

THE AMERICAN **Postal Worker** **APWU**

November/December 2017

**STANDING  
UNITED**



**STRENGTH**

**RESPECT**

**UNITY**

**EQUALITY**

**DIVERSITY**



# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 5** 'I Am the Real Face of Minimum Wage'  
*Op-Ed by Bill Thompson, Son of APWU member*
- 6** 'Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow'  
2018 Contract Campaign
- 8** Postal Workers Recover From Hurricanes
- 11** Letters
- 13** The Postal Service, Serving 2.7 Billion
- 15** Catching Up with APWU Young Leaders
- 17** EPI Report: Unions Improve the Lives of All Working People
- 18** Members in Action
- 21** Single-Payer Health Care, Its Time Has Come
- 22** Open Season 2017: We Are Focused On You
- 29** **FROM THE FIELD**  
Reversions, Abolishments, Excessing
- 30** **CAMPAIGN FOR POSTAL BANKING**  
Bank Closings and Lack of Confidence Point the Way to Postal Banking
- 31** **LET'S BUILD THE GRAND ALLIANCE!**  
Field Hearings Demonstrate Broad Public Support
- 32** Labor News



## ABOUT THE COVER

Through management's attacks on our jobs and service, hurricanes and fires, and the rising politics of hate and division, APWU members stand united.



## COLUMNS

- 4** **PRESIDENT**  
Fight for Working Class Unity
- 12** **VICE PRESIDENT**  
Are You Ready to Take Action?
- 14** **SECRETARY-TREASURER**  
Communication Is the Key
- 16** **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**  
A Growing Workplace Danger
- 28** **CENTRAL REGIONAL COORDINATOR**  
Still in the Struggle

## DIVISIONS

- 24** **CLERK DIVISION**  
Price Cap's Significant Impact on Clerk Craft
- 25** **MAINTENANCE DIVISION**  
Labor Distribution Codes
- 26** **MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICE DIVISION**  
Sept. 1 and Where is the Work?
- 27** **SUPPORT SERVICES**  
Contracts Ratified

## DEPARTMENTS

- 34** **LEGISLATIVE & POLITICAL**  
Congress Continues Attacking Postal Workers
- 35** **RESEARCH & EDUCATION**  
'A Woman's Place is in Her Union!'
- 36** **HOME FRONT**  
Long Overdue Welcome Home
- 37** **HUMAN RELATIONS**  
The Long Road Home
- 38** **RETIREES**  
Thank You for Your Service
- 39** **HEALTH PLAN**  
Open Season is Here

19



## The American Postal Worker

(ISSN 0044-7811) is published bimonthly by the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC, 20005

[www.apwu.org](http://www.apwu.org)

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKER, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC, 20005

Mark Dimondstein, President - Editor  
Debby Szeredy, Executive Vice President  
Elizabeth Powell, Secretary-Treasurer

Vance Zimmerman	Industrial Relations Director
Clint Burelson	Clerk Division Director
Steven G. Raymer	Maintenance Division Director
Michael O. Foster	Motor Vehicle Service Division Director
Steve Brooks	Support Services Division Director
Sharyn M. Stone	Central Region Coordinator
Mike Gallagher	Eastern Region Coordinator
John H. Dirzius	Northeast Region Coordinator
Kennith L. Beasley	Southern Region Coordinator
Omar M. Gonzalez	Western Region Coordinator
Judy Beard	Legislative & Political Director - Assoc. Editor
Anna Smith	Organization Director
Joyce B. Robinson	Research & Education Director
Sue Carney	Human Relations Director
John L. Marcotte	Health Plan Director
Nancy E. Olumekor	Retirees Department Director
Lamont Brooks	Clerk Division Assistant Director
Lynn Pallas-Barber	Clerk Division Assistant Director
Idowu Balogun	Maintenance Division Assistant Director
Terry Martinez	Maintenance Division Assistant Director
Javier Piñeres	Motor Vehicle Division Assistant Director

### CLERK DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

Robert D. Kessler	Christine Pruitt
Shirley J. Taylor	Larry Crawford
Robert Bloomer Jr.	Chuck Locke
Peter Coradi	Martin J. Mater
Sam Lisenbe	Mike O'Hearn
Stephen Lukosus	Stella 'Joann' Gerhart
William Mellen	Mike Schmid
Tom O'Brien	Michael Sullivan
Pamela Richardson	Bernard C. Timmerman
James E. Scoggins	Rachel Walthall
Billy Woods	Liz Swigert
Brian Dunn	James Stevenson
Frank Rigiero	Sonia E. Canchola
Pat Davis-Weeks	Brian Dunsmore
Linda J. Turney	Daniel F. Skemp
Robert Romanowski	Vince Tarducci
John Jackson	Vicki L. Carios
Jack Crawford	Michael William Funk Jr.
Jerry McIlvain	

### MAINTENANCE DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

William LaSalle	Louis M. Kingsley Jr.
Jimmie Waldon	Carlos Paz
John Gearhard	Craig Fisher
Jeffrey S. Beaton	Dave Sarnacki
Curtis Walker	

### MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICE DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

Dwight D. Johnson	Bruce Amey
Joseph LaCapria	Jerome Pittman
Kenneth Prinz	William Wright

### SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT

Judy McCann

### OTHER NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

Daniel Soto	Rufina Pagaduan
James M. Patarini	

### PRODUCED BY THE APWU COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Emily Harris	Communications Director
GO! Creative, LLC	Design and Layout



PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

# FIGHT FOR Working Class Unity

**“In Our Unity, Lies Our Strength!”** *“An Injury to One is an Injury to All!”* These are crucial union principles for building a better life for postal, and all, workers.

The corporate rulers know it. They counter our unity and solidarity path with their strategy of “divide and conquer.” As Wall Street strives for maximum profits, there are many fault lines they exploit such as dividing native from foreign born, men from women, white from black, private from public sector, career from non-career and workers here from workers around the world. When they succeed in dividing us – they laugh all the way to the bank!

For unions, a worker, is a worker, is a worker. We are all equal assets to society and to our unions. Workers all want and deserve decent wages and benefits, safe working conditions, respect and dignity, quality and affordable healthcare, dignified retirements and a bright future for coming generations. We have far more in common than we have differences.

## **FASCISTS ARE BITTER ENEMIES OF WORKERS AND OUR UNIONS.**

Dangerous to workers is the divisiveness, bigotry, intimidation, and race and religious hatred of the KKK, neo-nazis/neo-fascists and the so-called “alt-right.” APWU members and those of good will across the political spectrum are rightly disturbed and outraged by the rising presence and violence of these groups in Charlottesville and elsewhere – and the green light given by the White House.

As history marches on, many younger folks may not be fully aware of the devastation fascism inflicted on the people of the world. The dictionary defines fascism as: “a governmental system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly suppressing opposition and criticism... and emphasizing an aggressive nationalism and often racism.” Fascism is most notably associated with Hitler-led Nazi Germany. Hitler took power in 1933 promising to “Make Germany Great Again” and

rallying the people behind theories of the superiority of the “Aryan Master Race.”

One of Hitler’s first acts was to ban trade unions and persecute, jail and kill unionists. Hitler’s Germany invaded one country after another, leaving tens of millions murdered by the Nazis’ brutal iron heel which crushed those who did not think, talk or look like them.


It took World War II to defeat Nazism and world fascism, but not before Hitler exterminated six million Jewish people in concentration camps (including most of my family) and worked to death millions of slave laborers while German industrialists gained immense profits. 400,000 U.S. soldiers died. Great Britain was relentlessly bombed and lost 500,000 civilians/soldiers. Our other main ally, the Soviet Union, suffered the unfathomable loss of 30 million citizens.

My father, a highly decorated World War II Veteran flying 64 combat missions, was one of many millions who volunteered to defeat world fascism. Following Hitler’s defeat, after incredible suffering and sacrifice, the conventional wisdom was that the horrors of fascism could never happen in the USA.

I was raised differently. Growing up, my dad’s words of warning and wisdom were that fascism indeed could happen here.

The recent events in Charlottesville, the emboldened white supremacists and their spewing of race hatred toward African-Americans, Jewish people and immigrants indicate that my dad was right. If we are not vigilant we can wake up in Nazi America. The 40,000 in Boston who rallied for equality and against the hate-mongers certainly give us hope for the future.

What does all this have to do with the APWU? Everything! Fascists are bitter enemies of workers and our unions. Their race and religious bigotry, intimidation and violence are a direct threat to our unity and ability to “stand up and fight back” to save the public Postal Service, win good contracts, gain better working conditions, enjoy a better life and live in a more just society. *“In Our Unity, Lies Our Strength!”* ■



# I Am the Real Face of the Minimum Wage

This article by Bill Thompson first appeared in the *Kansas City Star* and has been edited for clarity. Thompson is the son of an APWU member and also a 46-year-old father and Burger King worker.

When I'm standing over the hot grill at Burger King, I often think of my father. He was a clerk, and a proud member of the American Postal Workers Union. Once a month, he and other clerks played the letter carriers in a union softball game. I would buy an ice cream cone and sit on the bleachers with the other children, watching my father in the outfield.

That now seems like another life. I'm a college-educated 46-year old who spent the last three decades at fast-food restaurants. At the Burger King in Kansas City, Missouri, where I've worked for the last five years, I'm paid just \$9.10 an hour.

Unlike my father, I get no health care or other benefits. Years ago, an infection caused my teeth to fall out and my whole face to swell. My wife of 16 years has never seen me smile with my teeth. She is my soulmate, but I can't even show her the joy she brings me because I'm too ashamed of my mouth.

How did I get here? My father's union job provided a middle-class childhood. We lived in a town with good schools; we visited the doctor regularly; and we never went to bed hungry. I graduated from college in 1995 as a drafting engineer, and worked for five years in that field, joining Burns McDonnell Engineering. But soon I needed training in 3-D technology to keep my job. With \$43,000 in student loans, I couldn't go back to school and was laid off. I had a wife and two kids to support, so I took the only job available: fast food.

Like me, most of my coworkers aren't teenagers – they're adults supporting families. Despite working nearly 40 hours a week, many of my coworkers are

homeless. Some sleep under a bridge near the store, or crowd into tiny apartments with many others. We rely on food pantries and food stamps to feed our families. There are definitely no softball games.

Without health care, none of us can afford a doctor or a dentist. My tooth infection has turned my mouth into a big open wound, but all I can do is self-medicate with Tylenol.

Two years ago, I joined the Fight for \$15, the movement to raise pay to \$15 and win union rights. Since 2012, we've won raises for 22 million underpaid workers nationwide—including a minimum wage increase to \$13 an hour here in Kansas City. By joining together, we acted a lot like the unions that helped my father and many others in his generation reach the middle class.

But unlike employers in my father's time, fast-food giants like Burger King refuse to respect our right to join a union. And before our city's \$13 an hour raise could even go into effect, Missouri state lawmakers stripped away the rights of cities like Kansas City to raise our minimum wage. Instead of looking out for underpaid workers, Gov. Eric Greitens and lawmakers in Jefferson City sided with lobbyists fighting to keep our pay as low as possible.

Workers like me can't depend on politicians to raise our pay and improve working conditions. This Labor Day, we fought back with nationwide strikes to demand \$15 and union rights. We know that if we want a better life—food, clothes, shelter, dental insurance and simple pleasures, like a softball game—we need a union standing behind us.

I won't continue to dream longingly of my father's life; I will fight to make it my own.



# FIGHTING TODAY for a BETTER TOMORROW

**T**he APWU's Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the Postal Service expires on Sept. 20, 2018. As part of the National Officers' preparation for the upcoming negotiations, they issued a call-to-action for members to suggest an initial contract campaign slogan. Answering the call, members stepped up and spoke out.

Slogans came pouring into headquarters with over 1,500 members, mostly rank-in-file, taking action. Concern for the future, unity, respect and support for the union's general bargaining goals were recurring themes. By the deadline, more than 2,500 entries were received, with some members entering multiple suggestions.

Around 1,300 All-Craft Conference (ACC) attendees got a chance to cast a ballot for their favorite pick of the five "finalist" slogans – determined by the National Executive Board. The winning slogan is "Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow," submitted by Alfonso McFarlin, Jr., a member of the Houston Area Local Retiree Chapter.



Alfonso McFarlin, Jr.

## 'Work Together to Get What You Really Want'

After learning he won the 2018 Contract Campaign slogan contest, Alfonso McFarlin, Jr., kept asking himself, "Is this real?"

The Houston Area Local Retiree Chapter member explained that his slogan, "Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow," embodies the spirit of not only hard



ACC attendees voting for their favorite slogan.



work and good service, but also ensuring better pay and benefits for generations of future postal workers, as well as a strong public Postal Service.

"I believe in fighting for what's right," McFarlin said. "That's what made me want to do this."

McFarlin started working at the post office in 1980 and immediately joined the APWU. He worked as a clerk for 29 years before retiring on Nov. 1, 2009. Since then, he has been a dues-paying member of his retiree chapter.

He talked about how all postal workers deserve good benefits for their work – and how belonging to a union makes it possible. "Everyone should be protected," McFarlin said. "With the union, you do better and you work better."

McFarlin plans to take the three-day trip to Washington, D.C. to coincide with Opening Day of contract negotiations. He has some winning advice of his own



for today's postal workers, "Keep fighting! Everyone should work together to get what you really want."

