this year. Every two years, the first conference in March is in the country's capital so state and local presidents and other APWU officers, members and their families can meet with their elected officials on Capitol Hill to discuss issues of importance to postal workers.

"We need to let [our legislators] know that the post office must remain viable, that we have workers in the post office that need to make a living wage... We are a service first," said Antoinette Robinson, President of the Greater Kansas City Area Local. "It's important for all of us to come together and fight for basic human rights."

"We need to let [our legislators] know that the post office must remain viable, that we have workers in the post office that need to make a living wage... We are a service first."

— Antoinette Robinson



Elgin, IL Area Local President Robert Feuser speaking with a congressional staffer.



(L-R) Kayden Krumrie; Ron Krumrie, Traverse City Area Local Steward; Michael Mize, Michigan Postal Workers Union/Flint Michigan Area Local President; Amy Puhalski, Western Michigan Area Local President; Roscoe Woods, 480-481 Local President/Legislative Director for the Michigan Postal Workers Union and Keith Combs, Detroit District Area Local President, enter the Cannon House Office Building.

NPC Chairperson Chuck Pugar explained that pursuing positive legislation is a crucial part of a local or state president's job – and one of their most integral roles is delivering messages on behalf of members to respective elected officials.

"By holding our March meeting in DC during the odd years, it puts us in touch with each new Congress," he said.

"It's important that our union put a face to what we are trying to do," explained Roscoe Woods, President of the 480-481 Local and Legislative Director for the Michigan Postal Workers Union. "To be in a room discussing with people who shape policy is not only good for our members, but good for the rest of the country.

"I don't see us gaining anything sitting on the sidelines letting other people choose our destiny," he continued. "You are not going to change anybody's mind without telling them what you are looking for. APWU members need to pay attention and they need to show up."



Charlie Moskowitz, Senior Legislative Counsel (for Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO)); Antoinette Robinson, Greater Kansas City Metro Area Local President; Darcy Wood, Greater Kansas City Metro Area Local Legislative Director; Kirk Schroeder, Missouri Postal Workers Union Legislative Director; John Zamudio, St. Charles Local President; Beth Zamudio; Beverly Wolfmeyer and Fred Wolfmeyer, St. Louis Gateway District Area Local President.



APWU Grassroots Political & Legislative Coordinator Janice Kelble (second from right) with community activists (L-R) Jeff Kramer, Kathy Staub, Keith Yergeau, Elizabeth Ropp, Emily Eastman and Eric Zulaski after “right to work” law was defeated in NH.

UNIONS DO IT RIGHT!

Higher Union Membership Boosts Wages for All

The correlation between a community’s percentage of union members and the average pay its workers make is crystal clear – the higher percentage of union members a city or state has, the higher the wages are for *all workers*, not only union members.

Unfortunately, many more states are poised to pass legislation designed to cripple workers’ rights. So-called “right-to-work” (RTW) laws continue to be introduced and passed in states around the country. Already in effect in 28 states, including three more in the last year (Kentucky, Missouri and West Virginia), the laws are designed to cut through the unified front workers present to management and weaken unions.

RTW laws eliminate the ability for a workplace to be a “closed” union shop, and have employees pay union dues as a condition of employment. It also prohibits unions and employers from negotiating a “fair share” fee.

This fee ensures that employees benefiting from the gains and protections of a workplace collective bargaining agreement pay their part for the cost of negotiations. It requires that employees cover some of the cost of negotiating the collective bargaining agreement, any necessary contract enforcement and any union representation they may use when filing a grievance.

Without the requirement, unions are forced by law to spend resources representing non-members, at the expense of the dues-paying membership. As federal employees are already prohibited from having any union dues deducted automatically as a condition of employment, postal workers know all too well how freeloading weakens us all.

“So-called ‘right-to-work’ laws weaken unions in general,” said APWU Grassroots Legislative & Political Coordinator Janice Kelble. “Even non-members and non-union workplaces benefit from the work that unions do.”

Creates ‘Race to the Bottom’

In some states, such as Wisconsin, anti-worker laws go even further. Gov. Scott Walker’s 2011 legislation, *2011 Wisconsin Act 10*, was written to stifle public employees’ rights in their workplace. Among other things, the law limits collective bargaining rights and caps wage increases with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). It also forces public employee unions to recertify every year, so the unions are forced to spend valuable resources combating anti-union communication and actions from management instead of representing their membership and strengthening the labor movement.

These laws create a ripple effect and a “race to the bottom” for the entire community.

“Without a good union job, I would not be able to support my local businesses,” Kelble explained. “There are so many things I wouldn’t be able to afford... When labor unions are weakened or busted at a workplace, the community has many more low paying jobs, creating a drain on everybody.”

Unified Victory

Earlier this year, community activists, including APWU members, stopped RTW in New Hampshire. APWU members participated with others against the legislation during public hearings and meetings.

“As a labor community, we were able to identify and mobilize supporters,” Kelble said. “Together we kept the pressure up, and, in some cases, persuaded legislators by holding district meetings in their communities.

“It was not just union people,” Kelble continued. “We had a coalition that included the faith community who joined us and were standing out there doing vigils against RTW, because they knew it’s bad for the entire state, not just for union workers.” ■



Postal Reform Quest

IN ORDER TO HAVE A HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, PUBLIC POSTAL Service, legislation is necessary to protect postal customers and postal workers from USPS's current financial crisis. The bi-partisan Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) of 2006 largely caused this crisis, sending the Postal Service on a severe downward spiral. The PAEA mandated the Postal Service "pre-fund" 100 percent of its retiree health benefit liabilities, 75 years into the future.

This absurd, unfair and unsustainable burden, which has cost the Postal Service \$5.5 billion each year over the past decade, is a large reason why the Postal Service cut back service and hours of operation, closed processing plants, increased subcontracting and severely reduced staffing. It also hurt the Postal Service's financial ability to upgrade buildings, update infrastructure and purchase a new vehicle fleet.

In the ten years since the passage of the PAEA, legislators from both the Senate and House of Representatives repeatedly introduced postal legislation. Some bills, such as H.R. 22 in 2009 and H.R. 1351 in

2011, were positive legislative efforts to help address the pre-funding mandate, and were supported by the APWU. Some, such as H.R. 2309 in 2012, were all-out assaults on postal workers and the public Postal Service, causing the APWU to strongly oppose them.

Regardless of the political party in power, all legislative efforts have failed and the pre-funding crisis continues. It is clear that while Congress created the pre-funding mess, they refuse to legislate its solution on a stand-alone basis.

New postal reform legislation introduced in the 115th Congress helps to solve the pre-funding crisis and is fair to active and retired postal workers. The APWU supports two companion bills introduced in the House of Representatives, H.R. 756 and H.R. 760. As these bills move through the legislative process, the APWU will continue working to improve them.

We received many good questions from around the country regarding the impact of the pending legislation, if it is passed. These questions are the basis for the following "questions and answers."

Q1: What is H.R. 756?

A: H.R. 756 is titled the "Postal Service Reform Act of 2017." It is co-sponsored by a number of Congressional Representatives on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the legislative committee with jurisdiction over postal issues.

Q2: Does it have bi-partisan support of both Republicans and Democrats?

A: Yes. A rare sight in Washington, key Republicans and Democrats support the bill. It is sponsored

What are the main aspects of H.R. 756 that affect postal workers and retirees? The bill puts the Postal Service on firmer financial footing, which should lead to positive benefits for postal workers both active and retired. It addresses the pre-funding crisis and increases postal rates to raise revenue. Aspects that will directly affect postal workers and retirees are the creation of a "postal only" health care program within the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), and the requirement of "Medicare Integration" for postal retirees who are eligible for Medicare.

by House Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-UT). Initial co-sponsors are Ranking Member Elijah Cummings (D-MD), and Representatives Mark Meadows (R-NC), Gerry Connolly

(D-VA), Dennis Ross (R-FL) and Stephen Lynch (D-MA). It passed the Oversight Committee made up of 24 Republicans and 18 Democrats with an overwhelming voice vote.

Editor's Note: These questions concerning H.R. 756 were the most frequently asked by APWU members. The answers were produced by APWU National Officers in consultation with attorneys and health plan experts. These "questions and answers" went to press at the beginning of April and reflect the language of the bill at that time. For the latest developments and additional information, please visit apwu.org.

Questions & Answers

How does H.R. 756 address the pre-funding debacle created by the 2006 PAEA? H.R. 756 helps to solve the crushing pre-funding burden. By lowering the cost of FEHBP with Medicare Integration, combined with introducing EGWP drug discounts, the Postal Service should be virtually 100 percent funded to meet the requirement of the PAEA.

Q3: If H.R. 756 becomes law, will there be any changes to what health benefits are covered?

A: There should be no changes in what health benefits are covered as a direct result of the passage of H.R. 756. With or without passage of the bill, FEHBP plans, with OPM approval, make changes annually to what they cover for medical procedures and prescription drugs, as well as co-pays, deductibles, networks and premiums. Those changes may increase or decrease a particular benefit. These FEHBP practices of the past will continue in the future.

MEDICARE INTEGRATION

Q4: What is Medicare Integration?

A: Medicare Integration requires that all Medicare-eligible postal retirees (age 65 or older) enroll in Medicare in order to maintain their FEHBP plan coverage in retirement. This means that all eligible retirees must be enrolled in Medicare Parts A, B and D in order to get insurance through the FEHBP. In order to simplify the enrollment procedure, all

Medicare-eligible retirees will be automatically enrolled.

Q5: What do Medicare Parts A, B and D cover?

A: Medicare Part A covers hospitalization, Medicare Part B covers doctor/physician care and Medicare Part D covers prescription drugs.

Q6: Will this cost employees, upon retirement, additional premiums? What about retirees who are not yet 65 years of age?

A: Medicare Part A has no premium. Medicare Part B currently has a standard premium for new enrollees of \$134.00/month. Each year, Medicare Part B premiums are set based on the Consumer Price Index, so premiums can change. There is no additional premium for Medicare Part D because it is part of a retiree's FEHBP plan coverage. Retirees under 65 years of age are not Medicare-eligible and thus will have no additional Medicare premiums until they become Medicare-eligible.

Q7: If a postal worker is still an active employee after reaching the Medicare-eligible age of 65, will they

Will H.R. 756 undermine our union rights? No. As opposed to some "postal reform" bills over the last few years, H.R. 756, as this article goes to press, does not attack collective bargaining rights, the right to dues check-off or the right to official union time.



"Regardless of the political party in power, all [previous] legislative efforts have failed and the pre-funding crisis continues."

Continues on the next page



Postal Reform Questions & Answers

H.R. 756 does not change any of the current laws that protect injured postal workers.

have to enroll in Medicare Part B to maintain their FEHBP coverage?

A: No. Only when an employee retires does the Medicare Integration mandate apply.

Q8: Will Medicare Integration remove retirees from medical coverage under the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program?

A: No. H.R. 756 sets up a “postal only” group within FEHBP for active and retired postal workers. For Medicare-eligible retirees, Medicare will be the primary insurance and a FEHBP plan will be the secondary insurance. Medical and prescription bills not covered by Medicare are covered by the FEHBP plan (if the medical care or drugs are normally covered by the plan’s benefits).

Q9: Will the postal only group insurance be run by the USPS?

A: No. USPS management will have no more authority to run the postal only health plans than they do now. The FEHBP “postal only” plans will continue to be administered by their plan sponsors, with OPM oversight.

Q10: Will retirees have access to all the FEHBP plans that other federal employees/retirees have?

A: Mostly yes. Eligible plans in the “postal only” group will be ones with over 1,500

postal participants. Right now, over 30 plans would be eligible, including all of the union-sponsored FEHBP health plans. Current retirees in a FEHBP plan with under 1,500 postal participants will be “grandfathered in” and can stay with their health plan – or switch to a FEHBP postal plan.

Q11: If a Medicare-eligible retiree has a spouse who is covered by an FEHBP plan, and is not yet 65 years of age, will there be a change in how the spouse gets medical coverage?

A: No. The spouse will be fully covered by the FEHBP plan until he or she becomes Medicare-eligible. At that point, the spouse will be required to enroll in Medicare Part B in order to maintain FEHBP coverage.

Q12: These are tumultuous times and there is much talk of doing away with and/or privatizing Medicare. If that were to happen, how would that affect our health coverage if H.R. 756 passes?

A: In the unlikely event of the elimination of Medicare, then there is really no Medicare Integration required of employees. Annuitants, including spouses, would maintain their FEHBP plan as their health insurance.

Q13: How many of the current postal retirees will be affected by Medicare Integration if this bill were to become law?

A: Approximately 20 percent of Medicare-eligible postal retirees are not currently enrolled in Medicare Part B. They will be required to enroll if they wish to keep their FEHBP coverage.

MEDICARE PART B

Q14: If an over-65 retiree did not voluntarily enroll in Medicare Part B at age 65, what happens to the late enrollment penalty if the bill is passed?

A: Under current provisions of the law, there is a 10% late enrollment penalty for each year after a person became Medicare-eligible, but did not enroll. H.R. 756 waives the late enrollment penalty for Medicare Part B to allow current retirees to enroll.

Q15: Is there any financial assistance with Medicare Part B premiums for those who are already Medicare-eligible but did not previously enroll?

A: H.R. 756 has a transition provision for current retirees and covered family members. The USPS will pay 75 percent

If passed, when would the Medicare Integration provisions of the bill go into effect? How will affected retirees know the impact on their individual situation? January 2019 is currently the proposed effective date. There is language in H.R. 756 that mandates an extensive education program for affected employees prior to Medicare Integration implementation. Furthermore, if H.R. 756 becomes law, the APWU is committed to creating its own education program.

Why do approximately 80 percent of APWU retirees already voluntarily enroll in Medicare Part B? With the combined benefits of Medicare Part B and their FEHBP plan, enrolled retirees have virtually 100% medical coverage with no co-pays, deductibles, co-insurance or catastrophic limits.

of the Medicare Part B premium the first year, 50 percent the second year and 25 percent the third year (only for retirees and dependents who did not enroll in Medicare Part B before the passage of H.R. 756). Furthermore, there are a number of Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) to assist low-income beneficiaries with their Medicare Part B premiums. Eligibility and availability vary state by state.

Q16: If a disabled veteran, getting their health care coverage through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Health Benefit program, has FEHBP coverage for a spouse, will they be mandated to enroll in Medicare as well?

The way H.R. 756 is currently written, yes. However, the APWU is working to improve and clarify the language surrounding this issue.

Q17: If I have a physician who opts out of Medicare Part B, will I be forced to change my existing doctor?

A: No. For doctors who opt out of Medicare, which is an extremely small number (less than 1 percent), your FEHBP plan will pay towards your medical expenses as set forth in its benefits and coverage rules.

MEDICARE PART D

Q18: How does Medicare Integration into Part D affect my premiums?

A: Prescription coverage is already provided in all FEHBP plans. There is no additional Medicare Part D premium that would be paid under the bill other than the premium already paid for FEHBP coverage.

Q19: Medicare Part D has what is called a "donut hole" creating a gap in prescription drug coverage. How will this affect annuitants under H.R. 756?

A: Whatever Medicare Part D does not cover in the "donut hole" will be covered by a person's FEHBP plan, if the FEHBP plan provides coverage with what is commonly referred to as a "wrap around plan." A "wrap around plan" for Medicare Part D gives a person complete prescription coverage. The APWU Health Plan will provide prescription "wrap around" coverage in the new "postal only" group and it is anticipated that other FEHBP plans will, as well.

Q20: If my current medicine is not covered under the Medicare Part D formulary, will I lose the coverage for that particular medicine?

A: No. Your FEHBP "wrap around plan" will cover what

Continues on the next page

There are no changes as a result of H.R. 756 to whether a dependent under 26 years-old is covered under a FEHBP plan.



"[If H.R.756 passes] for Medicare-eligible retirees, Medicare will be the primary insurance and a FEHBP plan will be the secondary insurance."



Postal Reform Questions & Answers

is not covered by Medicare Part D, based on the FEHBP plan's benefits. Keep in mind that FEHBP plans cover different medicines in different ways, which can change from year to year. That practice will not change as a result of H.R. 756, and employees will need to review their options carefully during Open Season.

Q21: What is the Employee Group Waiver Program (EGWP)?

A: The Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) of 2003, the law that created Medicare Part D, also created the Employee Group Waiver Program (EGWP). It is a program that incentivizes employers to cover health benefits for their retirees by providing access to discounted drugs. Right now, the EGWP does not currently apply to the FEHBP; however, H.R. 756 would allow the "postal only" FEHBP plans access to the EGWP discounts. In turn, access to the EGWP should save the FEHBP plans, individuals and the Postal Service significant amounts of money on the cost of medications.

"Prescription coverage is already provided in all FEHBP plans. There is no additional Medicare Part D premium."

OTHER ISSUES

Q22: What is the companion bill, H.R. 760 about?

A: H.R. 760, the *Postal Service Financial Improvement Act of 2017*, allows the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefit Fund (PSRHBF) to invest up to 30 percent of its funds in a Thrift Savings Plan-like account. Currently, all PSRHBF money (approximately \$50 billion) is in U.S. Treasury accounts, earning very low interest. With medical inflation running at 6-8 percent annually, the USPS loses large sums of money each year simply trying to keep up. Sensible investment approaches would allow the PSRHBF to generate more income to match medical inflation.

Q23: Why does the APWU support H.R. 756 when there is no language to restore overnight delivery standards?

A: The return of overnight delivery standards is an important goal of the APWU. However, pressing for it in this bill undermines its

passage because neither the USPS nor the mailers agree to support this language. The reality we face is that no legislation will survive in the current political environment without the support of the four major postal unions, postal management and a significant portion of the major mailers. APWU's effort to restore service standards will continue in other forms.

Q24: What about protection against further postal and plant closures?

A: If USPS finances are stabilized, there is less pressure to cut back on services. Conversely, if postal reform legislation is not passed soon, the Postal Service may look to implement further service cuts, such as eliminating delivery days, closing processing plants, reducing staffing, shuttering post offices and subcontracting more work – and services. Remember, a declining Postal Service is also an easy target for full-blown privatization. ■



Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) spoke to attendees of the National Presidents Conference on March 11, noting how "We actually have a moment in time where we can save what we got, we can prosper, and we can grow. We can build on the structure we have without killing that structure or damaging that structure in any fundamental way."

APWU Weighs In, Calling for An End to CPI Price Cap

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) submitted comments before the March 20 deadline to the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) for their ongoing “10 Year Rate System Review,” required by Congress in the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA). The Commission is reviewing the effects of the current rate system, capped by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to see how it affects the Postal Service’s ability to meet the objectives stated in the PAEA. The PRC requested comments from stakeholders, including the public, about the Postal Service’s rate setting system.

The union’s recommendations included eliminating the CPI cap on “market dominant products,” such as First Class Mail. This rate setting system blocks the ability for the USPS to raise revenue. If the cap was eliminated, the Postal Service would have the flexibility needed to meet their financial challenges.

Due to the lack of revenue from the rate cap, as well as the retiree health care pre-funding requirement not factored into the pricing system, the USPS cut costs. The cuts included consolidations of mail processing facilities, service standard degradation and cutting retail hours, thus denying good quality postal services to thousands of communities across the country.

The APWU outlined in their comments how the “price cap is the barrier to achieving a public postal system that satisfies the universal services obligation and meets all the objectives set out by Congress.”

The financial pressure of this CPI cap places the Postal Service at risk. It holds back necessary infrastructure changes, needed capital investments and the ability for the USPS to fix safety and health issues – such as replacing an outdated fleet of vehicles. It also strangles the USPS’ ability to restore and protect good postal services.

“Under any reasonable view of the Postal Service’s financial condition, it is evident that laboring under the price cap for the past decade has put the Postal Service in a difficult financial situation,” the APWU added in the comments submitted to the Commission. “It is evident that the price cap prevents the Postal Service from achieving its statutory objectives and mission. Particularly in



“The price cap prevents the Postal Service from achieving its statutory objectives and mission.”

meeting objectives to maintain quality service and achieve adequate revenue for financial sustainability.”

The APWU’s comments were prepared by a committee of officers, union members, attorneys and economic specialists. They pulled studies and utilized the research available on the last 10 years of the Postal Service’s failure to meet the necessary objectives as required by law.

The PRC will review the comments submitted and complete the project, as required by Congress and the PAEA. Their proposal is expected by the fall of 2017.

The APWU will continue to be engaged with its sister postal unions throughout this process to ensure the protection of the public Postal Service. Many organizations, including the four postal unions, postal management, a number of A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service signatories and other stakeholders submitted comments exposing the crippling effects of the price cap.

Thank You to Participating APWU Members

APWU wants to thank the local presidents and members who also submitted comments to the PRC. Their experience shows that there is widespread reductions in the quality of postal services, affecting communities across this country.

Locals who participated: Omaha Area Local (NE), Joplin Area Local (MO), New York Metro Area Local, Wilmington Area Local (NC), Montgomery County Area Local (MD), Des Moines Area Local (IA), Fox Valley Area Local (IL), Wichita Area Local (KS), Mississippi Coast Area Local, New Hampshire State, Central NY Area Local, Prescott Local (AZ), Greater Northland Area Local (Duluth, MN)

Also a special thank you to Byron Preminger (Des Moines Area Local Legislative Officer) and David Yao (Seattle Area Local Vice President) for submitting their own comments to the Commission. ■



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

Be Part of Our Democracy – Support ‘Vote by Mail’

*“It is up to us as
postal workers
to be an example
at work... Let’s
be a part of
the democracy
movement.”*

VOTER REGISTRATION IN OUR COUNTRY IS IN A SORRY STATE. IN THE 2016 general election, not all eligible voters were registered (only 79 percent) – and nearly half of those registered voters did not vote (*see chart below*).

Lack of voter turnout has consequences. What can your family lose by not voting? Pretty much everything – bills can be passed to change or end items that are important to you, including wages, health benefits, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, sick and family medical leave, vacation time, lunch breaks, right to organize, health and safety protections at work, pensions, and retirement benefits.

Legislation could also affect issues like your ability to take out bank loans, leaving you more susceptible to payday loan sharks. You may find more proposals to put nuclear sites in your backyard or pipelines near your water supply. There may be fewer government programs to help you when environmental disasters strike, to obtain affordable housing, to keep national parks open and to create climate change solutions.

One way we can prevent legislation and regulations that hurt our communities is increasing voter turnout. We can help our sisters and brothers by actively campaigning for “Vote by Mail” initiatives.

Once a person is registered, “Vote by Mail” makes it easier to cast a ballot. The three states that have “Vote by Mail” as a state law, Washington (since 2011), Oregon (since 2000) and Colorado (since 2013), were among the highest in voter turnout for the 2016 Election and had a very high percentage

2016 ELECTION

Total estimated U.S. population	325,742,227
# of eligible voters	251,107,000
# of registered voters	200,081,377
# of people registered but did not vote	92,671,979 (46%)

of registered voters who voted (*see chart on the next page*).