### 'You Are the Union'

"Negotiations are not a mystery," President Dimondstein said at the 2018 Contract Campaign Kick-Off event on Oct. 3 in Las Vegas. "We know we want decent wages and benefits, good job security, an end to subcontracting, ending the divisive three-tiered wage system and protecting so many of our great gains of the past... we want a better life for postal workers and our families."

**"OUR STRENGTH COMES FROM YOU,  
THE MEMBERS, BECAUSE YOU DO  
THE WORK, AND YOU ARE THE UNION."  
– PRESIDENT DIMONDSTEIN**

"And on the other side – and it is a 'side' – there's management," President Dimondstein continued, "who wants us to make less in the worst conditions, with a more hostile environment. They want more non-careers. They want more sub-contracting. They want more privatization."

"So how do we win?" he asked the crowd. "We win through building power and leverage... When we are at the table, our strength comes from you, the members, because you do the work, and you are the union." ■



## CAT Teams Are Forming

Recruitment for Contract Action Teams (CATs) began in the beginning of October at the All-Craft Conference (ACC). CATs are designed to involve union members in the fight for a good contract. This means sharing information on the workroom floor and winning community support for the struggle to secure better service and good jobs.

CATs can:

- Share flyers with updates about negotiations and upcoming activities;
- Establish a text messaging group, email list or a newsletter;
- Organize activities, such as T-shirt days, button days, sticker days, etc., to publicize the issues, and develop new ideas for building support for our goals;
- Conduct outreach to potential allies beyond the Postal Service to explain why their support is needed.

Seventy teams were formed on the spot at the ACC and President Dimondstein spoke with local and state presidents to discuss the contract campaign and the CATs on Oct. 27. The next phase involves recruiting more CATs across the country.

Local and state presidents who answer the call to establish CATs are requested to designate a coordinator to act as their liaison and assist CATs with efforts to share information on the workroom floor, as well as win community support for our struggle to secure better service and good jobs.

If you are asked to volunteer for a CAT, say "Yes!" It is more crucial than ever that the APWU's collective power is exerted as members fight to secure a good contract during these challenging times. Contact your local or state president to find out how you can get on board!

"Every member has a role to play," said President Dimondstein. "So build those Contract Action Teams, and send management a message that we plan to have a contract we can be proud of when we are done – one that advances the life of every APWU member, our families and the working class in general."

APWU members from the Mid Hudson New York Area Local in union gear during the 2015 Contract Campaign.



# Postal Workers Recover

## UNION FAMILY COMES TOGETHER TO

In less than a month, three catastrophic hurricanes made land-fall slamming the south (especially Texas and Florida) as well as the U.S. territories Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The storms left devastation and destruction in their wakes. Hundreds of thousands of homes – including hundreds belonging to APWU members – were significantly damaged or completely destroyed by wide-spread flooding, hurricane-force winds or mold afterward.

### ‘People Are Getting Desperate’

As this issue goes to press, the situation in Puerto Rico is dire. Puerto Rico Area Local President Juan González-Del Valle said he was only able to reach 30 percent of his members a week after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island.

### APWU Disaster Resources

**Employees’ Assistance Program (EAP)**  
800-EAP-4YOU/877-492-7341/eap4you.com

**Postal Employees’ Relief Fund (PERF)**  
202-408-1869/Perf10268@aol.com/  
postalrelief.com

**APWU Disaster and Hardship Fund**  
202-842-2471/scarney@apwu.org

**AFL-CIO Community Services Network**  
aflcio.org/about/our-unions-and-allies/state-federations-and-central-labor-councils

**AFL-CIO Union Plus Disaster Relief Grants**  
800-472-2005/unionplus.org/#/hardship-help/disaster-relief-grants



Photo courtesy of Avery Bristol/Flickr Creative Commons

Hurricane Harvey survivors

“Lines to markets are a three hour wait. Lines for ATMs are four hours. We have no water or electricity... Power is not expected to be restored for months,” he said. “To make things worse, in order to get gas, one has to wait in line from eight hours to two days. In some occasions, you wait in line for hours only to find out that there is no more gas... People are getting desperate.”

González-Del Valle thanked “all of our sisters and brothers who were always looking out for us during

and after this disaster,” including Northeast Regional Coordinator John Dirzius and the Philadelphia Area Local which sent supplies. “From our hearts, I thank all of you,” he said.

### ‘Stay Positive’

Members in the Virgin Islands “just started getting back on their feet.” Virgin Islands Area Local President Becky B-Simmonds explained that the islands – St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas – were hit with back-to-back storms.

## Union Family Flies to Puerto Rico

On Oct. 4, the AFL-CIO, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA-CWA), the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), the National Nurses United (NNU) and United Airlines worked together to send more than 300 skilled volunteers to assist the recovery efforts in Puerto Rico for two weeks.

Nurses, doctors, electricians, engineers, carpenters, boilermakers, cement masons, ironworkers, machinists, plumbers/pipefitters and truck drivers, representing over 20 different unions and 17 states, flew to Puerto Rico to help rebuild the lives of our fellow citizens. IBEW members fixed generators and electrical issues. Registered nurses and other health care workers from the NNU gave medical assistance. Teamsters delivered supplies and handled sanitation needs. ALPA members loaded over 35,000 pounds of relief supplies to fly to the island commonwealth.

San Juan Mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz praised the coordinated effort. “Thanks to our union brothers and sisters for hearing, listening to us,” she said. “The power of union... Let’s get it done.”



# from Hurricanes

## ASSIST AFFECTED MEMBERS

“St. John and St. Thomas were devastated by Irma and a number of post offices were destroyed. On St. Croix, we were assisting them with relief drives and sending stuff over. Then, we were faced with another hurricane the following week, Maria, which devastated St. Croix,” she said. “We could no longer help St. Thomas and St. John.”

Some communication lines are still down and people are waiting in long lines for necessities like groceries and gas. “Lots of mail comes through Puerto Rico. If they can’t function, we can’t either,” B-Simmonds said.

However, she noted that things do get better every day. “You have to stay positive.”

### ‘Kind of Like Zombies’

“Everybody is kind of like zombies at the moment. We are working regular hours, but still managing to clean up homes...dealing with insurance,” said Florida Keys Area Local President Omayra Cruz a week after Irma.

Cruz noted that there was an “issue getting back to work” due to conflicting information provided by local USPS management and the local government. Cruz thanked National Business Agents Pat Davis-Weeks, Robert Bloomer and Michael Sullivan “for going above and beyond,” working with local management to resolve problems. They also assisted with getting members back home after the evacuations.

“It gets better every day, but it’s a long process,” Cruz said, adding that members are now helping with

Puerto Rican relief. “It’s helpful to have someone looking out for you and helping you from places you don’t even know.”

### USPS Employees Bring Normalcy and Needed Supplies

“Postal workers sort letters and packages with needed funds and items, and also well-wishes from loved ones, into these recovering communities,” said President Diamondstein. “For many Americans, the return of the mail service to their homes is part of the healing process. A sense of normalcy returns.”

In Puerto Rico, in areas where the post office was damaged or destroyed, tents were set up for employees to sort mail. Carriers took notes of residents’ conditions on their routes, and reported to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) specific people who were in need of immediate assistance.

In the weeks following Irma, despite dealing with issues at home, Cruz said that “everyone came in

## Wildfires in California

As this issue goes to press, fires are raging in California, destroying thousands of homes and displacing as many families. For more information on what you can do to help, go to [apwu.org](http://apwu.org). The *American Postal Worker* will report on the fires and their effects on APWU members in the next issue.

early and stayed late to get supplies delivered,” such as chain saws and pressure washers. A team of postal employees came down from Miami to help sort parcels. Members were “digging through the mail” to expedite delivery of things like FEMA checks and prescription medications.

### Members Band Together

Houston Area Local President Alfred Davison reported that at least 30 APWU members lost their homes and dozens more were displaced. However, starting the process to help everyone back on their feet was made easier because of the APWU.

“The National kept me informed and touched base with me every single day, every step of the way,” he recalled. “National officers helped get everybody who was affected together and all the



A street in downtown Key West is ravaged by Irma.

Photo courtesy of Petty Officer 2nd Class Dustin R. Williams/Flickr Creative Commons



Puerto Rico Area Local member Juan Rivera's house was destroyed by Hurricane Maria. The second floor is completely gone and the first floor is damaged beyond repair.

documents in order. All I had to do was sign the paperwork. There were several relief forms that they issued to employees that I didn't even know the APWU had."

Members also helped each other fill out relief forms. Gathering in the local office, with guidance from National officers, they assisted one another with the forms, not leaving until everything was finished. "It was a grand effort," Davison said.

As a union family, Houston Area Local sisters and brothers came together and helped each other. One member had all of the cabinets and sheetrock on her first floor destroyed by mold. Local members worked together to remove the damage.

### Road to Recovery

To help our members who were uprooted by these deadly storms, the APWU coordinated relief efforts with the Postal Employees Relief Fund (PERF) and the AFL-CIO.

As flood waters receded and roadways became accessible, teams of counselors from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) were deployed to provide support to the worst hit areas to meet with members, to refer them to resources and to help them cope with their

losses. The EAP staff continues to work with local union leaders on the ground, providing consultations as part of the program's critical incident stress management response. Those efforts will continue in the months ahead. Members in need of assistance should not hesitate to call 800-EAP-4YOU.

PERF's Executive Committee had multiple meetings since the disasters in preparation for the anticipated applications and to discuss extraordinary funding needs. Eligibility criteria and relief grant applications can be downloaded from PERF's website, or obtained

through APWU local and state organizations, the APWU Human Relations Department or from an EAP counselor.

In coordination with President Mark Dimondstein, Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy and Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth "Liz" Powell, Human Relations Director Sue Carney developed a disaster response plan. The plan involved providing assistance to members with the direst needs, coordinating outreach, distributing information and mass fundraising efforts. The Human Relations Department, Regional Coordinators, National Business Agents, local and state presidents and their designees continue to play an active role to help bring aid to our members.

It will be a long road to recovery for survivors of these disastrous storms. APWU members, local and state organizations, and retiree chapters are stepping up with their hearts and their wallets. Those affected need all of us to help in their efforts to re-establish their homes, replace necessities and restore their lives, so please keep giving. ■

## An Appeal from APWU President Emeritus William Burrus

"I appeal to the sense of brotherhood and sisterhood that we feel for our coworkers who have lost everything and are in need of assistance," said APWU President Emeritus William Burrus. "During my service as a union representative, I conceived of and initiated the Postal Employees Relief Fund, PERF, to respond to events when the postal community can be called upon to assist those impacted beyond their means of personal recovery."

"The hurricanes, fires and floods have been unprecedented and have left in their wake near total destruction," he continued. "I ask that you think for a minute the effect on you personally if your place of employment was totally destroyed and all of your worldly possessions were lost in a flood or fire."

Burrus urged members to, "make a contribution per pay for a period of one year to the Postal Employees Fund to assist the affected employees... You can direct a payment through a payroll deduction to The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)... Such a limited contribution when combined with that of other union members can make a big difference."

*Editor's Note: The Combined Federal Campaign designation period started Oct. 2, 2017 and goes until Jan. 12, 2018.*



# Seasons Greetings

The officers and staff of the American Postal Workers Union wish you and yours a joyous and healthy holiday season, and a Happy New Year.

## LETTERS

*President Mark Dimondstein and Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard,*



I want to thank you for presenting me with a 50-year APWU member pin.

I have been a proud full dues paying member

at the local, state and national levels for over 50 years.

This union has given me and my family good wages and benefits for the 32 years I worked for the USPS and the 27 years of wonderful retirement.

I am so proud of this pin. I wear it at all major functions and encourage postal workers at meetings to continue to their membership after retiring.

I am honored to be a member of this union and will wear this pin proudly.

*Thank You,*

*Ed Brennan, St. Charles MO Local*

*The American Postal Worker* welcomes letters-to-the-editor. When writing, please print your name and local affiliation, and we ask, for verification purposes, that you include your address, phone number and employee ID number (if applicable). Send letters and other items to: *The American Postal Worker*, Attn: Editor, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005

*Dear President Dimondstein,*

You asked us to let you know what we think of the new format for the magazine. I like it and think it provides more information useful to the members than previously.

In particular, the articles about the Heritage Foundation and how to spot fake news are very good. I sometimes hear our own members repeating right-wing lies and it always bothers me when there isn't a handy, recent reference to rebut that behavior on-the-spot.

Here is something I would like to see and I think it would add to our truth arsenal. It would be a great service to our members to research some of the common anti-labor memes that our "friends" carelessly repost on social media, showing where the memes come from and who pays for them.

Keep up the good work to make union members better informed.

*Sincerely and fraternally,*

*George W. Potts, Jr., The Northern Virginia Area Local*





# Are You Ready To Take Action?

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

**W**e must fight back against consolidations and closures – and any attack on our workplace.

To assist, the National has provided locals with information and strategies on how to build a movement.

The whole country is feeling the effects of delayed mail and understaffing. Businesses that mail periodicals, newspapers and small mailings are adversely affected. Our customers are not happy. The continued degradation of service is harming the Postal Service's trusted record and affecting our future revenue and success.