Now, let's take a look at a state that does not have "Vote by Mail" - New York. New York has no early voting and absentee ballots must have an excuse. Even though the state still saw a high voter turnout percentage, there is a still clear difference with the "Vote by Mail" states in regard to the percentage of registered voters who actually cast a ballot.

Take a Stand

Are you willing to take a stand and make sure that more Americans "Vote by Mail" in the next election? Enhance your postal job by having millions of ballots mailed by the USPS. Do your part to bring about democracy by joining us in our effort to bring "Vote by Mail" to every state.

What can every APWU member do now to protect the mail service while combating voter suppression and apathy?

One easy option APWU members may wish to consider is to sign up, with their family members, to vote by absentee ballot for the next election (if no excuse absentee voting is an option in their state). This helps support our jobs. An additional benefit is the members would not have to wait in lines. We could be an example for people to utilize mail service, and at the same time bring about more democracy in America.

If your state has a "no excuse absentee ballot" system, help get your community to sign up to receive their ballot by mail. How about co-workers, too? If your state does not have "no excuse required absentee ballots" or mandatory "Vote by Mail," help get them passed in your state.

There are 27 states which offer no-excuse absentee voting. Do not forget to check if your state has a one-time request to receive a mail ballot for every election.

You can also get involved in the *Democracy Initiative*, which APWU has partnered with, to help fight voter suppression. Find more information at www.democracyinitiative.org.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DREW BELL VIA FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS

	Registered Voters	Number of Votes	% of Registered Voters who voted
Washington	4,270,270	3,316,996	78%
Oregon	2,568,602	2,051,448	80%
Colorado	3,837,505	2,780,247	72%
New York	12,439,250	7,721,453	62%

Resources

The following websites can help you find out what your state voting laws are. You can also check with your Secretary of State's website. If you are not registered to vote, you can go on the following websites:

- www.vote.org
- www.usa.gov
- www.rockthevote.com

The League of Women Voters has sites in many states and provides updates on what initiatives and laws are being worked on or are being fought to keep. Visit www.lwv.org to find out more information about what is going on in your state.

To better ensure delivery and return of ballots, voters should know the deadline to

request and return a ballot, as well as investigate all options in returning the ballot. Voters can request the return ballots be hand-canceled with a round stamp at any post office to ensure the ballot meets state postmarking requirements. Be certain to follow instructions, provide a signature, add postage (if required) and contact your local election office for assistance.

Overseas military and civilian voters can obtain much more information at www.fvap.gov.

There are many compelling reasons to "Vote by Mail," including no more long lines and no difficulty getting time off from work. You can take your time reviewing the ballot to learn about the candidates and measures. It lowers costs for your state and causes fewer problems with voter IDs. All in all it creates better informed voters. You do not have to worry about where your polling place is. "Vote by Mail" also leads to guaranteed security of ballots, since they are handled by trained postal workers.

It is up to us as postal workers to be an example at work, support our jobs and take pride in the fact that we help make democracy happen! So let us all pledge to start today. Make that call or go online and do your part. Everything you need is in this article to get started. Let us be a part of the democracy movement. ■



SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Yes Virginia, Unions Have to File Taxes, Too

“Trustees and newly elected officers should routinely verify that the union’s 990 tax report has been filed for each fiscal year!”

Liz Powell

APRIL WAS TAX TIME FOR CITIZENS, BUT UNIONS HAVE A TAX TIME TOO. All unions, which are tax-exempt organizations, are required to file an annual tax report with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

A labor organization, as defined by the IRS, is “an association of workers who have combined to protect or promote their interests by bargaining collectively with their employers to secure better working conditions, wages and similar benefits. *Similar benefits* include benefits traditionally provided by labor organizations such as strike, lockout, death, sickness, accident, and other benefits. Labor organizations need not be recognized labor unions.”

IRS 990 Forms

Since unions do not pay income

tax on the dues collected from their members, the federal government requires the finances of the union be available for review by the public. Unions must file an annual information return or tax report with the IRS. IRS Form 990 is the reporting form federally tax-exempt unions must file with the IRS each year. This form allows the IRS, and the general public, to evaluate a union’s operations and it includes information on their finances.

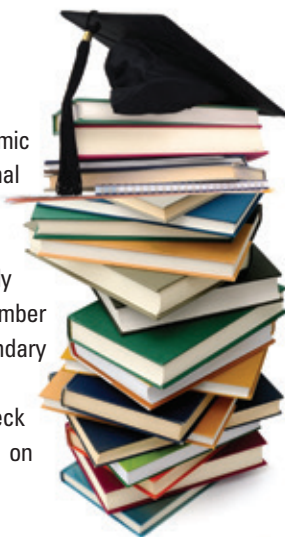
Annual information returns are reported on Form 990, Form 990-

2017 APWU SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE EXTENDED

The application deadline for the E.C. Hallbeck academic scholarship (\$8,000 over a four-year period) and vocational scholarship (\$3,000 over a three-year period) is extended to May 31, 2017.

Applicants must be the child, grandchild, stepchild or legally adopted child, of a current, retired or deceased APWU member as well as a senior attending high school or other secondary school. Don’t miss out on this benefit of union membership!

A brochure and application forms for the E.C. Hallbeck scholarship and the vocational scholarship can be found on apwu.org.



EZ and Form 990-N. The form that must be filed depends upon the annual income received by the union, called “receipts” by the IRS. When calculating annual receipts, the income from the current tax year is counted, not the funds already held in savings or checking accounts. In most cases, annual receipts will be limited to the dues collected for the fiscal year only, although some unions may have other income sources during the year.

Form 990 is the tax form used by unions who have \$500,000 or more in assets and \$200,000 or more in gross receipts for a tax year. This is the most detailed and complicated tax report unions must make. It is advised to get professional assistance when filing this report.

Form 990-EZ is the tax form used by unions who have less than \$500,000 in assets and less than \$200,000 in gross receipts for a tax year. This is an easier form to complete than the 990. If union officers are unfamiliar with the form, assistance may be required.

Form 990-N must be filed by unions whose annual gross receipts are less than \$50,000 and are required to submit the form electronically, also known as the e-Postcard, if they elect not to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ. There are no paper copies of this form; it must be filed electronically. The form has only eight questions, and only one that is financial. It confirms your contact information and that your union did not have receipts of over \$50,000 for the fiscal year.

Tax Return Deadline

The 990 reports are due every year by the 15th day of the fifth month after the close of the union’s fiscal year. For example, if the fiscal year ended on Dec. 31, 2016, the 990-EZ is due May 15, 2017. The 990 form cannot be filed until after the tax year ends. An extension to file forms 990 and 990-EZ is available, if requested in advance of the due date.

SECRETARY-TREASURER TRAININGS IN ATLANTA

From March 9-11, APWU local and state officers participated in the 2017 Officer’s Fiduciary Responsibility & QuickBooks Training offered by the Secretary-Treasurer’s Office in Atlanta, GA.



If a union fails to file a required return by the due date (including any extensions of time), it must pay a penalty of \$20 a day for each day the return is late. The same penalty applies if the union does not give all the information required on the return or does not give the correct information. There is no penalty for failing to file the 990-N report, although a union could lose its tax exempt status if the report is not filed for three consecutive years.

In general, the maximum penalty for any return is the lesser of \$10,000 or five percent of the union’s gross receipts for the year. For an organization that has gross receipts of over \$1 million for the year, the penalty is \$100 a day up to a maximum of \$50,000.

If the organization is subject to this penalty, the IRS may specify a

date by which the return of correct information must be filed. If the return is not filed by that date, an individual within the organization who fails to comply may be charged a penalty of \$10 a day. The maximum penalty on all individuals for failures with respect to a return shall not exceed \$5,000.

In addition, if an organization does not file as required for three consecutive years, it automatically loses its tax-exempt status. Loss of a union’s tax exempt status could require that the union pay taxes on the dues collected. There is a \$400 reinstatement fee. The Secretary-Treasurer’s Department can assist in getting the tax exempt status reinstated.

Remember, these tax filings are not optional, they are required by law. ■

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER’S TRAINING SEMINAR

Presidents, Treasurers and Trustees – You cannot comply with the law if you do not know the law!

Plan to attend the Secretary-Treasurer’s training from Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, 2017 at Bally’s Casino in Las Vegas, NV. The three-day training session offers classroom lectures on the legal and best practices for unions as well as a computer lab for both beginner and advanced Quickbooks users.

Registration information will be posted on apwu.org closer to the event date.

APWU Members Receive Pay Increases

COLA for Career Employees, Pay Raise for PSEs

A PWU members are receiving pay increases this spring.

Career employees received a **16 cent per hour** Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) increase effective March 4, in accordance with the 2015-2018 Collective Bargaining Agreement. The increase was the result of a rise of the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W), and it appeared in paychecks dated March 24 (Pay Period 06-2017). It will total **\$333.00 per year**.

This is the second cost-of-living increase under the 2015-2018 contract.

APWU COLA benefits “underscore the importance of collective bargaining rights,” said President Dimondstein. “It is because APWU members have joined together in a union, and negotiate together, that the contract includes COLA raises based on the CPI.”

The next COLA increase will be based on the July 2017 CPI-W, and will be effective in September 2017. Additional COLAs will be based on the January 2018 and July 2018 CPI-W.

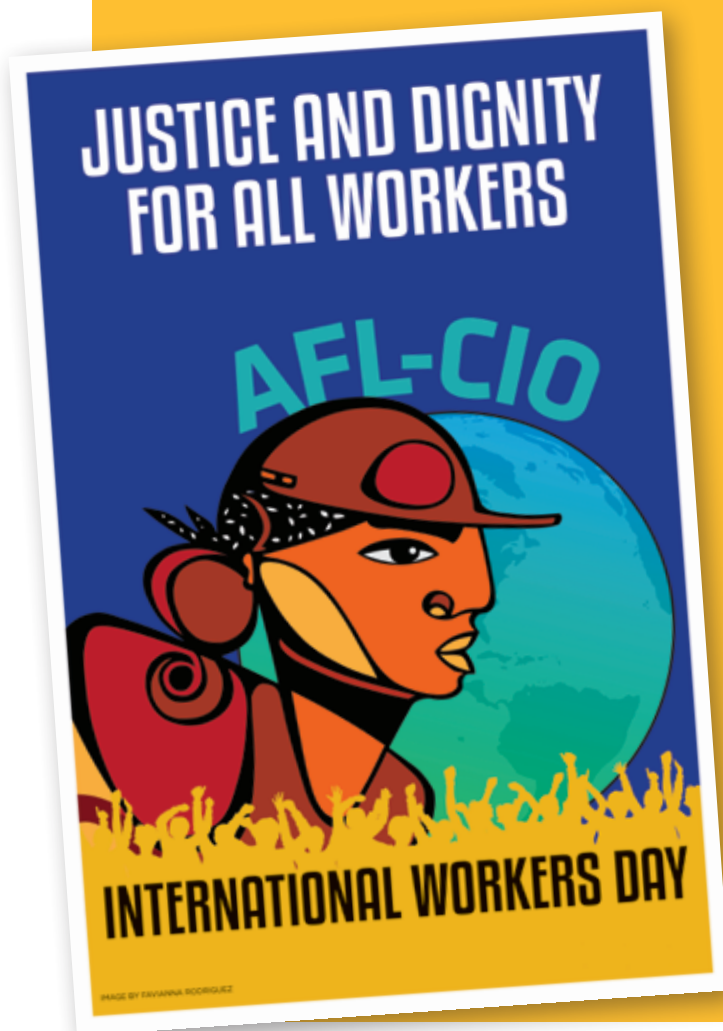
The cost-of-living adjustments are in addition to general wage increases. Go to apwu.org for more information about the next increase.