Those that want to privatize the Postal Service are attacking us now, and we must take action. It starts with local members and officers creating a plan to build up our members' mobilizing power, as well as organizing our community groups, customers and our legislative leaders in our cities and states around the country. Visit [apwu.org/sites/apwu/files/resource-files/Coalition%20Building.pdf](http://apwu.org/sites/apwu/files/resource-files/Coalition%20Building.pdf) for a booklet on coalition building.

Members will step up and get involved if they are asked. They need to understand the importance of good service – not only for them, but for their families – and the future of the people's Postal Service. We



Vice President Debby Szeredy speaks with clerk Michelle Reid.

are in dangerous times. Members need to get involved so we can reach our goals – protecting the country's Postal Service and our jobs.

While visiting the Lansing, MI plant (that was partially consolidated) I spoke to members about stepping up. It takes a one-on-one connection to build and mobilize a movement. Lansing members care – both the young and the seasoned want to make a difference at work.

## Consolidations Cause Delays

Christmas season is here and it is important to get all mail to our customers on time, not just packages. Postal workers are dedicated to giving the service our customers deserve. The problem is that prompt, efficient service standards were taken from all of us on Jan. 5, 2015. Plants were consolidated, causing excessive overtime in gaining facilities and mail delays everywhere.

Many facilities are understaffed, as workers are retiring and the turnover rate of our new, non-career employees continues to grow. New employees have less opportunities to become career because management's new campaign is to get rid of jobs. We are in urgent times and we need your passion and volunteerism *now*.

Get involved with your local and help build people power. If everyone works together with our customers, communities and congressional members, we can build the Postal Service. ■



Clerk Cindy Richardson, Vice President Debby Szeredy, Central Michigan Area Local President Lisa Jackson and Assistant Clerk Craft Director Lynn Pallas-Barber.



# The Postal Service, Serving 2.7 Billion

Contrary to the Postal Service's claims that post offices have less foot traffic than other national retailers, the United States Postal Service is truly the nation's leader in **service**. Postal workers assist customers at more than 30,000 retail outlets across the country, which is about as many locations as McDonald's, Starbucks and Walmart combined, according to a recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) report.

To be exact, the Postal Service served 2.7 billion customers in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, about triple the amount of official statistics, lauds the September report *Billions Served: Foot Traffic at the Post Office*.

The Postal Service claims that there were just 877 million customer visits in FY 2016, but that number only includes customers who completed retail transactions. It does not account for the majority of postal customers who visit a brick-and-mortar post office and do not complete a transaction, but rather drop off a letter, check their PO Box or pick up free shipping materials.

OIG researchers went a step further and measured the foot traffic in post offices, branches and stations that serve retail customers.

## How They Did It

To calculate foot traffic, the OIG created a special model that combines USPS data on transactions and occupied post office boxes; survey-based estimates of post office activity and assumptions about how those figures translate into foot traffic.

This past spring, researchers tested the model by installing people-

counting devices at the public entrances of 32 large post offices in the Northern Virginia District. The counters kept track of foot traffic hour by hour, for two weeks at each branch.

The results were very accurate – the devices' count came within 2 percent of the model's predicted visits.

Despite what postal critics say about declining customer volume, post office foot traffic is on par with foot traffic at corporate retailers.

among 18-75 year olds. They found that PO Box customers are the most frequent visitors, with about eight to ten monthly visits. Next are the self-employed and those who use the USPS mobile app – despite the fact that the Postal Service touts that the app saves a trip to the post office.

## Findings Support Expanded Services

This study adds to the argument for the USPS to expand services



Photo courtesy of USPS Office of Inspector General

Not all customers who use the post office are represented by the retail transaction number. Many visit a post office to use a PO Box, drop off stamped mail or pick up free forms and shipping materials.

In fact, the largest 450 post offices, or "Mega" locations, have the same number of average weekly visits as a Best Buy store. The next tier of "Large" locations have average visits of 4,095 per week, roughly the same as a typical CVS store. "Small/Medium" post offices have 1,599 average weekly visits, about the same as a typical bank branch.

## Who Are the Customers?

In tandem with its foot traffic calculations, the OIG conducted a national survey on post office use

– such as postal banking and licenses. Right now, the Postal Service states low retail transactions (877 million) create a "serious roadblock to any retail initiatives" and hinders the implementation of expanded services.

However, with the Postal Service's foot traffic totaling 2.7 billion customers a year, there is a clear market to reach. A customer coming in to check their PO Box or to drop off mail could also be interested in setting up and using a postal banking account. ■



SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

# Communication Is the Key

In most local unions, the primary means of communicating with the membership is at the general union meeting. However, if this is the only way to communicate with members, the local will not be very successful getting their message out to the members.

**WE CANNOT MOBILIZE OUR MEMBERS IF THEY ARE NOT EDUCATED AND INFORMED ABOUT THE ISSUES.**

Just like in most organizations, a small percentage of the membership takes an active role in the union and attends meetings. Although there are some exceptions, generally this is common.

The challenge for local union officials is getting the “word” out. The formal ways we communicate are at meetings, in local newsletters, online (via websites and social media), bulletin boards and in this magazine. None of these outlets, however, give us the opportunity to quickly inform members of important issues. This has been a challenge magnified by the fact that over half of our members are not in large facilities anymore, and are spread out into stations, branches and associate offices.

## Set the Record Straight

Have you ever marveled at how quickly a rumor can spread in the workplace? The word gets around without any of the formal communications we normally rely upon. That’s because informal communication is taking place among members in the break area, bathrooms, while working, in parking lots and at social gatherings.

A “map” of your members in the workplace is an important tool to start using this informal communications network to reach our members. The map helps identify what we call “floor leaders,” the people who other workers go to for information or help. Once identified, local officers and stewards should spread the word directly to these floor leaders – they can also be tapped for feedback on workplace issues. Mapping can also identify the telegraphers – those members who are sure to spread the word.

The floor leaders are men and women respected by their fellow co-workers. Even though they do not want to serve as officers or stewards, they may be willing to listen and comment on issues important to the members and the union. Telegraphers can usually be relied upon to spread the word, regardless. But this time, instead of gossip, they will be talking about their jobs, their union and their futures.

## Your Union Bulletin Board

Recruiting floor leaders will not be as helpful when the membership is spread out in different facilities. That’s why the union bulletin board is one of the most vital forms of communication to your membership. It is how your members who do not attend meetings, do not have access to the web or do not read their newsletter get information from the union. For those members who don’t have regular one-on-one contact with their local officers and stewards, that bulletin board is the face of their union.

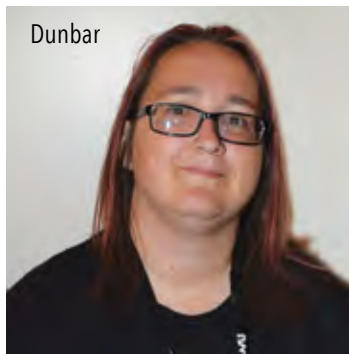
A neglected bulletin board is the enemy of effective workplace communication. Members won’t look to it for information because no one bothers to keep it current. That’s why every local union should have someone assigned to keep their board updated and free of unauthorized postings.

Why is communicating so important? As this article goes to press, the APWU is fighting for the very survival of the Postal Service and preparing for upcoming contract negotiations. We have an urgent need to get our members mobilized, and to get legislation passed that will allow the Postal Service to continue to serve the American public. We cannot mobilize our members if they are not educated and informed about the issues.

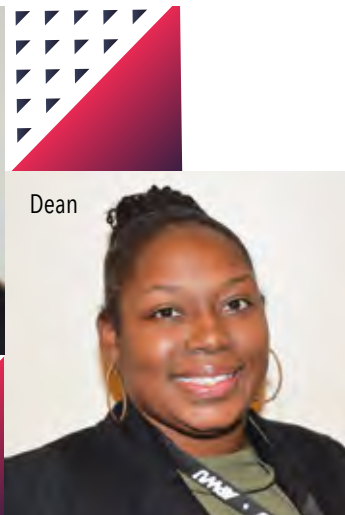
We need those person to person discussions, based on the facts, to move our members to action. This will not be the only time we will need to get the word out. We will always need to find effective ways to communicate to our members.

I would like to wish all of the members of the APWU happy holidays and a prosperous New Year. ■





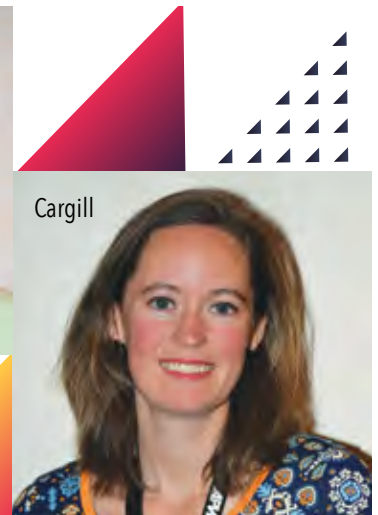
Dunbar



Dean



Johnson



Cargill

## Catching Up with APWU Young Leaders

**A**t the All-Craft Conference, the *American Postal Worker* sat down and spoke with a few young APWU leaders about why they decided to get involved in their local. Many shared the same sentiment – they saw things on the workroom floor they did not like and decided to take action.

“As a PSE, I worked 12-hour days, all the time,” recalled Lisa Dunbar, 29, acting president of the North Platte Local and state representative for the Nebraska Postal Workers Union. “I also saw what the workplace was like... We have safety issues.”

Ashley Cargill, 34, who serves as Oklahoma Postal Workers Union President and clerk trustee and steward for the Oklahoma City Area Local, agreed. “Things were not getting resolved and I didn’t like it,” she said. “When you start, you don’t even know what the violations are.”

**“IF YOU DON’T LIKE WHAT’S GOING ON,  
YOU HAVE TO FIX IT.”  
– CHRIS JOHNSON**

Chris Johnson, 32, Maintenance Craft Director of the Indianapolis Area Local, noted that in his office, “Everyone else serving as stewards and directors were on their way to retirement, so I stepped up to learn the ropes... I did it because I had to protect the workers.”

### Importance of Union

Johnson’s great-grandfather was a letter carrier and his father a mail handler. He used to be a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers before joining the APWU five years ago. He noted a lot of the

other young members he speaks with “do not fully grasp or understand what the union does and how it works. Even though I explain it to them, they just think it’s always going to be there.”

Denisha Dean, 28, is president of the Long Beach Area Local (CA). She said she saw the importance of being in a union at a young age when her mother was injured working at the post office. “Management lied to her, but the union helped her get back,” Dean recalled.

“Without the members, there is no union,” Cargill said. She noted that sometimes workers do not report an issue because they do not want to “cause a wave in their office.” However, if the worker does not report it, and the union does not enforce workplace standards and the contract, the protections will disappear. “It is important for us to be involved.”

Johnson stressed the importance of educating yourself, “If you don’t like what’s going on, you have to fix it,” he said. “You can’t sit on the sidelines and hope someone else does it for you.”

Dean noted that belonging to a union comes with opportunities for growth. “Health care, solidarity, education – I wouldn’t have any of that without the union,” she said, adding that she is an active member of Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER) and Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). “The union has all these sub-branches to help you not only become a good worker and know your rights, but to become a better person, too.”

“If not for the union, we don’t have a future,” Dunbar said. “It’s our job to continue the legacy that’s left before us.” ■



# A Growing Workplace Danger

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

In 2001, Anthrax-laden letters were sent through the mail sickening 22 Americans, including nine postal workers. Five died, including two APWU brothers – Joseph P. Curseen Jr. and Thomas L. Morris – at the Brentwood Mail Processing Center in Washington, D.C., that would later be named in their honor.

This is a reminder that we all need to be extremely aware of the dangers we face at work. Maybe you are less careful when it comes to spills. Maybe you are one of the tens of thousands of new employees working for the Postal Service since 2001, and are not aware of the history and protocols put into place. Deadly agents are illegally sent through the mail every day – and you need to be prepared in case you come across a powder or other spill.

## Opioid Crisis

We face an opioid addiction crisis. The disease affects addicts, their families, friends and co-workers. Overdose deaths are at all-time highs and they happen to those who are not only users, but also first responders, caregivers and everyday people.

Many of the overdoses are due to powerful synthetic opioids Fentanyl, Carfentanil and their derivatives. These drugs are much stronger than heroin and easily obtained. The substances enter the U.S. by international mail, are repackaged as pills or powder, and re-shipped all over the country via first-class, priority and express mail.

These chemicals are extremely dangerous and should not be taken lightly. As one law enforcement officer said when discussing 1 kg (2.2 lbs) of chemicals that were sent through the mail and intercepted, “There was enough there to kill millions of Americans.”

## Protect Yourself

My goal is not to scare you. It is to make you aware, observant and to protect yourselves.

The Postal Service has established procedures in the case of suspicious mail, unknown powders or sub-

stances. You need to know the procedures and follow them! The following is taken directly from a USPS handout about suspicious mail:

- “Leave the piece of mail or substance where it was found. Do not disturb it.
- “Clear all employees from the immediate area where the piece of mail or substance is located. Prevent others from entering the area.
- “Notify a supervisor or manager immediately. If a supervisor or manager is not available, contact the Postal Inspection Service.
- “Wash hands and exposed skin with soap and water.”

At this point, management has a checklist:

- Don’t clean up the substance.
- Keep people away.
- Shut down mail processing in the immediate area.
- Shut down the HVAC systems to prevent any spread.

Do not put yourself at risk! You must protect yourself! If you report a spill and management does not follow proper protocol, complete a 1767 Form and contact your steward. They should contact your Regional Safety and Health Representative. Find yours at [apwu.org/issues/regional-sh-representatives](http://apwu.org/issues/regional-sh-representatives).

You are allowed to wear nitrile gloves at work, USPS will provide them. Management Instruction EL-810-2009-4 (<http://bit.ly/2xDRHif>) explains the glove policy. This will help prevent exposure to any substances through your skin. Wash your hands at work and before you go home. Monitor how you feel. If you begin to feel strange, let your supervisors know – tell a co-worker to get help.

Symptoms for these drugs include weak muscles, dizziness, confusion, extreme sleepiness, pinpoint sized pupils, drop in blood pressure, profound slowing of heart beat and bluish tint to your nails and lips.

Your Industrial Relations Department has met with the Postal Service and is working to ensure this threat is taken seriously and an appropriate action plan to protect all is developed. ■



# UNIONS IMPROVE the LIVES of All Working People

## Truth Exposed in New Report by the Economic Policy Institute

Postal workers know first-hand that union jobs are good jobs. Unions help workers join together and bargain with their employer for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

However, unions also stand up for the rights of workers who are not currently in a union. They are a rising tide that lifts all boats.

According to the Economic Policy Institute's report *How Today's Unions Help Working People*, unions are under attack at a time when they are needed more than ever.

### Union Strong

A union's strength comes from its members. The report explains that "working people in unions use their power in numbers to secure a fairer share of the income they create." Union members earn an average 13.2 percent more in wages than non-union workers with similar education, occupation and experience in the same sector.

Unions also help raise wages across entire sectors of the economy. "Workers who are empowered by forming a union raise wages for union and nonunion workers alike. As an economic sector becomes more unionized, nonunion employers pay more to retain qualified workers and norms of higher pay and better conditions become standard," says the report.

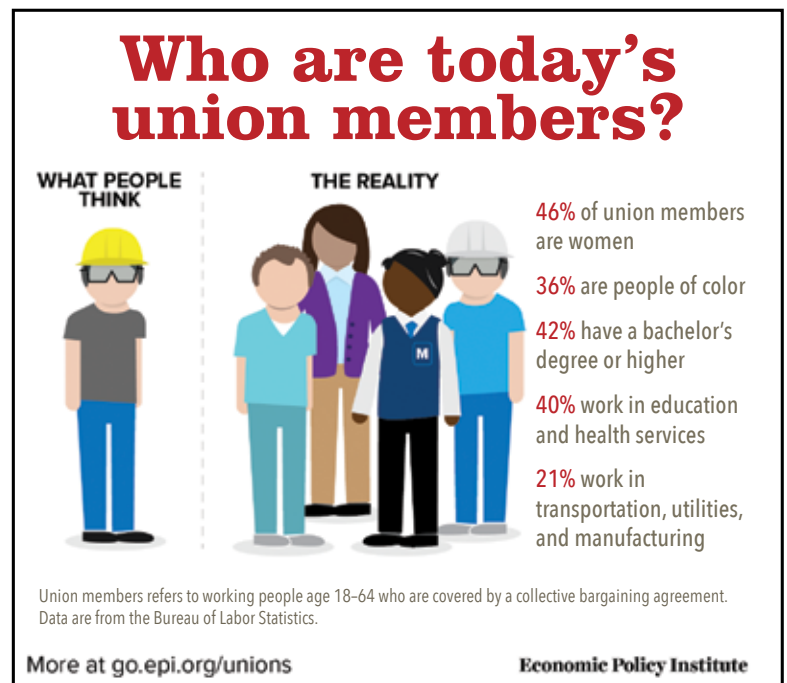
Additionally, unions raise the income of groups who are often economically disadvantaged. As of 2016, about 10.6 million of the 16.3 million union members are women and/or people of color. More than a third (35.8 percent) are black, Hispanic, Asian or other "nonwhite" demographic. Almost half (46.3 percent) are women.

### 'Rebuild' the System

Elected officials routinely pass legislation that strangles collective bargaining rights – and the results are clear. In 2016, only 10.7 percent of workers belonged to a union, compared to about 35 percent in the mid-1950s.

Workplace organizing campaigns also come with challenges. Between the 1990s and the early 2000s, the likelihood that an employer would use 10 or more union-busting tactics in its anti-union campaign doubled.

"Sixty-three percent of private employers interrogate workers about union support in mandatory one-on-one meetings between workers and their supervisors, and 54 percent of employers threaten workers in such meetings," the report added.



However, almost half (48 percent) of those polled for the report said they would vote to join a union in their workplace tomorrow. Young workers also support unions – 55 percent of workers polled aged 18 to 29 said they view unions favorably, compared to 46 percent of workers aged 30 and older.

"Unions – when strong – have the capacity to tackle some of the biggest problems that plague our economy, from growing economic inequality, wage stagnation, and racial and gender inequities to eroding democracy and barriers to civic participation...we must work together to rebuild our collective bargaining system," the report concludes. ■

# MEMBERS

## LOCALS CELEBRATE **LABOR DAY**

APWU members from coast-to-coast took to the streets for Labor Day events.



Members of the North Central Florida Area Local celebrated Labor Day in Gainesville.

New York Metro Area Local members marched in the city's parade.



Members of the Toledo Area Local are lined up to march.



Councilmember Richard Fimbres and Tucson Area Local President Connie Sadler-Nelson at a Labor Day picnic.



Pittsburgh Metro Area Local members and family participated in the city's parade.

## PROMOTING A PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE AT CBCF CONFERENCE

Courtney Jenkins of the Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local, Tina Bell and Arrion Brown – both of the Nation's Capital Southern Maryland Area Local – work a booth promoting our public Postal Service at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Legislative Conference on Sept. 22.





# IN ACTION



## APWU AT CLUW

**A**PWU National officers and members participated in the Coalition of Labor Union Women's (CLUW) 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention in Detroit, from Sept. 6-9. This year, 26 APWU members and officers were elected as delegates.

## FIGHTING BOB FEST IN MILWAUKEE



**I**n its 16<sup>th</sup> year, Fighting Bob Fest, an annual Wisconsin festival for progressive politics, was held in Milwaukee on Sept. 16. APWU of Wisconsin Legislative Director Chris Czubakowski (left), Milwaukee Area Local Recording Secretary Karen White (center) and Milwaukee Area Local

Steward Ken Liggan (right) represented the APWU, spending the day educating and discussing APWU legislative priorities with the public.



## SEATTLE PICKETS AGAINST JOB, SERVICE CUTS

**M**embers of the Greater Seattle Area Local held an informational picket in front of the Burien post office on Aug. 10, informing the community of postal management's proposed job and service cuts.

**O**n Aug. 30, Northeast Regional Coordinator John H. Dirzius and National Business Agent Pete Coradi held a training to provide New York local leaders with the necessary tools to fight back management's aggressive excessing, reversion and abolishment initiatives. NBAs Liz Swigert and Dave Sarnacki also assisted in the training. President Mark Dimondstein

opened the event with inspiring remarks. Locals in attendance were: Long Island Area Local, New York Metro Area Local, Brooklyn Local, Greater Hicksville Mid-Island Local, Mount Vernon Local, Western New York Area Local, Western Nassau New York Area Local, Albany Local, Kingston Local and Rockville Centre Local.



## NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL TRAINING



# MEMBERS IN ACTION

APWU local and state representatives came together at the All-Craft, Legislative and Retiree Conferences from Oct. 1-Oct. 4 in Las Vegas, NV.

## THOUSANDS PARTICIPATED IN DOZENS OF WORKSHOPS AND GENERAL SESSIONS



Maintenance Division  
General Session

## MEMBERS CALLED CONGRESS

**A**PWU members were politically active at the All-Craft conference by making calls to their member of Congress, urging them to vote “no” on the disastrous House budget proposal.



Clerk Division Workshop

Support  
Services  
Division  
General  
Session



Motor Vehicle Service Division Workshop

## RETIREEES PRESENT PRESIDENT DIMONDSTEIN WITH APWU HISTORY DISPLAY

Members from various retiree chapters in the California Bay Area presented President Dimondstein with an APWU campaign pin collection. Pictured L-R are Karen Wing, Maryann Medina, President Mark Dimondstein, Ernest Johnson, Judy Lynn and Juanita Boles.





# Single-Payer Health Care — Its Time Has Come

*The following is an op-ed by President Mark Dimondstein that originally appeared in Cleveland's The Plain Dealer on Sept. 20.*

Congress is back from its summer recess and the problems with our nation's health care system haven't gone away. How to fix health care is once again being hotly debated. Recently, President Donald Trump warned Republican senators that they must do something or be confronted with the dangers of "single-payer" health care. But, single-payer shouldn't be the boogey-man — its time has come.

As a postal worker and now president of the American Postal Workers Union, I've had many occasions to meet with Canadian postal workers. The lives and dreams of postal workers just across Lake Erie are similar to workers in Northeast Ohio and other parts of the United States.

One huge difference stands out — Canadian health care. Canadians never worry about being denied access to medical care. Unlike in the United States, no one is forced to choose between food and medicine. A major illness won't drive them to bankruptcy or out of their homes.

Canada's single-payer health care system is similar to Medicare but in Canada every man, woman and child has cradle-to-grave coverage for their doctor, hospital and nursing care — with full choice of physicians. The government also negotiates affordable drug costs with pharmaceutical companies.

Imagine how much less stressful our lives would be without co-pays, deductibles, billing for services, lifetime limits or huge insurance premiums. According to University of Massachusetts Economics Professor Gerald Friedman, 95 percent of U.S. households would save money under a single-payer plan.

It is striking that the Canadian success is rarely discussed in the current health care debate. The leadership of both major political parties treat health care as a privilege rather than a human right. The profits of the medical industrial complex sadly take center stage over the people's interests.

Most of the Democratic Party leadership is wedded to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). While some measures of the ACA should be preserved, such as coverage for the 153 million Americans with pre-existing conditions, the law has failed. It is not affordable. It contains no public option, does nothing to lower pharmaceutical prices, is a boon to the insurance companies and still leaves tens of millions uninsured and millions more with inferior insurance plans.

The failed legislation promoted by the Republican leadership is far worse. The GOP plans would gut Medicaid (used by one in five Americans and two-thirds of nursing home patients). Their plans would drive 22 million people from health insurance rolls, according to the Congressional Budget Office; incentivize employers to eliminate health coverage; limit coverage for pre-existing conditions; and drastically raise medical costs for seniors — all while giving billions in tax breaks to the wealthiest.

Most workers our union represents have employer-based health insurance. Every year we are paying more and receiving fewer benefits. A postal employee typically pays \$6,000 a year for their share of family plan premiums — plus co-pays, deductibles and co-insurance. A "Canadian style" system would offer financial relief, even to those currently insured.

Donald Trump was right back in 2000 when he said: "We must have universal health care. Just imagine the improved quality of life for our society as a whole... The Canadian-style, single-payer system... helps Canadians live longer and healthier than Americans... There are fewer medical lawsuits, less loss of labor to sickness, and lower costs to companies paying for the medical care of their employees."

According to the most recent figures, the United States spends 17.8 percent of GDP on health care — more per capita than any other country. More than 25 percent of health care expenses are administrative — money diverted to needless insurance industry overhead and profits. (Twice that of Canada.) U.S. citizens average \$9,000 a year in health-related costs.

Yet, health outcomes are dismal. The United States ranks 34th in life expectancy. (Canada ranks 13.) A 2017 study by the Commonwealth Fund, found that the United States ranks last of the 11 most "developed" countries in health care quality, access, results and efficiency.

The ACA should be replaced with a better system. The recent debate between bad ("Obamacare") and worse ("Trumpcare") fails to meet the health care needs of the 99 percent. Let's learn from our neighbor and demand single-payer universal health coverage — "Medicare for All!"

It is a proven, simple, cost-effective, and just way to heal what ails us.

# Open Season 2017: We Are

We are dedicated to our members and make no mistake, we care! The APWU Health Plan has been covering postal workers, retirees and their families since 1960 and it has been an honor to serve you with coverage that works when you need it. Below are some important benefits you may not know about your Health Plan.

## Coverage that offers you access 24/7. See a doctor when you need one!

- Virtual visits: Telemedicine is revolutionizing the way in which doctors practice medicine and the way in which patients are receiving their medical care. Telemedicine allows you access to a doctor around the clock, at a time that is convenient for you.
- 24 hour nurse line: Your health plan coverage gives you access to the 24-hour NurseLine staffed by industry-leading health professionals. Nurses are available to answer your health questions and give you helpful information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Visit [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com) today. The APWU Health Plan member website puts you in touch with the tools and resources you need to manage your health plan benefits and gets you on the path to healthier living. Search for providers in your area, research prescription drugs costs, estimate your costs before you go to the doctor and track claims and deductibles through our secure online portal.

## Your plan features a large network of doctors, hospitals, and health care providers.

The APWU Health Plan offers two comprehensive fee-for-service plans that offer you the cost-savings of a vast Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) network.