PSE Raise

Starting May 13, Postal Support Employees (PSEs) will get a pay raise of 20 cents an hour. The increase will be reflected in June 2 paychecks.

PSEs are not eligible for COLA increases, but they receive five general wage increases under the 2015-2018 contract.

Updated pay scales are included in this issue and are available at www.apwu.org/resource-types/pay-scales.



MAY DAY

The International Holiday of Worker Solidarity

May Day, the annual holiday recognizing the international working class, is celebrated around the world on May 1. Originating in the 1880s, the holiday came out of the historic fight for the eight-hour day, centered in Chicago.

In 1891, Samuel Gompers, president of the newly formed American Federation of Labor, declared “May 1st of each year is now looked upon by the organized wage-workers and the observing public as a sort of new Independence Day upon which they will every year strike a blow for emancipation and steadily weaken the shackles of wage slavery.”

Today, May Day is celebrated in over 80 countries, with mass rallies and, in many countries, a paid day off from work.

Sadly though, the holiday that was born in this country is not observed by the United States federal government. The American Postal Workers Union still encourages all members to take part in this historic day, and bring attention to workers’ issues at home and across the world!

If you are interested in finding a May Day event in your area, please contact your local or state APWU representative. May Day, the international day of worker solidarity, lives on!

APWU Joins 'March on Mississippi'

Over two dozen APWU members from multiple states stood in solidarity during the “March on Mississippi” with Nissan workers attempting to organize a union and join the United Auto Workers (UAW).

In March, over 5,000 union brothers and sisters protested near the Nissan factory in Canton, MS, in support of the plant’s workers fighting to organize the notoriously anti-union plant. After the rally, workers marched two miles to the plant. They delivered a letter to Nissan demanding the right to vote for union representation and for a contract to address wages, require safer working conditions and improve job security – free of fear or intimidation.

“The rally was well organized and attended,” said Mississippi APWU President Sundrenia (Sunny) Thigpen. “The employees from Nissan saw the union support there for them. It was very inspiring.”

Workers Want a Union

The march comes on the heels of numerous safety violations at the Nissan plant. When the plant opened in 2003, the Mississippi state government gave the company \$1.33 billion in tax breaks, in hopes that it would provide good-paying, full-time jobs to the community.

Workers have been trying to organize at the Canton factory for 13 years, with constant anti-union pressure from the Japanese multi-billion dollar company. Only three of Nissan’s 43 plants worldwide are non-union. All three are in the United States, the one in Canton and two in Tennessee.

In late 2015, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) charged Nissan and a temporary worker agency with violating workers’ rights in Mississippi. In a press release, the UAW outlined the NLRB’s decision, finding “that Nissan unlawfully threatened to close the plant if workers unionize;



The crowd of over 5,000 protestors included (L-R) MS District 3 Director Jerry Moore, Jackson Area Local President Darrious Berry, Memphis (TN) Area Local Legislative Director and Steward Patricia Heron, NBA Billy Woods, MS State President Sunny Thigpen, Jackson Area Local Secretary-Treasurer Teresa Smith and MS Coast Area Local President George Collins (not pictured).

threatened employees with termination for union activity; and unlawfully interrogated employees. The Labor Board said that Nissan has ‘been interfering with, restraining and coercing employees in the exercise of their rights.’”

“Nissan employees are working under punishing production quotas and unsafe conditions in Canton, and the company does not respect our rights on the job,” said Nissan employee Morris Mock. “We risk our lives every day because Nissan refuses to make the plant safe, and when we speak out to demand basic protections, the company threatens and harasses us.

“That’s why we’re joining together to demand the good jobs that our community deserves,” Mock continued. “We don’t back down until we win the freedom to stand together in a union.” ■

APWU members join thousands of others in the two mile march to the Nissan factory.



Washington Post Gets It Wrong

In a Feb. 13, 2017 opinion piece, “The Postal Service needs more than a Band-Aid,” *The Washington Post* editorial board issued a troubling public stance on postal reform.

The *Post* created a false dilemma for its readers: that we must curtail postal services (including Saturday delivery) and eliminate jobs to save the USPS from certain deterioration and failure. They claim the Postal Service “can’t pay their bills” and is sluggish to innovate.

They began with “The U.S. Postal Service continues to hemorrhage red ink.” Although they do criticize the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) for putting certain restrictions on the USPS and for creating the prefunding mandate, they left out the fact that the burden of the prefunding mandate is onerous and unparalleled.

As APWU members well know, Congress manufactured USPS’ “crisis” by imposing an unfair, crushing financial mandate on the Postal Service that no other government agency or private company is forced to bear. The PAEA compels the USPS to pay approximately \$5.5 billion per year to fund future retiree health care costs 75 years in advance. Without this unreasonable burden, the USPS would have enjoyed an operating profit of \$610 million in 2016 and over \$1.2 billion in 2015. Including the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2017, USPS has seen an operating profit of \$3.7 billion since the start of FY 2014.

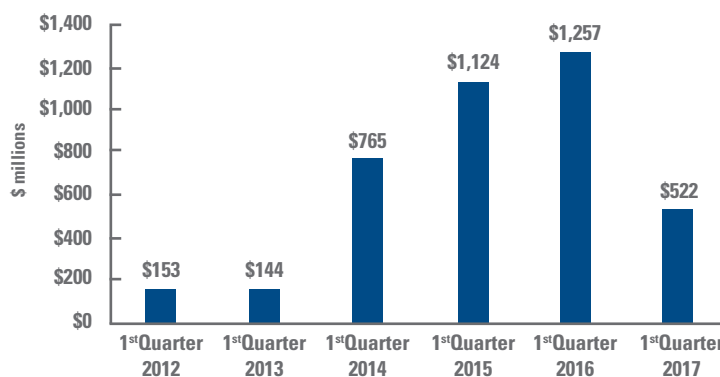
This same legislation holds the Postal Service back from introducing new non-postal services, services that would strengthen them. Congress created this crisis, and it can be corrected.

The *Post* editorial board went on to criticize recent efforts at reform for failing to address collective bargaining or eliminating Saturday delivery. We’ve seen these calls for cutting services and jobs many times before, from corporate forces who aim to demonize, destroy and ultimately privatize our public Postal Service.

The Truth Speaks for Itself

The Postal Service continues to rank highest in public support among all federal agencies, while providing affordable mail service to all without a dime of taxpayer

1ST QUARTER USPS OPERATING PROFIT IN \$ MILLIONS



“Congress created this crisis, and it can be corrected.”

money. Every day, the Postal Service ties together communities, supports commerce - including the boom of e-commerce - and provides the foundation for financial stability for workers from all walks of life.

The more than 100 organizations which make up A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service believe that the public good must not be sacrificed for private profit. We advocate for an alternative vision, one of expanded and enhanced services that sustain a vibrant public Postal Service for generations to come. Local post offices could offer not-for-profit, consumer-friendly financial services, for example. Other ideas include outfitting post offices to serve as hubs for local food banks, internet access and green energy infrastructure. Let’s continue to work together to bring these ideas into reality. ■

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.

Sure Money: Ripe for Expansion

The Market for International Remittances is Hot

The market for international remittances – sending money abroad – is rapidly expanding. Between 2010 and 2014, money transfers worldwide increased between three percent and 11 percent annually, according to the USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG). The United States ranks first worldwide for this service, with 22 percent of the global market.

Postal systems offer international remittance services in more than 60 percent of countries around the world. This is by far the most widespread postal financial product, according to the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Posts have been exchanging paper-based money orders since 1878, when the first UPU international treaty on postal payment services was adopted.

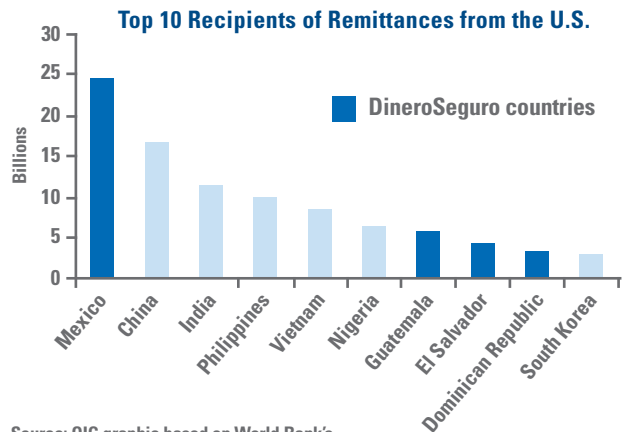
What is Sure Money/DineroSeguro?

Your post office may already offer an electronic money order service. The program, called Sure Money or DineroSeguro, offers international remittances from the United States to nine countries. Although the program started with 4,500 retail locations, by 2014 only about 800 locations processed Sure Money transactions.

In 2014, more than \$130 billion in remittances were sent from the United States to more than 140 countries. The USPS processed only 0.01% of those transactions, according to the USPS OIG. Of the ten countries receiving the most remittances from the United States (Mexico, China and India are the top three), the USPS wire service serves only four (and only one of the top five), *see chart*.

OPPORTUNITY FOR EXPANSION

The top 10 countries where Americans send money account for more than two-thirds of the \$131 billion sent abroad each year. But DineroSegundo (Sure Money), the Postal Service's international money transfer service, only serves four of those countries.



Source: OIG graphic based on World Bank's 2014 Bilateral Remittance Matrix.

Task Force on Enhanced and Expanded Services

For consumers, an expansion of international remittance services will provide a needed service at reasonable rates by a trusted public institution. For the USPS, improving and expanding the service could generate needed revenue. The USPS OIG estimated that the U.S. Postal Service could increase its market share to three percent over a five year period, generating on average annual revenue of \$89.2 million.

The 2015 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and the U.S. Postal Service calls for a joint "Service Enhancement and Innovation" Task Force. Authorized to discuss, research and consult with experts in various fields, the task force will cooperate on identifying and developing potential opportunities to increase revenue.

International remittance is one of the programs that APWU will raise with the task force.

In support of the APWU/USPS Task Force, the Campaign for Postal Banking is seeking clerks who process Sure Money/DineroSeguro transactions at their post office window. Please contact the Campaign at info@campaignforpostalbanking.org.

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.





INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR

***“You have a
right to report
safety concerns
to management
without fear of
retaliation.”***

Vance Zimmerman

You Have a Right to a Safe Workplace

YOUR SAFETY AT WORK IS A PRIORITY TO THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS Union (APWU). We want you to come to a safe workplace and to return to your families each day, without injury. Sadly, you cannot rely 100 percent on the Postal Service to make sure you are protected and your workplace is free from hazardous conditions. It is each member's responsibility to watch out for his or her own safety, as well as the safety of our union sisters and brothers.

The first step to ensure you are safe at work is to know your rights. Under federal law, you are entitled to a safe workplace, free of known health and safety hazards. You have the right to be trained in a language you understand and work on machines that are properly maintained, with all necessary safety protections installed. Management must provide safety gear and protect employees from toxic chemicals.

Should you have concerns, you have the right report to them to management without the fear of retaliation.

It is within your rights to request an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) inspection, speak with the inspector, see copies of the workplace injury and illness logs, review the records of work-related injuries and illness, and see copies of test results done. When necessary, your rights allow you to report a work-related injury or illness and to seek medical treatment for it.

Your union will always protect your right to a safe workplace, as well as

your ability to report an issue free of retaliation. Enforcement of safety laws is one of the largest benefits of union representation. The APWU takes that responsibility very seriously.