We have over one million providers in our networks. Of course, you are always free to seek the services of any covered provider, worldwide; however, selecting an in-network PPO provider will offer you the lowest out-of-pocket costs.

You have the freedom to choose. Check to see if your doctor is in the network by visiting [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com) and select "Are my doctors in the network?" in the middle of the page.

## Serving APWU Members

APWU Health Plan customer service is committed to providing high quality responses to inquiries. Health Plan Director John Marcotte takes a compassionate leadership role as all member appeals are investigated and resolved by his office. It's clear that our focus is customer service. Working with executive staff and member education, APWU members' requests are expedited quickly.

During the 2017 APWU State Convention season, the APWU Health Plan staff participated in 46 meetings. The conventions were well attended and averaged over 100 attendees. The Health Plan staff was available to distribute Health Plan information and provide answers to questions.

## Smile, routine dental care is covered

Office visits, exams, cleanings, X-rays, fluoride treatment, fillings and simple extractions are covered.

- HIGH OPTION YOU PAY 30% of the plan allowance
- CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION: Pay for your dental care at the time of service and use your Personal Care Account\* to cover up to \$400 per Self Only or \$800 per Self Plus One and Self and Family.

## Get ready for savings on glasses.

- HIGH OPTION: Access to the Healthy Rewards program, which offers savings on glasses and frames.
- CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION: Pay for your vision needs at the time of service and use your Personal Care Account\* to cover up to \$400 per Self Only or \$800 per Self Plus One and Self and Family.

\*The amount \$400/\$800 is for both dental and vision combined



# Focused On You

APWU Health Plan members will experience a small premium increase. The premium increase for the Consumer Driven Option for Self Only and Self Plus One is less than \$1. The price of medical care is the single biggest factor behind rising U.S. healthcare costs. These expenditures reflect the cost of caring for those with chronic or long-term medical conditions, an aging population and the increased cost of medicines, procedures and technologies.

The APWU Health Plan takes on a big role in making postal employees healthier while still controlling costs. It brings us great pleasure to roll out plan options that are focused on you and your family. **While we have managed to keep the premium increase low**, we ask that you continue to stay engaged with our health coaches and health management programs that are designed to offer you a healthy lifestyle.

How can you save the most on premium expenses? Because you are an APWU member you can save 95% on premium cost. This can mean an extra \$100 a pay period!

The collective bargaining agreement gives APWU members a reduction on the Consumer Driven Option. This means USPS is paying 95% of the premiums for this comprehensive health insurance plan.

Visit [apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com) to see the benefits that this plan offers. There is also an overview on the back of this *American Postal Worker* magazine with Health Plan details.



TOGETHER.BETTER HEALTH.®

[www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com)  
(800) PIC-APWU



The 2017 Open Season will run Nov. 13 - Dec. 11. Consider your APWU Health Plan which is union owned with a union workforce.

## 2018 Premiums

	Enrollment code	Non-Postal biweekly You pay	Non-Postal monthly You pay	Postal			
				Biweekly			
				Category 1 You pay	Category 2 You pay	APWU career You pay	APWU career rate change*
<b>HIGH OPTION</b> Self Only	471	\$93.04	\$201.59	\$86.67	\$80.31	\$86.67	+ \$1.61
Self Plus One	473	\$185.79	\$402.55	\$172.15	\$158.51	\$172.15	+ \$4.25
Self and Family	472	\$251.90	\$545.78	\$237.41	\$222.92	\$237.41	+ \$5.37
<b>CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION</b> Self Only	474	\$63.97	\$138.61	\$58.21	\$53.10	\$12.79	+ \$0.43
Self Plus One	476	\$140.74	\$304.93	\$128.07	\$116.81	\$28.15	+ \$0.95
Self and Family	475	\$153.53	\$332.65	\$139.71	\$127.43	\$41.83	+ \$2.82

**Postal Category 1** rates apply to career bargaining unit employees who are represented by IT/AS, NALC, NPMHU, NPPN, NRLCA and to APWU career employees with less than one year in FEHB.

**Postal Category 2** rates apply to career bargaining unit employees who are represented by PPOA.

**Non-Postal** rates apply to all career, non-bargaining unit Postal Service employees and to APWU non-career (PSE) employees.

\*Rate change is the premium increase members will pay in 2018 over 2017.

# Price Cap's Significant Impact on Clerk Craft



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

**A**ny day now, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) will be making a decision on the postage price cap that will significantly affect service to the American people and possibly the wages, benefits, and working conditions of the Clerk Craft and other postal workers.

The price cap was part of the harmful bipartisan Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA) passed in 2006 at the urging of the large mailers. Although not discussed nearly as much as the impact of the PAEA requiring the prefunding of retiree health care, the price cap is arguably much worse.

The old way of determining rates was for the USPS to propose postage costs for service based on prior and expected expenses. Anyone could provide input and the PRC would make the final determination of the appropriate rates. By contrast, PAEA imposes a price cap on dominant products (most letters and flats) and mandates that postage cannot be raised higher than the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Urban Workers. This index is a poor fit for a large organization like the USPS.

At the time the PAEA was passed in 2006, Congress was aware that a reduction in the volume of mail was forecast for the future and revenue would go down. Congress was also aware that the number of delivery points was forecast to increase and drive up costs. Given these factors and other unexpected costs, a price cap is an artificial measure that interferes with the mission of the USPS to provide prompt service to all American people, regardless of where they live.

In 2007, the USPS had one last opportunity before the price cap kicked in to raise rates to match actual costs (referred to as a true-up). However, at the urging of the large mailers, the USPS failed to take advantage of that opportunity. As a result, the USPS started the new rate system, which is insufficiently funded and has never been able to make up the deficit.

## Financial Instability

The government organizations that monitor the USPS have determined that it is in serious financial straits.

The PRC reported in 2016, "The Postal Service is not currently generating sufficient funds to cover mandated expenses or invest in critically deferred capital needs." The Postal Service has not been able to adequately upkeep buildings, equipment or vehicles.

In 2016, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported the Postal Service, "faces a serious financial situation and does not have sufficient revenues to cover its expenses, putting its mission of providing prompt, reliable, and efficient universal services to the public at risk."

## Service & Wage Cuts

The price cap has led to severe service cuts to the American people. The USPS has consolidated processing plants, thereby delaying the mail and even eliminating overnight delivery. The Postal Service also reduced hours that post offices are open, and continually understaff retail windows. These are clear violations of the mission of the USPS to provide prompt, reliable and efficient service.

The USPS has utilized the fiscally flawed price cap to reduce postal worker wages and benefits. Through understaffing, the USPS has created stressful and unhealthy working conditions for its workforce, and poor service for the American people.

## Decision in Hands of Republican Party

The PRC has five appointed commissioners. With one vacancy, Republicans have a 3-1 majority on the commission. Therefore, the Republican Party will play a big role in determining the future of the Postal Service when the Republican majority PRC commissioners decide whether or not to end the price cap.

## What Can We Do?

We can hold the PRC, the USPS and our political representatives accountable for supporting a postal rate structure that allows the Postal Service to fulfill its mandate of providing prompt and efficient service to the American public. ■



# Labor Distribution Codes



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

**W**hen we punch into work, the USPS time-keeping system tracks our workhours based on the operation we badge onto. All employees are assigned to a particular Labor Distribution Code (LDC) as their “base.” Occasionally, depending on assignment, those work hours need to be recorded under a different LDC – frequently done by badging onto the proper operation number. Sometimes, a manual entry into the time-keeping system is required.

Accurate recording is important, as it is how the USPS determines the costs of your labor. By proper tracking, the employer determines fund allocation to their various functional areas. Eventually, your time is combined with everyone else’s, and is looked at when the USPS establishes postage rates, makes decisions on equipment, opens or closes facilities, decides on staffing levels (where allowed), etc.

This is in no way an in-depth look at fiscal accounting procedures, just a brief overview to illustrate that being on your proper operation number counts.

The Maintenance Craft makes use of LDC tracking within our functional area (Function 3b). They are: LDC 35 (Maintenance Supervisors), LDC 36 (Postal Operating Equipment – MPE-side to us), LDC 37 (Building Systems Equipment – BE or Building-side), LDC 38 (Building Services – aka – Custodial) and LDC 39 (Maintenance Admin for short – the MSCs). There is also LDC 93, which is Maintenance training time, but we are focusing here on the ones beginning with the number 3.

Everyone is likely aware of the importance of LDC 38. The parties have an agreement on custodial staffing and work performance with a monetary penalty. LDC 38 hours are to be performed on work that is specifically identified within your custodial staffing package in general, and Line H in particular. The agreement on Line H signifies the commitment of the employer and represents your job security. Please help yourself by simply ensuring you are working on the right operation number.

The USPS is very concerned with “standardization” and now believe they must correct a situation regard-

ing LDCs, so as such, some of our Area Maintenance Technicians (AMTs) and Area Maintenance Specialists (AMSs) have been moved into LDC 36 from their former LDC 37.

Some AMTs and AMSs have always been assigned to LDC 36, but the USPS did not wish to have the same category of employee doing the same work under different LDCs.

We heard about the change from our members, as the USPS did not communicate it. The Maintenance Division made an inquiry to the USPS regarding the purpose and intent of this change. The pertinent part of the response, received August 22, 2017, is worth noting:

*“It is the belief of Maintenance Operations leadership that the proper Labor Distribution Code (LDC) for bargaining unit employees assigned to Field Maintenance Operations (FMO) is LDC 36. This is based on the job descriptions of the Area Maintenance Technician, PS-09, and the Area Maintenance Specialist, PS-08. Currently both LDC 36 and LDC 37 are in use for those positions. The intention is to have the employees accounted for under the correct LDC. There is no anticipated impact to the occupational group, work hours, or staffing determinations ... The LDC is an accounting tool and as such the consolidation of FMO employees into the correct, single, LDC is not expected to impact the bargaining unit.”*

This doesn’t mean that all the work performed by AMTs/AMSs is properly under LDC 36, just that this will be their base. There will be work performed that should be classified under the Building-side LDC 37, such as electrical, HVAC, etc.

Please remember to say “Hi” to your steward! ■

**We trust all who attended the All-Craft Conferences found it successful. We are back and are entering this holiday season, gearing up for another round of negotiations. The scope and importance of the task is not lost on any of the involved APWU Officers and staff. Our strength is in our unity of purpose!**

# Sept. 1 and Where is the Work?



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster

On August 18, 2016, Arbitrator Shyam Das ruled in case Q06C-4Q-C 11182451 that the Postal Service had violated Article 32 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement by failing to notify the union of at least 212 Highway Contract Routes (HCRs) until after the contracts had already been let. Arbitrator Das' award ordered the Postal Service to convert 110 of the disputed routes remaining in service to the Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) for regular, four-year contract terms.

After extensive negotiations concerning timelines and substitute routes, the parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing that the Postal Service would convert the agreed upon 110 routes from HCR to PVS no later than Sept. 1, 2017.

Sept. 1 has come and gone: Where is the work?

In August, the union signed Postal Support Employee (PSE) salary exception requests for most of the sites that are due to receive work from the 110 award, and local union officers have done their due diligence by sending Requests for Information (RFIs) regarding:

1. Where management is in the recruiting and hiring of operators; any problems they have in hiring;
2. Class/type of employees they plan to hire – whether new work PSE or career;
3. How much equipment will be needed;
4. What steps management has taken to lease vehicles.

We continue to receive numerous reports from the field that local management is either unwilling or unable to comply with the terms of the award and subsequent MOU, or refusing to meet or provide information at the local level. Some locals have had to file unfair labor practice charges (ULP) to obtain the requested information, and we have submitted multiple Requests for Information (RFIs) at the national level, questioning why they are not in timely compliance.

Some of the answers provided to the local officers are especially concerning, such as that local management of a certain installation was given a “tentative date”

of Sept. 16 to convert only a portion of the awarded HCRs. Additional issues include insufficient trailers and vehicles to perform the work, a lack of current or newly hired employees, inadequate hiring efforts, etc.

Local managers are also claiming that they have not received confirmation or instructions from Postal Service headquarters to comply with the Das award, or that they have been told that the Sept. 1 deadline as stipulated in the MOU is not critical.

The most salient fact to come from all this information is that the Postal Service will not be in timely compliance with the Das award.

**THIS WORK IS RIGHTFULLY OURS, AND THE POSTAL SERVICE CANNOT ABROGATE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY BY DRAGGING THEIR FEET.**

The parties have been in discussions since 2016, so it is difficult to understand why the Postal Service would not be able to come into compliance by the agreed upon date over a year after the award was issued. While working out the terms of the MOU, there was no indication how truly arduous it would be to get management to comply with the award by Sept. 1; even just getting management to provide information has been like pulling teeth.

We cannot let this impede us. Our officers at every level have endeavored tirelessly to return work to the Motor Vehicle Service Division, and the Das 110 award was a significant victory for our Craft. Local officers at sites identified in the award should continue to send RFIs and follow up with management if your questions are unanswered or the answers are inadequate. This work is rightfully ours, and the Postal Service cannot abrogate their responsibility by dragging their feet and giving conflicting instructions to the field.