Report Your Concerns

You can assert your rights in various ways. We encourage you to file a *PS-Form 1767 Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice* when safety issues arise. This is one of the most important steps in addressing unsafe working conditions.

PS-Form 1767s must be readily available at your worksite for your use. When you turn in this form to your supervisor, they are instructed to investigate the alleged hazard during the same tour of duty the report was received. Management should abate the hazard if possible, note on the form what corrective action was taken and sign the form. The form has four (4) copies and you must be given a copy with the supervisor's actions to abate the hazard notated on the form.

The process does not always end there, especially if the hazard could not be immediately fixed. During the process to fix the issue, you should be kept informed of what is being done and what the final solution was to abate the hazard.

Scan the QR code to the right immediately to pull up a PDF version of the PS-Form 1767 on your phone or tablet. If you choose to use this PDF to report a hazard, be prepared to submit four separate copies of this form per issue.

When to Contact OSHA

When the safety issue is not resolved by reporting it to management, or you believe the safety problems are egregious and being ignored by the Postal Service, you have the right to file a complaint with OSHA. The

law protects employees and their representative's right to file complaints and request OSHA inspections of their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or their employer is not following OSHA standards.

You do not have to know what specific OSHA standard is being violated in order to file a complaint, but there is a time restriction on citations. OSHA may only issue citations for current and/or violations within the past six months. Therefore, a complaint must be filed as soon as a hazard or lack of compliance is noticed.

Complaints may be filed online, faxed, mailed or made via telephone to your local OSHA office. Go to www.osha.gov and click on "workers" to learn more about your rights or to file a complaint. I also encourage you to visit the Industrial Relations page at

apwu.org for the latest safety updates and contact information for your regional APWU Safety and Health representative.



PS-Form 1767, Report Of Hazard, Unsafe



Download the 2015-2018 Collective Bargaining Agreement to your mobile device!

PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEO ON USPS PROPERTY

In February, the APWU was involved in a case out of Austin, TX that the General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) filed against the Postal Service over the USPS' multiple policies against photographing, audio recording and video recording of anything inside or on the premises of a Postal Service facility. The General Counsel of the NLRB contends that ELM provision 667.2 (Interception of Oral or Wire Communications by Postal Employees), Handbook AS-805 5-5(s) prohibiting the use of unauthorized cameras in certain locations and Administrative Support Manual Section 663.4 requiring permission to use postal trademarks and copyrighted material, can all be construed as chilling an individual's right to engage in protected concerted activities guaranteed under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act.

At the hearing, the Postal Service argued that unlike private employers where similar rules have been struck down by the NLRB, it is its duty to prevent the photographing of the mail (an obligations under

the Privacy Act). They also argued that the special security needs of the Postal Service and the need for confidentiality in the Equal Employment Opportunity process justify the multiple restrictive policies as well.

The APWU, National Postal Mail Handlers Union and National Association Letter Carriers all intervened and participated in the hearing. I attended and provided testimony about the realities of why recording or photographing in a postal facility can protect both the health and safety of employees in addition to the workers' rights in situations where they are facing discipline but a union steward is not available.

Attorneys for all sides submitted their written post-hearing briefs at the end of March. We expect the judge will likely render a decision in late spring, which will then go before the full National Labor Relations Board. If the NLRB makes a favorable ruling the handbook will be changed. Until then, the current language is in effect.



CLERK DIVISION

The Future of Retail: Moratorium and Discussion

THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) “RE: RETAIL” IMPOSES A one-year moratorium on any new contracts under the Approved Shipper Program, Contract Postal Units (CPUs) and Village Post Offices (VPOs). In addition, “For a twelve month period of time commencing on the effective date of the 2015 National Agreement, the parties will enter into discussions over the ‘future of retail’ in the Postal Service.” Absent any extensions, the moratorium and discussions are scheduled to end approximately July 8, 2017.

The Clerk Craft officers have met several times to discuss “the future of retail” with USPS Retail managers. The first few meetings were used to gather information and better understand the USPS Approved Shipper Program, CPUs and VPOs. Historically, the Postal Service argued that the private companies are there to provide services where post offices are not available. However, the biggest takeaway in the last year of gathering data is we can confirm that the vast majority of these private companies are close to real post offices.

In total, 83 percent of all Approved Shippers, 71 percent of all CPUs and 74 percent of all VPOs are within three miles of a post office (*see chart*). The percentage of private postal retail outlets that are located close to a post office confirms union members’ experience that the Postal Service is encouraging the replacement of work performed by postal workers in post offices to private companies.

As the “smoking gun” documents in the Staples fight showed, although the Postal Service claimed they wanted to expand access for customers, some top officials in the USPS simply wanted to shift work and jobs from the Postal Service to private companies.

‘Approved Shippers’ Dissing the USPS

One of the many downsides to private companies performing postal work is the inherent tendency for the private companies to put their interests over that of the Postal Service and the American public. Approved Shippers like Office Depot, UPS, PostNet, Staples (before they were defeated), etc., in addition to selling USPS products and services, sell competitor services. For example, UPS stores sell UPS products, Office Depot sells FedEx products, and PostNet sells UPS, FedEx and DHL products.

Each of these companies makes a greater profit selling UPS, FedEx and DHL products than they do USPS products. Consequently, our testing



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

of the Approved Shippers showed their employees promoting their profitable products over that of the USPS. Moreover, in pushing the competitor products, the store employees often dissed the Postal Service.

Approved Shippers can also charge customers more than the actual cost of USPS stamps and services. Members have even told us they heard the companies do not always admit the extra costs to the customer, and sometimes blame the Postal Service for the higher cost.

Since the Staples embarrassment, where Approved Shipper employees bashed the USPS, some top officials in the Postal Service question the idea of the Approved Shipper program. Why continue the program if it threatens the USPS' positive brand and the trust of retail customers? Why send customers to USPS competitors, where they discredit the Postal Service to increase their profit at the expense of the USPS?

Revitalizing Post Offices

As part of our discussions with the USPS, we challenged the Postal Service to stop encouraging customers to go to private companies where service will be reduced, costs for the customer may be higher and the company may badmouth the Postal Service. We asked the USPS to increase access to customers through expanding post offices' hours, locations and staffing.

If the USPS truly wants to provide access to postal services at later hours, why not have post offices stay open

PRIVATE RETAIL OUTLETS' DISTANCE FROM POST OFFICE

Distance in miles from Nearest PO	Approved Shippers	CPUs	VPOs
Total	8,252	2,384	856
1 or less	2,680 (32%)	425 (18%)	422 (49%)
1.5 or less	4,045 (49%)	777 (33%)	490 (57%)
2 or less	5,266 (64%)	1,124 (47%)	556 (65%)
2.5 or less	6,194 (75%)	1,425 (60%)	599 (70%)
3 or less	6,870 (83%)	1,686 (71%)	637 (74%)
4 or less	7,621 (92%)	2,002 (84%)	695 (81%)
5 or less	7,940 (96%)	2,208 (93%)	733 (86%)

Numbers are cumulative. Percentages are rounded up to two digits.

later and open on weekends as they did in the past? Post offices should be open after hours for working-class people who work long hours around the clock.

The Clerk Craft officers emphasized that the key to success is staffing the windows. It used to be windows were staffed properly, which respects both the worker at the window and the customer waiting for service. It is demoralizing to postal workers and unfair for customers, for postal management to understaff

window counters, post signs encouraging the customer to go to a competitor and hear the constant negative stories about the Postal Service. If the Postal Service truly values its customers, why doesn't it staff the window counters with enough employees to assist customers in a timely manner? In any industry, without good service, customers will go to a competitor.

The Postal Service built the respect of the American public by providing affordable and excellent service in all aspects of operations. It is a tragedy how some in the Postal Service, and some outside of it, want to destroy that trust and respect by purposely eroding service.

Once the moratorium ends, we will be at a crossroads. If the Postal Service decides to continue to erode service at the post office and encourage people to go private companies, then we have to be ready to duplicate the successful Staples strategy of boycotts and pickets. Members should research the private postal retail companies in their area. As in the Staples fight, it is a fight for good service and good jobs for our communities.

Safety Is Its Own Reward

THE LEHIGH VALLEY PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION CENTER WAS ISSUED A fine of nearly \$100,000 by OSHA for extensive “willful” safety violations. OSHA found the \$99,630 violation willful because the Postal Service failed in their “ongoing responsibility [to] ensure the adherence to the machine specific procedures to affect the necessary energy control for each system component.”

More specifically, OSHA charged a violation of 29 CFR 1910.147(d)(2) because “the machine or equipment was not turned off or shut down using the procedures established for the machine or equipment.” Those procedures are contained in the Electrical Work Procedures Maintenance Management Order (MMO) and machine specific Energy Control Procedure MMOs, such as MMO 037-15, which applies to the Automated Package Processing System (APPS).

A ‘Running’ Example

Reportedly, the Postal Service required repair work on the induct line of an APPS machine while the equipment was running.

The Maintenance Division sent out information earlier to the field about a safety issue on the APPS. It was highlighted in a Safety Bulletin, sent as MMO 069-08, dated July 3, 2008. This was necessary because, as the title of the MMO said, there could be an unexpected startup of the induction belts under certain conditions.

These conditions involved

maintenance work and the bulletin warned that, “To prevent personal injury or death, the following precautions are to be followed...” The bulletin continued with four bullet points outlining the safety issues and the statement that USPS Engineering and the vendor were working on a solution.

By April 26, 2010, management issued MMO 039-10, rescinding the prior MMO regarding the unexpected start-up of the induction belts. After the unexpected start-up problem was fixed, specific safety procedures were listed. These included admonitions to not defeat an interlock switch without authorization, to stop the machine before opening any access door and to follow the prescribed safety procedures. Other requirements included that auto induction lane 1 should be stopped prior to entering and working in the area. This was to prevent the risk of personal injury beyond the interlock controlled induction area access gate.

Unfortunately, local management wanted our mechanics and technicians to perform maintenance functions on



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

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Inspection Number: 1190196
Inspection Date: 11/08/2016 - 01/13/2017
Inspection Date: 02/08/2017

Citation and Notification of Penalty

Company Name: U.S. Postal Service, c/o Lehigh Valley Processing & Distribution Center
Inspection Site: 17 S. Commerce Way, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002

Citation 1, Item 1. Type of Violation: Willful

29 CFR 1910.147(d)(2): The machine or equipment was not turned off or shut down using the procedures established for the machine or equipment.

a) Lehigh Valley Processing and Distribution Center - Employees are rebuilding an Automated Package Processing System, comprised of multiple machines with separate energy sources which have not been controlled. This continuing violation most recently occurred on or about October 18, 2016, when the previously developed hazardous energy control procedures were not applied to the machine machine assembly. The employer's ongoing responsibility is to ensure the adherence to the machine specific procedures to effect the necessary energy control for each system component.

Abatement certification and documentation required within 10 days after abatement date. The certification shall include a statement that abatement is complete, the date and method of abatement, and state that employees and their representatives were informed of this abatement. Abatement documentation shall include documents demonstrating that abatement is complete, such as evidence of the purchase or repair of equipment, photograph or video evidence of abatement or other written records.

ABATEMENT DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR THIS ITEM

Date By Which Violation Must be Abated: 02/21/2017
Proposed Penalty: \$99630.00

PROPOSED PENALTY: \$99,630.00

See pages 1 through 3 through 3 for complete citation and notification of penalty for violation on employee and employer rights and responsibilities.

Citation and Notification of Penalty Page 1 of 3

Safety is Serious Business

It should be obvious that safety is its own reward. Following the sometimes inconvenient procedures required ensures your own safety and health, providing the best chance of avoiding injury at work. It is easy to engage in a kind of gallows humor about how the employer will put the bottom line ahead of individual well-being, but safety is serious business.

Employers are serious about cost avoidance, and we must be serious about enforcing our rights to a safe and healthful work location and procedures. Rushing to shortcut things is NOT in the best interests of anyone,

employer or employee. The extra time and cost, if any, necessary to perform your duties in a safe and effective manner is an investment for which the reward is not being injured or killed.

Our sincere thanks go to the officers and members of the Lehigh Valley, PA Area Local and to Vice President Chris Day for swift and appropriate action. We hope and trust that the citation for a repeated and willful violation, with a hefty monetary cost, will deter the Postal Service from putting us at risk. But, to ensure our own safety, we must, as the members did in Lehigh Valley, insist on enforcement of the safety and health rules.

the auto inductions lane inside the APPS while the machine was running. Local management believed that the Maintenance Technical Support Center (MTSC) in Norman, OK supported their position.

Thankfully, a rightfully concerned mechanic contacted the local union, resulting in consultation and information from the Maintenance NBA and headquarters Maintenance Division officers.

As a reminder to all, you can find further information on the Hazardous Energy Control Program (Lockout) in MMO 033-05 and the Electrical Work Plan in MMO 023-13. The document which "establishes policy and requirements for an electrical work plan (EWP)" is Management Instruction (MI) EL-810-2013-5.

All the documents listed here should be available locally.



Stand Up for Safe Jobs!

President Dimondstein continues to push hard for the APWU program Stand Up for Safe Jobs! (<http://www.apwu.org/issues/safe-jobs>). Like he says, "Everyone has the right to leave work in one piece!"

Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman administers the general APWU safety program, including this program. You can find an abundance of safety & health information on the APWU website (<http://www.apwu.org/issues/safety-and-health>).

We do ask that you involve and communicate with your friendly local steward or craft director, who may then contact your NBA.

If you have Maintenance Craft safety-related concerns, please also feel free to contact Maintenance Craft Assistant Director B Terry B. Martinez.



MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICE DIVISION

The Protection of Skilled Wo

AS THE MOTOR VEHICLE DIVISION CONTINUES THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL arbitration schedule, we are focused on preserving and upgrading highly skilled work in Postal Vehicle Service (PVS). The first case on this year's docket was the Schedule Examiner Vehicle Runs position, scheduled from Feb. 27-28, before Arbitrator Shyam Das.

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) challenged the Postal Service's shift of highly skilled bargaining unit work to Executive and Administrative Staff (EAS) positions. The Schedule Examiner is an essential part of PVS. This position carries through to completion all steps in the process of developing schedules for transit and local mail transportation throughout the entire area, properly coordinated with transportation contractors, special delivery and carrier delivery schedules and units.

The Postal Service has slowly been eroding the duties of the Schedule Examiner as network rationalization results in the reduction of supervisor positions. Claims by management that this work is becoming less and less are nothing more than smoke and mirrors. The Postal Service is systematically reducing the number of Schedule Examiners across the country and shifting the work to the Supervisors Transportation Operations and the Network Specialists.

Article 1, Section 6, draws a clear line between the work of supervisors and the work of bargaining unit employees. The work of the best qualified Schedule Examiner Vehicle Runs has been shifted

to EAS positions in violation of those lines. Management may not perform these duties where Schedule Examiners are assigned. In offices where full-time Schedule Examiner positions are not established, Article 1.6 still prohibits the performance of bargaining unit work by supervisors and EAS employees.

Instead of going before the arbitrator with the merits of the dispute, the Postal Service decided to bifurcate the case under the pretext that the union failed to raise an interpretive issue.

However, the APWU presented two witnesses during the bifurcation portion of the hearing: Assistant MVS Director Javier Piñeres and MVS Central Region National Business Agent William Wright, a former Schedule Examiner, who testified to the duties and work a Schedule Examiner performs daily. Additionally, the union testified that during the actual Step 4 meeting, MVS Director Michael Foster clearly stated the interpretive issue the union would present to the arbitrator.

MVS Division Seeks DIE/DSI Upgrade

On March 29 and 30, before Arbitrator Shyam Das, the Motor Vehicle Service Division sought the

rk Continues



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster.

Driver Instructor and Examiner (DIE) – the current Driver Safety Instructor (DSI) position – to be upgraded one level higher than those employees they train. The MVS Division takes this position from a previous Step 4 award granting a higher level of pay for employees who train another employee of an equal level.

Arbitrator Das is very familiar with the issues surrounding the DIE position since his involvement goes as far back as 2004, when he sustained the union's challenge that the Postal Service's revision altering the language of the existing qualifying standard was a violation of Article 19. In that case, he found the language was unnecessarily ambiguous, and therefore not fair, reasonable and equitable as required by Article 19.

Subsequently, as part of the Postal Service's 2005 "Safe Driver Program" the existing title of the Driver Instructor and Examiner changed to the current Driver Safety Instructor. As part of a general upgrade, the DSIs received a one pay level upgrade during the 2006-2010 National Agreement, upgrading the DSI position to a PS-07 position. The duties have remained the same despite the change in title and the subsequent upgrade.

The DSI is a highly skilled position and an integral part of the Postal Service's "Safe Driver Program." The program itself grew out of unfavorable publicity in 2004 concerning a

number of children's deaths in accidents. It should not have taken a national-level dispute (much less a national-level arbitration) to achieve a well-deserved upgrade for these positions.

SEAM Case Outcome

Arbitrator Stephen B. Goldberg rejected the APWU's contention that the introduction of a computer program called Solution for Enterprise Asset Management (SEAM) to manage vehicle repairs at Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs) violated existing handbook and manual provisions.

The APWU filed a dispute asserting SEAM caused the reassignment of work across occupational groups in violation of Article 7.2. The union's dispute stated how the program violated the PO-701 Fleet Management Handbook and violated position descriptions in the EL-201 Handbook. The APWU also argued that SEAM resulted in supervisors performing bargaining unit work in violation of Article 1, Section 6.

Arbitrator Goldberg reaffirmed that Articles 7.2 and 1.6 of the National Agreement limit management's right to make changes in the workplace. However, he ruled "the essential nature of the work performed by technicians and stockroom employees under SEAM is not meaningfully different than it was" before SEAM's implementation.

The Arbitrator's finding that SEAM "did not change any Postal Service Handbook" led him to conclude that "the Postal Service did not violate Article 19 by implementing SEAM without Article 19 notice to the Union." However, he remanded to the parties the question whether or not the Postal Service violated Article 19 "by not furnishing the SEAM Coordinator Guide to the Union upon its issuance."

Arbitrator Goldberg also rejected the Postal Service's contentions that it had complied with Article 19. The Postal Service claimed it complied because it gave the union all it was entitled to under this article. It also argued the union's appeal to arbitration under Article 19 was untimely.

Under the Award, the APWU has a right to meet further with the Postal Service on SEAM and, if necessary, to seek a remedy for the Postal Service's untimely provision of the SEAM Coordinator Guide to the union.

The Award reconfirmed the principles that management cannot assign our work across occupational groups and must follow the requirements of Article 19.

As evidenced by the SEAM award, there is still much to be done in the MVS Craft towards protecting our work and significant contributions to the Postal Service. As always, we will continue the fight. ■

‘Unprecedented’ Contracts

Negotiations with Pacific Architects and Engineering, Inc. (PAE) for our Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) were successfully completed with the membership’s unanimous ratification of the tentative agreement. The parties agreed to terms including a grievance process with just cause provisions. We were also able to achieve a “no lay-off” clause as well as a guaranteed floor in regards to a minimum number of full-time positions.

Both are unprecedented in private sector Postal Service contracts.

The main goal in establishing this initial agreement was to improve working conditions. This is a two-year contract that will enable the parties to test the provisions and readdress what needs to be changed in the next agreement. We established a good foundation which can be built upon going forward.

The employees will also receive two cash payments as well as an established incentive program which will offer compensation based upon performance standards. We normally do not desire such a program, but in this environment it is customary. During the next contract discussions, we will be negotiating for permanent wage increases that are in excess of those required under the Service Contract Act.

Negotiation Updates

As this article was submitted, we are still in negotiations with the Postal Service for the IT/AS agreement. The Feb. 24 extension has passed. However, the parties settled on all its non-economic issues and are narrowing down economic requests.

We held our initial bargaining session with the private sector group covered under the Salmon Companies collective bargaining agreement. The first session went smoother than anticipated. The parties were able to tentatively agree on several working condition changes. As this issue goes to press, negotiations are expected to continue in mid-April.

Going into this process, it was a concern of our negotiating team that the company would not bargain in good faith. So far, they have been willing to compromise on many issues. By the time you are reading this, we hope you will already have read on apwu.org that we have a ratified agreement.



Director Steve Brooks

Outstanding Grievances Reduced

The Support Services Division has been very busy the past few months. Contract negotiations require many hours of preparation, in addition to the actual hours traveling and negotiating. Any time between negotiation sessions is spent dealing with day-to-day grievances received from represented locals. I am pleased to state that despite the fact that we have had to spend so much time in negotiations, we have also been able to cut the number of outstanding old cases.

The next three years for Support Services will prove to be very challenging. We, like the other crafts, must be prepared for the changes we expect due to the results of the 2016 Election. We cannot trust that newly elected officials will do the right thing by the Postal Service. That means USPS may find it necessary to make changes in its operations, affecting all of us.

I believe our union members will meet the challenges ahead. When we fight together, we show our strength and prevail. ■

Fighting for Workplace Safety

Before passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act in December 1970, millions of Americans risked their lives every time they reported for duty – there were no national safety laws designed to protect workers across industries.

In 1970, groundbreaking legislation created the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), which is responsible for setting workplace safety and health regulations.

Risking Lives on the Job

In the 1800s, factory workers were often mauled in grisly workplace accidents. In 1877, Massachusetts passed the nation's first factory-inspection bill, and other states passed similar measures. State laws, however, were largely ineffective as many industries were not covered, and enforcement was weak. Newspapers reported tens of thousands of workplace deaths each year.

Although Congress created the Department of Labor (DOL) in 1913, most workplace regulation was left up to individual states, which declined to sufficiently fund inspection procedures and enforcement measures.

In the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Frances Perkins, an advocate for workplace safety, as Secretary of Labor. With union support, Perkins helped create the Bureau of Labor Standards in 1934 to ensure workplaces were “as safe as science and law can make them.”

For the next three decades, union efforts to expand workplace safety laws were slowed by opposition from employers, who found it cheaper and more profitable to replace dead or injured workers than to create safe workplaces.

Taking Action

Labor unions began clamoring for the federal government to act. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), which represented workers in some of the most dangerous industries in the country, pushed for health and safety language in contracts. OCAW organized public hearings around the country with doctors, scientists and community activists to expose dangerous workplace hazards and to push for federal legislation.

Feeling their pressure, the U.S. Public Health Service issued the 1965 report, “Protecting the Health of Eighty Million Americans.” It found that a new chemical entered the workplace every 20 minutes, and evidence showed a strong link between cancer and the workplace. It also reported that

old problems were far from being eliminated, and called for a major national campaign to improve occupational health.

After years of debate between political parties about workplace safety – as well as more and more worker injuries and deaths – Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act in November 1970, creating OSHA. A month later, it was signed into law.

A Lasting Impact

OSHA was created to improve and enforce safety standards to reduce workplace hazards; to research occupational safety and health; to maintain a record-keeping system to track violations and work-related casualties, and to establish occupational safety training programs.