We will continue to pursue this issue along with the many others that affect MVS, on behalf of every member of our Craft. Please contact your National Business Agent for guidance on any local issues. ■



# Contracts Ratified



Director Steve Brooks

**T**he Support Services Division ratified two of its tentative agreements in August. First, the Information Technology & Accounting Services (IT/AS) agreement, which had a 77 percent approval, and then the private-sector mail-haulers contract with Salmon Companies, with a 75 percent approval.

The contract terms are effective Sept. 2, 2017, with retroactive pay from Jan. 21, 2017, for the IT/AS agreement, and August 31, 2017 for the Salmon group.

## IT/AS Agreement

The IT/AS agreement covers approximately 1,140 IT/AS employees located in four separate centers in Eagan, MN; St. Louis, MO; San Mateo, CA; and Wilkes-Barre, PA. The members had an opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision during onsite visits, where the terms of the agreement were presented. The process proved to be successful. The details of this contract can be found on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) and in my last article outlining the tentative agreement.

## Salmon Companies Agreement

Our Salmon Companies group includes private-sector drivers from locals in Dallas, TX; Little Rock, AR; Memphis, TN; and Shreveport, LA. In this agreement, we were able to negotiate individual terminal work rules on job bidding, bumping rights and extra-board provisions. Each APWU representative on the negotiating team had significant input in the development of the terms for their own terminal.

These employees receive pay based upon the prevailing wages in the McNamara-O'Hara Service Contract Act (SCA), which are set according to occupation. In addition, they received a health and welfare stipend to be used towards their health benefits, life insurance, 401(k) and other benefits. We also achieved an opt-out clause based on guidelines in the Affordable Care Act; whereas, an individual may opt out of the company health insurance plan if they can provide documentation stating they are covered under a spousal group plan. This is a very important issue, as the company plan is very costly.

In addition, we were able to raise the wages for lay-over pay and work performed that is not SCA covered work. It also includes a provision for extra holiday pay for someone who volunteers to cover a vacant run for the holiday.

## MTESC Update

Earlier this year, I reported that our Division had lost a Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) in Detroit, MI. It was due to a new company's bid and operational move to Temperance, MI. I am happy to announce that the APWU has come to terms with the new company to hire the displaced Detroit workers. In addition, the company will recognize the APWU as the sole representative of the workers.

**WE NEED TO CONTINUE DOWN THE PATH OF ORGANIZING THE PRIVATE-SECTOR.**

The parties have also agreed to a collective bargaining process, so in the near future, we will begin negotiating their contract. These types of negotiations for an initial agreement prove to be challenging. We will be starting from scratch, as we do not have any existing language to adjust. These negotiations will be similar to the ones we completed earlier this year for a new MTESC with another company in Urbandale, IA.

## Private-Sector Organizing

I believe that we need to continue down the path of organizing the private-sector. There are so many companies out there doing work that touches the mail – and we have the right to organize them. Mail pre-sort facilities and distribution centers, MTESCs and mail-haul companies are all within our grasp. The organizing process can be time consuming and costly, but the rewards outweigh the price.

I look forward to expanding our membership through outside organizing. I believe it is the way to grow this great union exponentially. By doing so, we will be able to improve the working conditions and benefits for many workers across the country. ■



Sharyn Stone, Central Regional Coordinator

# Still in the Struggle

**P**ostal management's massive violation of Article 12 continues to have a significant impact on our jobs. As this article goes to press, we are still having extensive meetings and some impacts remain up in the air. Clearly, management does not have a vision of what they are trying to achieve. Not only are the numbers constantly in flux, but the reasons for some of the impacts keep changing.

**THE IMPACTS FOR SOME OF THE OFFICES ARE NOW CANCELLED, BUT THE REMAINING NUMBER IS STILL IN THE HUNDREDS.**

One impact provides documentation for a Function 4, and then a revised statement for the same office is issued, basing the impact on the F-1 scheduler. Offices have come off the impacted lists, only to be put back on a couple days later as a revised impact. Some of the impacts received are left off the scheduled meeting list until we notice and ask about that office. It has been a big mess. To management's credit – and I give them credit for very little – the impacts for some of the offices are now cancelled, but the remaining number is still in the hundreds.

President Dimondstein is consistently speaking with national-level postal management officials about their actions and how to minimize the nationwide impact. Several telecoms have taken place with the

Regional Coordinators, President Dimondstein, Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, and National Clerk Craft Officers.

Because of the APWU's actions, the move date now is Feb. 3, 2018. This means all of these impacts should have been met by Nov. 3, in order to provide Regional Coordinators with the required meeting, at least 90 days prior to moving employees. Impacted employees must have at least 60-days notice. Considering the large number of offices left to be discussed and the constant changes, that may be cutting it extremely close. As this article goes to press, I have dates scheduled for meetings into late October.

There is another significant obstacle to management's planned reduction of the work force. After the major Area Mail Processing

(AMP) impacts we endured a few years back, there are not nearly enough (not even close) residuals to place impacted employees within the required 50 miles. During every Article 12 meeting, we ask for a list of residual vacancies withheld for the impact. There are never more than a few. Most impacts do not have any yet.

So even when the move date gets here, management must also have residual vacancies within 50 miles to place these impacted employees in. I do not see that happening.

Locals are also tasked with filing grievances – not only on the impacts but also on work hours in offices that are equivalent duty assignments. All of us together will be successful in our efforts to minimize, and in some cases prevent, impacts to our members. ■

## Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM) Training

Our new JCIM is out and national headquarters started nationwide "Train the Trainer" training. This training was jointly prepared and presented by APWU National Officers and the USPS. The training is given to district/area management employees and APWU NBAs. After receiving the training, these officers/managers will in turn together provide training to local union officials and local management officials.

After receiving the national training, the same training will be provided in all of the USPS offices on a local or district level. The guidelines to be used for providing the combined training locally were provided at the national training sessions.

The JCIM is a major tool which should be used to resolve issues at the lowest possible level and provide all our members with effective representation. The goal is that both parties apply the JCIM language.

My fellow coordinators Omar Gonzalez, John Dirzius, Mike Gallagher, Kenneth Beasley and I participated in the national-level training and will be available to assist NBAs with local trainings.



# FROM the FIELD

*From the Field* is a new recurring feature for *The American Postal Worker* spotlighting statements from APWU local and state publications on a current issue.

## Reversions, Abolishments, and Excessing

"This is an attack on postal workers' jobs and we have a big fight on our hands. We need all of you in that fight. You need to report every violation to your steward. Management will be forced to perform more clerk work if this excessing occurs and it is up to you to report those violations."

– Bob Gunter, Illinois Postal Worker Union President,  
*The Illinois Postal Worker*

"We can stand together as a union and fight back or we can fall into their trap and split up until our demise is assured. It is in these times of struggle that the true strength of a union is put to the test. It is also in these times that we must all realize that we ARE the union."

– Bill Schweiker, Philadelphia BMC Local  
Clerk Craft Director, *Philly Parcel*

"The Postal Service is reducing duty assignments, although the affected post offices are already understaffed... What makes this action particularly disgusting is that most of the impacted employees are former PSEs that were recently converted to career employees."

– Lisa Ortega, East Bay Area Local (CA) President,  
*East Bay Unionizer*

"They will try to intimidate you, but when we, as a union, stand together, what can they do? Don't give away your rights with inactivity and fear. Young members, PSEs, learn your rights, get active with your union, for the future is yours. Management would like no more than to have an uneducated and unchallenging work force to direct."

– Rodney Jones, The Northern Virginia Area  
Local Industrial Relations Director,  
*Northern Virginia Postal Worker*

"These vacant duty assignments that management has decided to revert means there is less opportunities for career jobs for our PSEs. When we started at the Postal Service, we all looked forward to the day we would turn full-time regular. This is the same for PSEs and PTFs... But management doesn't care. They want a workforce of PSEs so that they can continue to pay low wages and benefits."

– Tiffany Foster, New York Metro Area Local  
Executive Vice President, *The Union Mail*

"I can only encourage each and every one of you to continue to help us protect your jobs, and not let other employees from outside your craft perform your work. Continue to perform every aspect of your duty assignments on a daily basis... This truly is a fight where we have to work together as one... The union is your voice. It is a body made up of all of you."

– Michael L. Macho, Kentucky Postal Workers Union  
President, *The Kentucky Postal Worker*

"I can tell you one thing: the union does NOT run the Postal Service! The union reacts to management decisions that violate the contract... We must recognize that if it wasn't for the union and we worked in the private sector, those of us who got abolishment letters might be looking for a new job outside the company."

– Michael J. Bates, Des Moines Area  
Local President, *Iowa Postal Solidarity*



# Bank Closings and Lack of Confidence Point the Way to Postal Banking

Way back in 1956, an article in the *Monthly Business Review* made a case for ending the Postal Savings System (see box). “It would seem that the Postal Savings System has outlived any social or economic need it may have once satisfied,” wrote the Cleveland Federal Reserve.

What were some of those social and economic needs, and do they exist today? After the financial crisis of 1907, public confidence in banks was extremely low. The Postal Savings System offered an alternative: the backing of deposits by the federal treasury and accessible locations, particularly in rural communities, where few bank branches existed. The savings program was also designed to attract the large number of recent immigrants with confidence in postal banking, as experienced in their home countries.

## Old Arguments No Longer Ring True

By 1956, public confidence in banks had been restored partly due to implementation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), protecting private bank deposits. The number of bank branches had also grown. However, here we are in 2017, on the heels of a major financial crisis, and those social and economic needs have returned – and new ones have appeared.

“Mortgage foreclosures, bank failures, a massive stock market crash, continued fraud, and excessive fees: it’s no wonder only 27 percent of Americans have confidence in banks,” remarked APWU President Dimondstein. The 27 percent is according to a 2016 Gallup Poll that was taken *before* we learned the full extent of the Wells Fargo fraudulent account and insurance scandal.

## Banks Abandoning Communities

In addition, since the financial crisis, more than 6,000 bank branches have closed. Bank of America closed or sold 1,600 branches and 90 percent of these were located outside of large population urban areas, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The loss of access to banks has increased reliance on expensive, alternative

## The Postal Savings System

The United States had a Postal Savings System from 1911 to 1967 which in 1947 had \$3.4 billion in assets (more than \$35 billion in today’s dollars) or about 10 percent of the assets of the entire commercial banking system. The Postal Savings System earned a profit in every year, but one, of its existence.

financial services, such as paycheck cashing, and has a negative impact on lending to small businesses.

Overall, 82 percent of all bank branch closings were in urban zip codes. But rural areas are also hard hit. New banking deserts – an area where there are no banks within ten miles – are in an additional 86 rural locations since the financial crisis, according to a new report from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

## Postal Banking: The Time is Now

Financial crisis, lack of confidence in banks and the closing of bank branches all combine to make a strong case for an alternative. In addition, predatory “alternative” financial services such as payday and title loans are increasingly filling the void left by the banks.

Sound familiar? Postal banking is more needed than ever. The U.S. Postal Service is the most trusted federal agency. Providing basic financial services at the post office will serve individuals, underserved by traditional banks. It will promote an economy that serves the people, not Wall Street, and it will strengthen and protect our public Postal Service. ■

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 include check cashing, bill payment, savings accounts and small-dollar loans. Postal Banking will benefit consumers without access to traditional banks as well as those who want a public option. The expansion of services would also strengthen our public Postal Service. To learn more, visit [www.CampaignforPostalBanking.org](http://www.CampaignforPostalBanking.org).



# Let's Build The Grand Alliance!

## Field Hearings Demonstrate Broad Public Support

“**S**ave and enhance the U.S. Postal Service” was the overwhelming spirit of the community field hearings held around the country by A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service. A wide range of speakers reaffirmed the need for a public postal system and rejected privatization, while recognizing that changes must be undertaken to bring the USPS fully into the 21st century.

*The Future of the U.S. Postal Service*, a new report by A Grand Alliance, is a culmination of the community field hearings held around the country in 2016.

“I hope you take the time to read the testimony of postal customers, workers, community and faith leaders, academics, and many more who showed up to take a stand for the future of our public Postal Service,” urged APWU President Dimondstein. The report is available at [www.agrandalliance.org](http://www.agrandalliance.org). (For print copies, email [info@agrandalliance.org](mailto:info@agrandalliance.org).)

The hearings took place in Baltimore, MD; San Jose, CA; New York City, NY; Cleveland, OH and Greensboro, NC; and many were anchored by APWU locals. Speakers gave testimony at each to a panel of hearing officers.

The importance of the USPS to the public good was a recurring theme. “We have said that there are certain assets that we as a people believe that we should own together, that we are going to invest in these assets because they fuel the greater good,” testified Elly Matsumura of Working Partnerships USA at the San Jose field hearing.

The many threats – including the financial health, cuts in service, and privatization – to our public Postal Service were highlighted. Typically, with privatization,

“you get higher costs, worse services, less efficient services, or no services,” argued Professor Mark Cassell at the Cleveland, OH field hearing.

Expansion of service – particularly postal banking – was a popular topic at each hearing. In New York City, Sarah Ludwig of the New Economy Project testified that, “There are seven zip codes... where there is not one bank branch serving the community.”

**A Grand Alliance** is proud to announce our newest national signatory organization: the NAACP! Chapters of the NAACP in Baltimore, San Jose, Greensboro, and Cleveland participated in the field hearings.