On the positive side, in the 40 years since the enactment of the OSH Act, workplace safety has improved dramatically. Fatalities and debilitating injuries have decreased; occupational diseases such as “brown lung” have all but disappeared, and OSHA standards are in place to limit workplace exposure to asbestos, lead, cotton dust, and other hazardous material. Yet, there are still far too many injuries and deaths caused by corporate greed, and OSHA has been undermined and weakened. ■

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY IS APRIL 28

The labor movement observes Workers Memorial Day on April 28, to commemorate those who have been killed or injured on the job and to revitalize the fight for workplace safety.

Each year, thousands of workers die and millions more are injured or sickened from dangerous working conditions. Many employers routinely cut corners and violate the law. Fewer workers are reporting hazards and injuries because they are afraid of being harassed or fired.

According to OSHA, between Oct. 1, 2015 and Sept. 30, 2016, nearly 5,000 workers were killed on the job and nearly 2.9 million suffered from non-fatal injuries or illnesses.

APWU members are encouraged to participate in Workers Memorial Day events. To find one near you, visit affcio.org/Issues/Job-Safety/WorkersMemorialDay.

In 2015, the APWU launched the *Stand Up for Safe Jobs* campaign, encouraging workers to be aware of the many dangers on the job, and to actively fight together for safe working conditions. Go apwu.org/issues/safe-jobs to learn more.



REGIONAL COORDINATORS

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

SOUTHERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Kennith Beasley

ALABAMA
ARKANSAS
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
LOUISIANA
MISSISSIPPI
NORTH CAROLINA
SOUTH CAROLINA
OKLAHOMA
TEXAS
TENNESSEE

Inspire and Motivate

THE HEADLINE ABOVE IS SOMETIMES A HARD THING TO SET AND KEEP IN MOTION because some of our members are usually concentrating on their own private concerns. However, there are constant and enormous challenges that require our membership's prompt and undivided attention. Members must be reminded that their jobs and personal concerns are equally important.

The tasks before us include finding ways to inspire and motivate the majority of the APWU membership. I will venture to say that just about all APWU officers and stewards are extroverts and have the charismatic gift of gab. Let's use this to our advantage to get the membership's blood pumping and ready to fight for the causes of justice.

First, having a sustained degree of inspiration and self-motivation is essential. We must get members involved internally and externally in postal affairs. There is no satisfaction or glory in standing on the sidelines, watching everyone else do the work. Explain how that's free-loading if they do, which makes them devoid of character and integrity.

American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best." Our members have this type of spirit.

Leaders at APWU headquarters, as well as local leaders, officers and stewards out on the workroom floor, have to awaken that sleeping spirit and bring those dormant talents out of the members. We all must seek all opportunities available, 24/7, to inspire and motivate them, despite any differences.

"There is no satisfaction or glory in standing on the sidelines, watching everyone else do the work."

We want to organize our members and have them support our legislative fights for civil rights, for the poor, for the disenfranchised and for bills that promote the inclusion of all. We are color and gender blind, and we love to produce a united front for justice and equality.

One thing we as postal workers want and have in common is "our desire for a decent job." My colleagues Sharyn M. Stone, Omar Gonzalez, Mike Gallagher, John H. Dirzius and I have pledged to lead the inspirational and motivational charge. We are "fired up" and "ready to go."

Topsy-Turvy Times

There seems to be a cloud of consternation among people. You can tell by the prolific political conversations that are going on in the work place. The current government's leadership, or the lack of leadership, does not seem to be

giving all people a sense of hope. Most citizens want strong leaders who make sense and are inclusive.

There is a lot of misinformation being communicated to the people by politicians and others through the mass media. The problem is, leaders and spokespersons are standing and defending things that are false, and then insisting they are true. That is a blatant oxymoron. Some of us can deal with it because we know the truth and spot biases, but I am concerned about the generation coming behind us.

Some may be impressionable and naïve, possibly accepting this new way of thinking as normal. I believe that acquiescing to this type of reasoning is on the backs of future generations. When truth is seen as lies, and lies are seen as truth, it strips the truth of its beauty and pureness. Further, it

degenerates and demoralizes. This type of thinking can affect masses who believe in nobility. I believe the old adage that says, "The truth will set you free."

Leadership in a democratic and civilized society is of the people, for the people and by the people, as our forefathers wrote in the U.S.

Constitution. Our nation is not yet perfect, but it has evolved into a country of hope and concern. To do anything against that would be a setback.

Remember, the duty lies upon us to inspire and motivate our ranks with hope and faith to secure our future. ■

AMPS STATUS

There was a signed moratorium by Arbitrator Stephen Goldberg halting the Area Mail Processing consolidations and plant closings through April 2017. We should know by the time this article is published if the moratorium remains. As this article goes to press, we hope that the moratorium will evolve into a definite stoppage of all facilities closing.

Supply and demand stiffened the past rash of closings, because the slowing down of delivering mail was – and still is – a national embarrassment to the post office heads. The public and members of Congress know it did not make sense to downgrade business by slowing the mail down and hurting our customers.

APWU SUPPORTS NALC'S 25TH ANNUAL STAMP OUT HUNGER FOOD DRIVE

President Dimondstein is urging APWU members to actively support the 25th annual National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) Food Drive, slated for Saturday, May 13.

"This year is a milestone for our NALC sisters and brothers and I encourage each APWU member to make a donation," he said. "We appreciate our sister postal union's leadership in coordinating this generous drive year after year."

Last year, carriers collected more than 80 million pounds of food, well above the previous record of 77 million pounds.

Postal customers across the country are asked to put non-perishable food donations in a sturdy bag and place the bag near their mailbox prior to their regular mail delivery on Saturday, May 13. Letter carriers will collect the donations as they deliver mail. Many USPS worksites also set out containers to collect contributions.

Volunteers can: organize donations as they come in; help transport contributions to local pantries; place posters and flyers about the food drive in public places; make sure family and friends know about the drive and how easy it is to donate, and spread the word on Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Contact your local or state union representative for more information.



Postal Reform is ‘Marked-Up’

On March 16, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee “marked-up” and approved the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2017* (H.R. 756). A mark-up is a process where a congressional committee can consider and amend a bill before advancing it to the House of Representatives or Senate.

Recognizing the need to set the Postal Service on sound financial footing, the APWU supported H.R. 756 advancing through committee. The favorable vote to move the bill out of the Oversight Committee is one of several steps in a lengthy legislative process.

The bill helps to solve the disastrous pre-funding mandate caused by the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), while at the same time treating our retirees fairly (please see pages 8-12 for answers to how the bill specifically affects APWU members). The bill would also allow the Postal Service to modestly raise postage rates immediately by one-cent, generating roughly an

additional one-billion dollars in annual revenue.



Revisions

Several revisions to the bill were considered in the mark-up, addressing some of APWU’s concerns:

- A manager’s amendment (a change to the bill by its sponsor) was offered by Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), and adopted by the Committee, to clarify prescription drug benefit coverage under FEHBP.

Legislative and Political Training

The 2018 mid-term elections are coming up fast, and we will be providing training to increase voter turnout. The training will consist of mobilizing our members, sharpening our message and getting out the vote. The Legislative and Political Training will take place October 1, 2017 in conjunction with the All Craft conference taking place in Las Vegas, NV at Bally’s hotel. Go to apwu.org for more information.

- An amendment by Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA) requires the Postal Service to give members of Congress advanced notice if a postal facility in their district would be subject to closure, consolidation or a reduction in service.

There are key legislative steps still before H.R. 756, including consideration before the full House of Representatives, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and the full Senate.

Additional Legislative Issues

In addition to postal reform, there are several legislative issues we would like you to know about. Let your Congressional Representatives know where you stand on these issues!

- Support H. Res 31, a bipartisan House Resolution to keep the “Service” in Postal Service. Take action to end the mail slowdown by restoring prompt service standards.
- Support H.Res.15 (defends six-day delivery) and H. Res 28 (protects door delivery).
- Oppose attacks on federal workers, such as H.R. 1364’s proposal to end “official time,” in which union representatives can represent their coworkers on government time. We must stand with our sister unions to stop legislative attacks on their representation and collective bargaining rights.
- Oppose measures which force federal and postal workers to pay more into FERS for less retirement benefits.
- Support H.R. 676 (“Medicare for All”), which advocates for health care as a right, not a privilege.
- Support fair treatment of America’s seniors. S. 427 gives fair increases to those receiving Social Security benefits. H.R. 1251 makes Cost of Living Adjustments reflect the spending habits of seniors.

Go to the “Resources” section of the Legislative Department’s page on apwu.org for 1 page sheets with detailed information about these issues. Staying active and engaged with your local, state and congressional representatives is critical in order to move them on any issue. ■

Benefits of Being Union

Sometimes, we forget why we are union members. We may fall into a trap of feeling as if we solely pay dues. Too often, I hear members say, “I just pay my dues, and the union never does anything for me.” I recently spoke to a member who was employed for 30 years and is now nearing retirement. She said, “I have never used the union.”

Is that really true? Let’s be honest with ourselves.

We do not have to work where we do. Some people are forced to have a job that pays minimum wage, with no vacation time, no holidays and no protections against the employer. Many work for an “at will” employer, meaning the employer could fire us for any reason, without cause and without warning. I do not think most of us would choose to have one of those jobs, if offered.

The reality is, we all benefit every day from being union.

USPS employees enjoy union representation for your needs, including in contract negotiations and the grievance process. Other benefits include an

effective grievance procedure to adjudicate disputes with management; protections against unjust discipline, including termination; prohibitions against unilateral actions by our employer, and provisions for safe working conditions (with union safety representatives to enforce them).

Below are some other examples of what APWU members have achieved by working together.

APWU Career Employees Enjoy:

PROTECTIONS AND RIGHTS

- Night differential pay
- Enforcement of overtime provisions – time-and-a-half for overtime and penalty pay for excessive overtime
- Sunday premium pay
- Out-of-schedule premium
- Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)
- Hourly wages that may not be unilaterally reduced
- Job Security
- Jobs awarded by seniority, not favoritism
- Access to training opportunities

- 50-mile excessing limitations
- Protections against layoffs

BENEFITS

- Good health insurance, in which the employer must pay at least three quarters of the total premium
- Basic Life insurance with additional insurance options
- Ten paid holidays (PTFs are compensated by receiving a higher straight-time hourly rate throughout the year)
- Annual and sick leave accrual
- Flexible spending accounts for health care and dependent care
- Holiday scheduling rights
- Allowances for uniform and work clothing
- Retirement planning

Postal Support Employees (PSEs) Enjoy:

PROTECTIONS AND RIGHTS

- Regular pay increases
- Night differential pay
- Time-and-a-half for overtime work in excess of 40 hours
- Higher level pay when performing higher level work
- When scheduled to report for work, work hour guarantees

BENEFITS

- Health benefits eligibility upon employment
- APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan after first 360 day term and upon reappointment, in which the employer must pay 75% of the total premium
- Annual leave accrual and unused leave can be cashed in
- Six paid holidays and an option to have annual leave balance credited in lieu of holiday leave pay if you work
- Annual uniform allowance

FAIR PROMOTION STANDARDS

- Strong contractual language that provides for career appointments
- Reappointments by seniority, not favoritism

All postal workers are also entitled to union democracy. Every member has a voice and vote in union elections and membership ratification of contracts. There are direct elections of all union officers and opportunities to participate at all levels of the organization. ■



HOME FRONT



APWU Gives Vets a Helping Hand

On Jan. 28, the American Postal Workers Union and community volunteers joined the Veterans Administration (VA) to give a helping hand to veterans in need at the 23rd annual

Winterhaven Stand Down. This was the thirteenth consecutive year that the APWU participated in the event – providing assistance to more than 700 homeless and underserved veterans from the DC Metropolitan area.

Veterans were transported from neighborhood shelters and off the streets in order to receive useful resources and a variety of beneficial services. Upon arriving to the Washington, DC VA Medical Center they were greeted with smiles and handshakes thanking them for their service. Each veteran received two hot meals, care packages, toiletries, blankets, insulated work boots, winter coats and other necessities to help sustain them. Health and vision assessments, HIV testing, dental exams, employment and educational services, legal aid, financial planning, substance abuse and rehabilitative counseling, and one-on-one sessions with mental health professionals were also available.

This year several officers, staff and friends of the APWU came together to distribute an assortment of items purchased through local and member donations. Backpacks filled with survival gear, hygiene kits, warm clothing, fast food gift cards and other supplies were given to the men and women taking refuge in shelters and trying to manage on the street in nature's harsh elements. Veterans living in VA transitional facilities and those recently placed in permanent housing were given one of our APWU "Welcome Home" packages to help them settle into their new place. The giveaways included fleece blankets, dish sets and utensils, cotton towels and sheets. The veterans made their selections based on their personal preferences and individual needs.

Only eight percent of America's population can claim veteran status, but veterans more than double that figure in the nation's homeless population. According to the Disabled Veterans National Foundation (DVNF) and other credible resources, veterans are 50 percent more likely to become homeless than other Americans due to unemployment, underemployment, service-connected disabilities, delays in disability ratings, a lack of support networks and social isolation after discharge.



Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy and Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman with veterans proceeding through the APWU checkpoint.

Tremendous strides have been made to eradicate homelessness and improve the financial standing of our veterans through outreach programs like the Winterhaven, but much remains to be done. We still have 500,000 veterans who become homeless in a given year. On any given night, 50,000 are sleeping on the streets and another 1.5 million continue to live below the poverty line.

Veterans deserve better. They merit the dignity and respect they've earned through personal sacrifice. More assistance, better employment opportunities, expedited ratings, improved medical care and enhanced access to VA benefits are needed if we are going to succeed.

For more information about veteran homelessness, or to learn how you can support veterans in your community, visit www.va.gov/Homeless/ or contact a veteran organization in your area.

The APWU Human Relations Department has numerous programs to benefit U.S. Service members, veterans and their families. If you would like to contribute to these worthy causes, make donations payable to "APWU" Support Programs and mail them to:

American Postal Workers Union
Attn: Human Relations Department
1300 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

Any questions about our Support Programs should be directed to the Human Relations Department. Call 202-842-4270. ■

Union Administration Training

The Research and Education Department developed a training program entitled “Union Administration,” and will conduct several training programs in 2017.

The training is a week-long program designed to assist local and state APWU Executive Officers in acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to run an effective union, and to meet the upcoming struggles and challenges of the future.

The training is limited to APWU local and state presidents, executive vice presidents and secretary-treasurers. Training will be provided by APWU national officers, staff and affiliate organizations. The registration fee is \$450 per person and includes materials, coffee breaks and a graduation dinner.



Curriculum Synopsis

- **Effective Leadership Skills** - Discusses the responsibilities and challenges of leadership and explores ways to build an effective team to achieve a common goal.
- **Efficient Time Management** - Provides participants with time management tools, including setting priorities, managing paper work and eliminating time wasters.
- **Coalition Building** - Identifies coalition partners and explores how to maintain a successful relationship to collaborate on joint projects.
- **Conducting Effective Meetings** - Teaches a basic knowledge of parliamentary procedure, and explains how to organize an agenda for productive and efficient union meetings.
- **Dealing with Difficult People** - Aids in finding alternative approaches to conflict resolution and develops participant's ability to listen attentively and use “I” messages when giving feedback.
- **Duties of Election Committees** - Highlights the “Dos and Don'ts” for running union elections.
- **Fiduciary Responsibilities** - Discusses creating a budget, keeping track of and controlling expenditures and safeguarding union funds.
- **Filing and Defending a Charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)** - Outlines the documentation needed to file a successful claim with the NLRB and explains how to defend the union when a member files a charge.
- **Labor History** - Looks at the major struggles of the past and examines how we can apply the lessons learned to the challenges we face today.
- **Monitoring Dues Check Off (DCO)** - Tracks the processing of 1187 Forms, managing transfers to other locals and making dues adjustments.
- **Officers Duties and Responsibilities** - Explains how each department interacts with their local/state counterpart to aid in identifying and resolving work place issues.
- **Recruiting Union Activists and Volunteers** - Teaches how to effectively identify, recruit and maintain union activists.
- **Setting Goals** - Assists officers in setting priorities and outlines a procedure to measure its progress.
- **Stress Management** - Analyzes the causes, the health consequences and strategies for managing or eliminating stress.
- **Structuring Constitution and Bylaws** - Features policies to include in local and state constitutions and bylaws, also gives instructions on handling charges filed against officers and stewards.
- **Understanding Diversity** - Aids participants in understanding and respecting that each individual comes from a different background and has a unique perspective and explains how collective diversity makes the union strong.
- **Utilizing the News Media** - Gives instructions on notifying the media, when to submit press releases or event media advisories and what not to say during interviews.

For additional information, visit the APWU Calendar of Events at www.apwu.org/events/category/national-events, click on the Union Administration Training in your region and follow the link for hotel information and to print a registration form. ■

Older Americans Month: Age Out Loud

The first Older Americans Month (OAM) was launched in 1963, aimed at celebrating the contributions and lives of older Americans.

This year's theme is "Age Out Loud," highlighting "the ways older adults are living their lives with boldness, confidence, and passion, while serving as an inspiration to people of all ages. Getting older doesn't mean what it used to... For many aging Americans, it is a phase of life where interests, goals, and dreams can get a new or second start," said the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut.



Today, aging is about eliminating outdated perceptions and living the way that suits you best. Older Americans are taking charge, striving for wellness, focusing on independence and advocating for themselves



and others. What it means to age has changed. OAM 2017 is a perfect opportunity to recognize and celebrate what getting older looks like today.

The APWU Retiree Department would like you, your local and chapter to use OAM 2017 to focus on how older retirees in the APWU are redefining aging. Through work or family interests, by taking charge of your health and staying independent for as long as possible, and through your community and advocacy efforts, use this opportunity to learn how we can best support and learn from our older members.

Share the story with your members of an older APWU Retiree member in your local or state who is "Aging Out Loud."

Send their story to the APWU Retiree Department, Attn: Age Out Loud, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. Submissions need to arrive no later than July 15. Please limit the story to 300 words or less. Photos can be included. ■

USPS CLAIM OF OVERPAYMENTS OR OUTSTANDING DEBTS OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES

Retirees have a right to file a grievance when becoming aware of an alleged outstanding debt owed to the USPS. That right is in the contract and JCIM under Article 15, Section 7- Outstanding Debts of Retired Employees.

The APWU and the USPS agreed, in part, that:

"Due Process requires prior notice. Retirees are entitled to a written notice, including notice of their right to file a grievance, before the Postal Service takes any action to collect on an alleged payroll issue or outstanding debt. If a timely grievance is filed, the collection of the debt will be delayed until final disposition of the grievance, either through settlement or exhaustion of contractual remedies. The Postal Service may not submit a Request for Recovery of Debt

to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) before the grievance/arbitration procedure has been exhausted. The Article 15 time limits apply. A Step 1 grievance must be filed within fourteen (14) days of the date on which the employee or the Union first learned of its cause, the alleged payroll or collection dispute."

Retirees, when you receive any type of notice from the USPS or OPM claiming that you owe the USPS money, you must **act immediately**. The notice may come in the form of a Notice of Determination of a Debt, a Letter of Indebtedness, a Letter of Demand or an invoice from the USPS.

Read the letter completely, then contact the local union representative where you last worked to file a grievance.

APWU Health Plan Gains Accreditation

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) recognizes comprehensive Health Plan Accreditation provided by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. All Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) plans are expected to meet this OPM requirement by April 2017.

In September 2016, the APWU Health Plan successfully completed the Health Plan Accreditation. This achievement shows the APWU Health Plan's commitment and overall dedication to quality. It also improves patient experience for our members.



What is Accreditation?

Health Plan Accreditation helps employers and consumers identify health plans based on quality and value.

What are the components of Health Plan Accreditation?

1. Standards – An evaluation of the health plan's structure and processes to maintain and improve

quality. *The health plan must provide documented evidence through the use of policies, reports, materials and records that foster successful outcomes.*

2. Performance measures – An evaluation of the health plan's performance on process and outcomes in clinical care, as well as member experience of care, to determine quality and value. *The assessment of these performance measures lets APWU Health Plan members know how well your doctor is managing your care, if you are receiving the required tests and treatments necessary to get well and if you are obtaining appropriate follow up appointments to ensure you remain healthy.*

Accreditation Assesses Quality

The APWU Health Plan wants its members to understand what "Quality" means to overall health and well-being. This allows our members the opportunity to partner with the APWU Health Plan to ensure that our quality program initiatives meet your needs. Examples include:

- **Living with Illness** - The health plan has activities for members managing chronic illness. *What this means to you:* The APWU Health Plan has programs in place to help manage chronic conditions. One example is for members who have been diagnosed with diabetes. They can access care at 100 percent, which means you pay nothing for in-network office visits, generic medication and insulin through the Health Management Programs (terms and conditions apply).
- **Access and Service** - Health plan members have access to needed care and favorable patient experience. *What this means to you:* The APWU Health Plan continuously assesses how quickly our members can access care, how members rate their personal physician and if there are enough primary care physicians and specialists to serve all members.
- **Customer Satisfaction** - Health plan members have access to Membership Services for answers to questions regarding health benefits and claims payment. *What this means to you:* The APWU Health Plan strives to ensure that all claims are processed accurately and timely. Members also have the opportunity to file an appeal regarding submitted claims. All appeals will receive a written notification within the specified time frame based on the type of appeal.

Delegation Oversight

The APWU Health Plan contracts with: Cigna, United HealthCare, Beacon Health Plan (Behavioral Health), VI Equicare and ExpressScripts (Pharmacy) to provide health services to all members. Our contracted relationships with these vendors also ensure we provide adequate oversight and have accountability for our health care services.

Our vendors are accredited or certified, which means they, too, undergo a rigorous accreditation assessment and implement their own quality improvement program. The APWU Health Plan continuously reviews our vendors' quality and provides recommendations to meet the health care needs of our members.

Our accreditation status ensures we will continue to distinguish ourselves amongst our competitors. ■

Show Your Union Pride! Wear Union Gear!

Visit the online store for the latest APWU apparel, publications, gifts and insignia products.

Order online at
apwustore.org

◀ Display your support for "Our Postal Service – Yesterday, Today, Forever," with the exclusive Forever T-Shirt.
\$12.00

◀ Show your APWU pride with the "Standing Up! Fighting Back!," exclusive T-Shirt.
\$8.50

CHECK OUT THESE ITEMS

Two-Tone Varsity Jacket



65/35 poly/cotton shell with 100% nylon lining; navy blue with tan sleeves and tan accents on knitted cuff and collar; kasha lined front slash pockets; embroidered APWU logo in matching color.
\$45.00

Pro-style with structured mid-height crown; all cotton, sanded finish in khaki with navy blue visor; APWU logo embroidered in navy blue.
\$8.00



Two-Tone Navy/Khaki Cap

Denim Button-Down Shirt



Long sleeve medium blue denim button-down shirt; APWU logo embroidered above left chest pocket.
\$33.00

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

For a catalog and order form,
call (703) 631-4200 or write
APWU Insignia Products Department,
P.O. Box 221494, Chantilly VA 20153-1494