The report describes some of the ideas offered for innovative expansion. These include licensing, notary, copy and scanning services, internet access, longer hours and additional staffing, and green innovations such as electric car charging stations and solar panels.

### Build A Grand Alliance

The field hearings were effective in educating the public and building support for strengthening the USPS. Let's keep that momentum going by:

- Identifying organizations in your community whose members benefit from a public Postal Service.
- Distributing copies of the field hearing report to potential allied organizations.
- Making a presentation and/or showing the video – see the box below – at organizational and local union meetings.
- Asking local organizations to join A Grand Alliance.
- Proposing a resolution at labor councils and city and county council meetings. ■

### **A GRAND ALLIANCE** TO 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 the NAACP, 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 **[AGrandAlliance.org](http://AGrandAlliance.org)**.

A new video, produced by **A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service**, highlights the community field hearings. The video includes footage of Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC-12) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH-9) who testified at the hearings in Greensboro, NC and Cleveland, OH respectively. You can view the video at **[www.agrandalliance.org](http://www.agrandalliance.org)**. Show the video at local union meetings, as well as at state and regional conferences.

## FIGHTING FOR **ONE FAIR WAGE** FOR ALL

**T**he federal minimum wage for tipped workers has not been increased in 25 years – and Restaurant Opportunities Center United (ROCU) launched a campaign to change that.

Back in 1991, the tipped-worker minimum wage rose from just \$2.09 to \$2.13 an hour, where it remains today. According to ROCU, this two-tier system has left nearly 4.5 million workers struggling to make ends meet on poverty wages.

In 43 states, the restaurant industry still follows the federal minimum wage for tipped workers, so servers, bussers, hosts and bartenders are forced to rely on tips to earn a living. This creates a number of problems:

- Although employers are legally required to “top off” a worker’s pay when tips don’t add up to at least the standard minimum wage (\$7.25 federally), enforcement is scarce.
- The restaurant industry includes 7 of the 10 lowest paying jobs in the country. Servers are twice as likely to need food stamps than the rest of the workforce – and are three times as likely to live in poverty.
- The restaurant industry is the largest source of sexual harassment charges filed by women – with a rate five times higher than any other industry – according to The Equal Employment Opportunity Center. Since



ROCU members protest for One Fair Wage in Washington, D.C.

70 percent of servers are women, they frequently are forced to put up with sexual harassment from customers, coworkers and managers in order to receive the necessary tips and shifts needed to pay the bills.

To stop this predatory behavior by the restaurant industry, ROCU kicked off the One Fair Wage campaign, dedicated to passing city and state legislation that would require the restaurant industry pay all workers – regardless of whether they are tipped or not – the same minimum hourly wage.

To get involved in a campaign near you, or for more information, visit [OneFairWage.org](http://OneFairWage.org).

## British Postal Workers **Vote Overwhelmingly for National Strike**

**A**s this issue went to press, 111,000 British postal workers were planning to walk off the job – as part of a long-running fight for a fair contract and improved service.

On Oct. 3, the Communication Workers Union (CWU) announced that nearly 90 percent of members voted “Yes” to industrial action against their employer, Royal Mail. The decision to strike was fueled by 18 painstaking months of contract negotiations.

Royal Mail quickly requested an injunction, or a court order, to stop the strike. On Oct. 12, the company’s bid was granted and the strikes planned for Oct. 19 and 20 were stalled. CWU officials assured members that the strike was not “cancelled...just postponed.”

Dave Ward, General Secretary of CWU said of the vote, “We asked our members to engage like never before and they did it. Make no

mistake...this is about defining your service, a service we have been proud to deliver for many, many years.”

During negotiations, Royal Mail proposed massive cuts to workers’ pensions and benefits – along with service standard cuts. During the strike ballot initiative, management ran an anti-union campaign where workers were “bombarded” with advertisements on television, as well as on hand-held scanning devices used during deliveries, telling members to vote “No” on the strike ballot. Nevertheless, 73.7 percent of CWU members cast a ballot and 89.1 percent of those voted “Yes.”

“We are not just fighting for ourselves, we are fighting for a great public service,” Terry Pullinger, Deputy General Postal Secretary of CWU said. “It’s really important the public understands that this dispute is about broken promises and broken agreements.”





Fight for \$15 members march in Oakland, CA, on Labor Day.

## FAST FOOD WORKERS HOLD LABOR DAY PROTESTS IN OVER 300 CITIES WORLDWIDE

**S**triking fast food workers took to the streets in over 300 cities worldwide on Labor Day. They were striking for \$15 an hour minimum wage and the right to unionize. Workers from other industries joined them in solidarity, including those in the health care, child care and transit.

Cities from coast-to-coast saw workers participate in the protests, including Atlanta, Austin, Birmingham, Boston, Buffalo, Charleston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Des Moines, Durham, Hartford, Kansas

City, Las Vegas, Little Rock, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Oakland, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Sacramento, San Diego, St. Paul, St. Louis, Tampa and Tuscaloosa.

Workers in other countries also went on strike and protested in solidarity on Sept. 4, including Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Sweden and the United Kingdom. For more information, visit [fightfor15.org](http://fightfor15.org).

## FRENCH UNIONS PROTEST LABOR REFORMS



Photo courtesy of Thomas Bresson

CGT members employed at North Hospital march on Sept. 21.

**T**housands of workers from all industries filled the streets of Paris throughout the month of September protesting President Emmanuel Macron's labor reforms, which they claim slash collective bargaining rights and transfer power away from workers to employers.

The strikes, supported by the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), take aim at the pro-business Macron, who signed five decrees that overhaul the country's labor laws. These decrees make it easier for companies to hire and fire employees. On top of that, there are

plans to change the country's unemployment benefit and pension systems.

Although some French unions agreed to Macron's reforms, many did not. Aside from the Paris protests, members of the Force Ouvrière union also blocked access to several fuel depots in southern and western France.

"We're determined. We're going to stay as long as possible while hoping that other blockades take place elsewhere; maybe that'll make Mr. Macron move," a Force Ouvrière union official Pascal Favre told *Reuters*.

Protests continued as this issue went to press.



Judy Beard, Director

# Congress Continues Attacking Postal Workers

Throughout the course of the year, we have been informing you of attacks against postal employees and retirees by the 115th Congress.

Many of these attacks, such as those contained in recent budget proposals, have included cuts to postal/federal retirement benefits. In addition, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released a report in August detailing options to change the federal retirement system and how those changes would affect the federal budget. Members of Congress often look to these reports to justify their support of proposed cuts to workers' benefits.

## Change the FERS Pension Plan

- **Option 1:** Increase the pension contribution to 4.4 percent of salary for all employees. (Currently that rate is 0.8 percent for employees hired before 2013 and 3.1 percent for employees hired in 2013. It is already 4.4 percent for employees hired after 2013.)
- **Option 2:** Decrease the pension contribution rate to 0.8 percent for all employees.
- **Option 3:** Decrease pensions by basing the retirement benefit on the five years of highest salary (instead of the three years of highest salary, as in current law).

## Replace the FERS Pension with Larger Government Contributions to TSP for New Employees

- **Option 4:** Eliminate the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) pension, increase the government's automatic Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) contribution to 8 percent of salary, and require the government to match up to 7 percent of additional contributions for new employees.
- **Option 5:** Eliminate the FERS pension, increase the government's automatic TSP contribution to 10 percent of salary, and eliminate the government's matching contribution to TSP.

While not set in stone, the options outlined above are predominantly dangerous and in step with both the House Budget Committee's recommendations and the White House budget proposal.

Option 2 is the only welcome option. Postal and federal workers could stand to benefit with thousands of dollars more in annual take home pay. Further, it would restore some parity in pension treatment between new workers and their experienced colleagues.

These potential outcomes underscore the importance and urgency of the APWU's ongoing campaign to protect postal/federal employee pay and retirement security. As new legislation is introduced (or existing legislation advances) we will keep you informed on how you can get involved.

Thanking you in advance for your continued help to defeat attempts to cut or eliminate pensions or slash the pay of workers and retirees. ■

## Legislative Priorities

### Support

**The Postal Service Reform Act of 2017 (H.R. 756)** – We support this bill moving through the legislative process. This bill advanced to the Energy & Commerce and Ways & Means Committees.

**Medicare For All (H.R. 676 & S. 1804)** – We support legislation introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI-13) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) for universal healthcare, ensuring access to high-quality affordable health care for all Americans, regardless of employment, income, or health care status.

### Oppose

**The PAGE Act (H.R. 3257)** – This anti-worker legislation introduced by Rep. Todd Rokita (R-IN-4) would strip union representation and protections from new postal and federal employees, making them "at-will" employees subject to discipline or termination at management's discretion.



## Get Involved!

Pledge to participate in political activities between now and April 30, 2018! To sign the pledge online please visit

**apwu.org**. You can also email **legislative@apwu.org** or call **202-842-2411** to request a pledge card.





Joyce B. Robinson, Director

# 'A Woman's Place Is in Her Union!'

## APWU POWER Convention Donates Over \$23,000 to COPA



Front row: new POWER Coordinators Bernadette Baker, Tanya Jackson, Michelle Boulware, Erica Cole, and Darcy Wood. Back row: Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, Research & Education Director Joyce Robinson, President Mark Dimondstein, and Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy.

“A Woman's Place Is in Her Union!” was the theme that kicked off the Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER) 18th Biennial National Convention in Baltimore, MD.

Workshops offered included: Express Yourself; You are Out of Order; Living on a Budget; Stepping Up and Stepping Out; and You're Getting on My Nerves. Participants received an abundance of information to share with their locals and states. ■

### Highlights

The Honorable Catherine Pugh, Mayor of the City of Baltimore, gave a heartfelt welcome address. She spoke of the struggles and difficulties that women in public office have to overcome and commended APWU POWER for speaking out on women's issues. She said it's important that we acknowledge, support and respect all women and try to uplift each other.

The convention keynote speaker was Donna S. Edwards, President of Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. She stated that women are born leaders who have learned to work together. She spoke about executive orders being adopted that violate both women's and workers' rights, and stated this country is being pushed backwards.

She encouraged women to get involved in the political process, to run for local, city, county and state offices, and to pay close attention to legislation being introduced in the Congress and Senate. Edwards ended by reminding the delegates that when our union is directly connected to our members' needs, then we can ask them to support credible politicians.

The Eastern Region reclaimed the COPA Award, contributing a whopping \$6,287.50, leaving the other regions behind in the dust. Other region totals were: Western \$3,255.10; Southern \$3,217.00; Central \$2,730.00 and Northeast \$2,645.00. Contributions from the sale of other items were \$4,873.60, making **APWU POWER's grand total \$23,008.20.**

National APWU awards presented were: The Elizabeth "Liz" Powell Executive Award to Elizabeth "Liz" Swigert (NBA), the Joyce B. Robinson Leadership Award to Rachel Walthall (NBA) and the Nilda Chock Pioneer Award to Margaret Glass (Houston Area Local).

In addition, outgoing POWER Coordinators received awards and the POWER Coordinator's Award went to Linda Terry, Northeast Region.

During the Installation Dinner, President Mark Dimondstein addressed the delegates. He recognized first time attendees and women delegates under 35 years old. He stated that today there is a war on workers and made reference to the recent victory over Staples and the battles that workers face today, saluting everyone on the front line.

President Dimondstein spoke about the need to be involved in issues affecting postal workers and talked about the upcoming contract negotiations, the Campaign for Postal Banking and A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service. He encouraged members to continue to be diligent and persistent as we fight for good postal jobs and benefits. Following his remarks, he installed the newly-elected APWU POWER Coordinators and Alternates.

The newly-elected APWU POWER Coordinators are:

**Darcy A. Wood**, Central Region, [Dwood@gkcmal.org](mailto:Dwood@gkcmal.org)  
**Michelle Boulware**, Eastern Region, [michelleh715@hotmail.com](mailto:michelleh715@hotmail.com)  
**Tanya D. Jackson**, Northeast Region, [tanyaapwu251@gmail.com](mailto:tanyaapwu251@gmail.com)  
**Bernadette Baker**, Southern Region, [bbdette44@aol.com](mailto:bbdette44@aol.com)  
**Erica Cole**, Western Region, [ecole@apwuslcb.org](mailto:ecole@apwuslcb.org)

APWU POWER encourages members to donate a check or money order payable to "Sisters Helping Sisters" to aid postal employees devastated by recent disasters. Mail to APWU, Attention: Joyce Robinson, 1300 L St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. It's important to help our postal family!

## Long Overdue Welcome Home

**T**his Veterans' Day the Military Exchange will open its virtual doors to more than 13 million veterans. All honorably-discharged veterans will receive a lifelong benefit to online exchange shopping – a long overdue welcome home.

The Exchange was established in 1895 to serve America's Armed Forces, but this is the first time in its 122-year history that all honorably-discharged veterans will be able to take advantage of the tax-free, competitive, military discounts offered by the Exchange.

Until now only active-duty, members of the Guard and Reserve, retirees, 100 percent disabled veterans, Medal of Honor recipients and dependent family members of these groups were permitted to use military exchanges.

Exchanges are self-supporting.

They depend on the sale of goods and services, which accounts for 98 percent of their operating budget. One

hundred percent of all Exchange earnings are used to support the military community through Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) and other quality of life programs that are critical to maintaining force readiness and resiliency.

Exchanges provide over \$300 million annually to help fund child development centers, youth services, fitness centers, outdoor recreation and more. Exchanges have allocated more than \$2.4 billion to these military programs over the last decade and have reinvested in new and renovated stores. Last year alone, the Exchange outfitted 1.1 million troops with combat uniforms, served 3 million school lunches to their children and enabled the operation of seven plants that provide baked goods, bottled water and ice to overseas bases. The Exchange is also a source of income to military families and veterans. Approximately 85 percent of the 34,000 Exchange associates are connected to the military.

But Exchange benefits are at risk. In the past few years, sales have declined largely due to drawdowns creating a reduction in force and because there are

more prevalent online shopping opportunities for military members and their families, impacting how much the Exchange can give back to the military community. Officials estimated sales would drop to one-third of their current levels in the next few years.

Recognizing changes to their business model needed to be made, the Department of Defense (DoD) Resale Board voted to allow online access to all honorably-discharged military veterans. This is the first time in nearly three decades that the DoD expanded Exchange shopping privileges. The new rule does not include brick and mortar stores located on military bases because current support structures cannot sustain 19 million veterans gaining access to bases and would likely infringe on military operations.

The change is expected to return an additional \$100 million to the military community each year. Increased sales would also allow AAFES and NEX to negotiate bigger discounts on larger, bulk orders of the goods it sells – bringing even greater savings to our deserving U.S. Service members, veterans and their families.

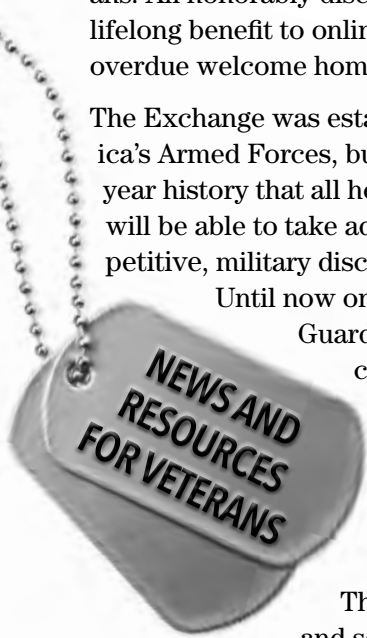
The Exchange websites offer millions of products including apparel and accessories, jewelry and watches, health and beauty, electronics, home goods and appliances, baby products and toys, and more. Actual online pricing can only be seen by those authorized to shop online. Shipping is free for online orders of \$49 or more.

To get started, veterans will need to register at [VetVerify.org](http://VetVerify.org). [VetVerify.org](http://VetVerify.org) uses information from the Defense Department's Defense Manpower Data Center to verify a veteran's status. Veterans will receive notification of their acceptance as online shoppers, or if their records are incomplete, they will receive guidance on the steps they can take to update those records. Veterans are invited to register prior to the launch date so they can start shopping on Nov. 11.

To learn more about the Exchange, its price match policies, or to start shopping once you've successfully registered visit: [shopmyexchange.com](http://shopmyexchange.com); [shopcgx.com](http://shopcgx.com); [mymcx.com](http://mymcx.com); and [mynavyexchange.com](http://mynavyexchange.com).

Thank you for your service. Happy Veterans' Day.

– Human Relations Department







Sue Carney, Director

# The Long Road Home

**F**or many survivors of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria the road home will not be easy. Torrential rains, powerful wind gusts of up to 175 mph and storm surges reaching 12.5 feet caused widespread flooding and destruction throughout much of the south and the Caribbean – impacting millions, including more than 100,000 postal employees and an untold number of retirees.

The hurricanes claimed at least 257 lives. Hurricane Harvey significantly damaged over 185,000 homes; 40,000 homes were completely destroyed and more than 1 million vehicles were totaled as the storm dumped nearly 52 inches of punishing rain on south Texas and Louisiana over six merciless days – that’s 27 trillion gallons of water – enough to meet New York City’s water needs for the next five decades. Harvey is the second costliest storm in U.S. history, falling just short of Katrina.

Irma ravaged the Keys. The hurricane smashed houses and shattered lives across Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Tennessee, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. What Irma didn’t destroy, Hurricane Maria aimed to finish. Maria left total destruction in her wake. Crippling Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the storm swallowed and splintered homes and infrastructures with flash-floods and ripping winds – leaving residents without housing and in short supply of food, water, gasoline, medicine and other necessities for the long haul.

Each of these catastrophic storms indiscriminately jolted people from their ordinary lives. With the reality of global warming and climate change – regardless of where we live – any one of us could easily find ourselves in their shoes. In the last 10 years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has declared 665 major disasters – no state or U.S. territory has been exempt. Each has suffered a multitude of disasters in the last decade. Who will you turn to when disaster strikes?

### We Can All Help

Hurricane survivors who suffered the greatest loss will need our help. Based on our experience with

Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy, it can take months, even years before they will be able to return home. Just 12 percent of our country’s homeowners carry flood insurance. Many can’t afford it and significantly more aren’t required to carry it because they do not live in a flood zone. So the overwhelming majority of survivors will be dependent on private charity and government aid, which is limited. FEMA grants are capped at \$33,300. Most will see significantly less. Many more won’t qualify. Most did not even receive 30 days of Transitional Shelter Assistance from FEMA.

Despite the daunting costs of recovery, each of us has the ability to do our small part, which together will make a big difference in the lives of many. Giving as little as \$5 per pay period, less than a Quarter Pounder and fries, to the Postal Employees Relief Fund (PERF) through payroll or annuity deduction during the Combined Federal Campaign can help fellow coworkers and retirees re-establish their homes and replace other necessities lost to these catastrophic storms, and other devastating disasters.

**EACH OF US HAS THE ABILITY TO DO OUR SMALL PART, WHICH TOGETHER WILL MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MANY.**

Imagine losing your home and everything you worked for; every necessity and comfort, every precious keepsake that represents your life destroyed. Imagine what it would take to re-establish your home and replace your losses, living paycheck to paycheck while still having to pay a mortgage and property taxes for a home that is destroyed. Rainy day savings won’t be enough to recover from this type of destruction. Wouldn’t you want someone to be there for you? Please consider giving what you can.

Postal employees and retirees suffering losses to their primary residence from a natural disaster or home fire, must apply to PERF within six months of the event to be eligible for assistance. Visit [postalrelief.com](http://postalrelief.com) or contact the Human Relations Department to learn more. ■



Nancy Olumekor, Director

## Thank You for Your Service

**A**s we enter the season of gratitude, I want to first thank all of our veterans and active military personnel for their service. In recognition of Veterans' Day, I share the story of one of our APWU retiree members, a Navy veteran who has truly been Aging Out Loud.

Elizabeth "Betsy" Huff served as a Navy WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). On Dec 7, 1941, Betsy decided if they allowed women in the armed forces, she was going to join the Navy.



Photo courtesy of Curtis Rustin

APWU member Betsy Huff at the Retiree Conference in Las Vegas.

She had a medical background as a pre-nursing student, worked as a Red Cross nursing assistant and worked more than two and a half years in a hospital – which more than qualified her.

In 1945, she answered the call for WAVES medical corpsmen

in Hawaii and spent most of the year serving at the Pearl Harbor Dental Clinic, taking care of many marines who had come back from Iwo Jima, until the war ended. Then in May 1946, Betsy married Alfred Huff, a marine, and started their family.

Betsy spent 34 years working as a clerk in various positions at a post office in Dayton, Ohio, retiring in 1986. She credits John R. Smith with helping to form the APWU Retirees Chapter in Dayton, Ohio, where she is one of the founding members. She is still a member and has enjoyed an active retirement.

She joined us this year at the APWU Retirees Educational Conference in Las Vegas, where we honored her by presenting her with a cake for her 95th birthday. Betsy's long term goal is to live as a retiree longer than she worked – and will achieve that goal in 2020. ■

### Organizing for Action

The legislative battles we face in 2018 can only be won if we work collectively. Retirees still need to organize and take action!

Organizing a local retiree chapter begins by contacting the Retiree Department. The local chapter must function consistently with the national and chapter constitutions, and with the cooperation of the local.

The local, at its general membership meeting, should pass a motion to form a Retiree Chapter to be chartered by the national union. In accordance with Article 16.2(i) of the APWU National constitution, "Ten (10) or more Retiree Department members residing within a local or area local geographical jurisdiction may form a Local Retiree Chapter." The members formalize the Retiree Chapter with assistance from the Retiree Department.

### 2018 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

"With two months (August and September) to go in the cost-of-living countdown, federal, military and Social Security retirees are eagerly awaiting their 2018 cost-of-living adjustment," wrote Mike Causey, senior correspondent for *Federal News Radio*, on Aug. 14. "Last month, the COLA – based on the nationwide rise in living costs measured by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics – stood at 1.6 percent, but the Consumer Price Index for the month of July dipped slightly, dropping the estimate to 1.52 percent. The actual amount of the 2018 COLA will be based on the average of the indices of July, August, and September, in comparison with the previous year's third quarter average."

The 2018 cost-of-living adjustment for those receiving Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) was released on Oct. 13. It will be two percent.





John Marcotte, Director

# Open Season is Here

**F**ederal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Open Season is upon us and I am proud to report that the APWU Health Plan is bucking the trend of ever increasing premiums by offering extremely small premium increases of less than a dollar for most plans and premium decreases for some.

For those of us that trust our families' health insurance needs to the APWU Health Plan, this is welcome news. For those of you that don't, you need to look at getting comprehensive health care at the most affordable price and switch to the APWU Health Plan this Open Season.

The APWU Health Plan was founded by postal employees to serve postal employees, not stockholders or investors. What does this mean for you? That our focus is on your family's health and on allowing you to keep as much of your paycheck as possible. This led us to create an extensive national network of physicians, health care providers and health care facilities, while also obtaining high customer satisfaction.

We provide compassionate customer service with a personal touch, all while minimizing administrative

costs – just what you would expect from an insurance company whose board of directors are all current or retired postal employees.

**APWU HEALTH PLAN WAS FOUNDED  
BY POSTAL EMPLOYEES TO  
SERVE POSTAL EMPLOYEES,  
NOT STOCKHOLDERS OR INVESTORS.**

These are very challenging times for postal workers. There are attacks on health care benefits for both current and retired postal workers on Capitol Hill, by the USPS and in op-ed pieces published by several publications.

This is not new. The APWU has been successful in the past defending health care as a right for working Americans, but it will take all of us working together to keep this basic negotiated benefit for ourselves and future postal workers.

I believe we should focus on the real problem with American health care – costs spiraling out of control – not lowering care for workers whose families deserve high quality health care. We at the APWU Health Plan have seen huge increases in hospital charges, physician bills and drug costs. In fact, it is not unusual of the price for the same drug to have increased 400 percent in the last few years.

We at the APWU Health Plan are here for you, and proud to serve you and your family. Together Better Health! ■





# Comprehensive health benefits at an affordable price.

## OPEN SEASON DATES

November 13 -December 11, 2017

**We work hard  
to keep your  
premiums low.**

	Enrollment code	Non-Postal biweekly	Non-Postal monthly	Postal			
				Biweekly			
				Category 1	Category 2	APWU career	APWU career rate change*
<b>HIGH OPTION</b> Self Only	471	\$93.04	\$201.59	\$86.67	\$80.31	\$86.67	+ \$1.61
Self Plus One	473	\$185.79	\$402.55	\$172.15	\$158.51	\$172.15	+ \$4.25
Self and Family	472	\$251.90	\$545.78	\$237.41	\$222.92	\$237.41	+ \$5.37
<b>CONSUMER DRIVEN OPTION</b> Self Only	474	\$63.97	\$138.61	\$58.21	\$53.10	\$12.79	+ \$0.43
Self Plus One	476	\$140.74	\$304.93	\$128.07	\$116.81	\$28.15	+ \$0.95
Self and Family	475	\$153.53	\$332.65	\$139.71	\$127.43	\$41.83	+ \$2.82

\*Rate change is the premium increase members will pay in 2018 over 2017.

**TOGETHER.  
BETTER HEALTH.**

**APWU**  
HEALTH PLAN

[apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com)  
**OPEN SEASON HOTLINE**  
**800.PIC.APWU**

## High Option

### 100% COVERAGE IN-NETWORK

- Preventive care and screenings
- Maternity care
- Accidental injury within 24 hours
- Lab tests (\$0 for covered blood work performed at LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics)
- Visits to registered dietician/nutritionist
- Diabetes management: Generic medication, glucose test strips, lancets and coaching calls
- Weight management, pregnancy and tobacco cessation programs

### COPAYS IN-NETWORK

- \$25 for office visits, including specialists and virtual visits
- \$40 for urgent care centers
- \$10 for retail generic drugs – non-specialty



The High Option features the Cigna Healthcare provider network.

## Consumer Driven Option

### 100% COVERAGE IN-NETWORK

- Preventive care and screenings
- Maternity care
- Pregnancy and tobacco cessation programs
- Personal Care Account covers 100% of the first \$1,200 expenses for Self Only or \$2,400 for Self Plus One and Self and Family

### COPAYS IN-NETWORK

No upfront deductible, coinsurance or copay until Personal Care Account is exhausted.



The Consumer Driven Option is administered by UnitedHealthcare.