

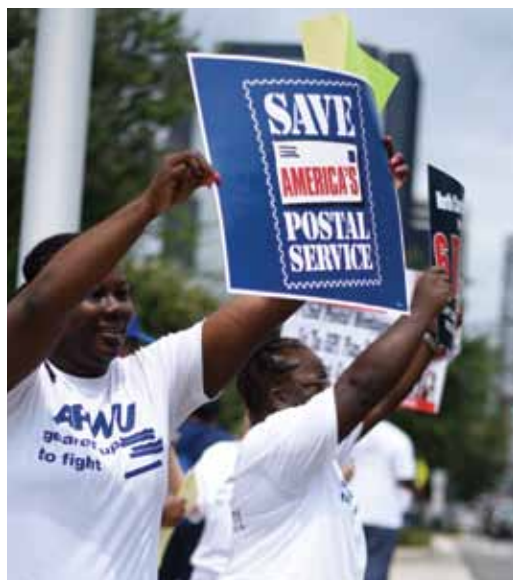
THE AMERICAN **Postal Worker** APWU

September/October 2017

Workers hold the winning cards



KONOPACKI
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Art by Mike Konopacki

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'In Our Hands Is Placed a Power...'

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

There are many daunting challenges on the horizon that demand our attention and action as postal workers.

Management, with their slash and burn approach, has targeted 16,000 jobs for reversion, abolishment or excessing, which not only disrupts the lives of postal workers, but undermines service to the customers. This fight is raging, but a successful fightback will have to include strong alliances with the public and taking it "to the streets."

WE HAVE THE POWER BECAUSE WE DO THE WORK, CREATE THE WEALTH AND PROVIDE THE NEEDED SERVICES, AND THERE ARE FAR MORE OF "US" THAN "THEM."

The 2018 National Collective Bargaining Agreement (union contract) negotiations with postal management will begin in nine months. Preparations are underway. Negotiations are never easy, and these may prove to be the most difficult to date. Building power and leverage through a rank-and-file "contract campaign" is vital.

The need for positive postal reform legislation is urgent. Even in this unpredictable and hostile political environment, success is possible. Our members represent the entire political spectrum. This is a source of strength, because it will take members from every viewpoint working together to get any legislation across the finish line.

The looming White House inspired and proposed House Budget Committee 2018 Federal Budget bill is an assault on and insult to every worker. It is a proposed budget, dubbed the "tanks and tax cut" budget, with massive tax breaks for the rich and billions added to an already bloated Pentagon budget, all while robbing from working families – including thousands of dollars a year from postal workers with proposed changes to retirement contributions and reduced benefits.

It might appear that the odds are overwhelming and that the Wall Street banksters and their bought and

paid for politicians hold all the cards. Their message to us is that we are powerless, we cannot fight city hall and to struggle is futile.

Not so! History teaches us otherwise. Powerful labor struggles brought unions into being at a time when corporations were "all powerful." Women's suffrage once seemed an impossibility. The civil rights movement of the 1960s won human rights many thought unachievable. Postal strikers stormed the heavens in 1970, changing postal jobs into decent living-wage ones and replacing collective begging with collective bargaining. What all these struggles had in common was a powerful movement capable of wresting power from the robber barons.

Our recent *Stop Staples* campaign victory and the successful effort on the part of the union movement and many allies to stop the rotten Trans-Pacific Partnership, underscore when we are organized we can win!

We have the power because we do the work, create the wealth and provide the needed services, and there are far more of "us" than "them." We hold the winning cards – our union, solidarity, unity, activism and community allies. The famous and well sung labor anthem puts it so well:

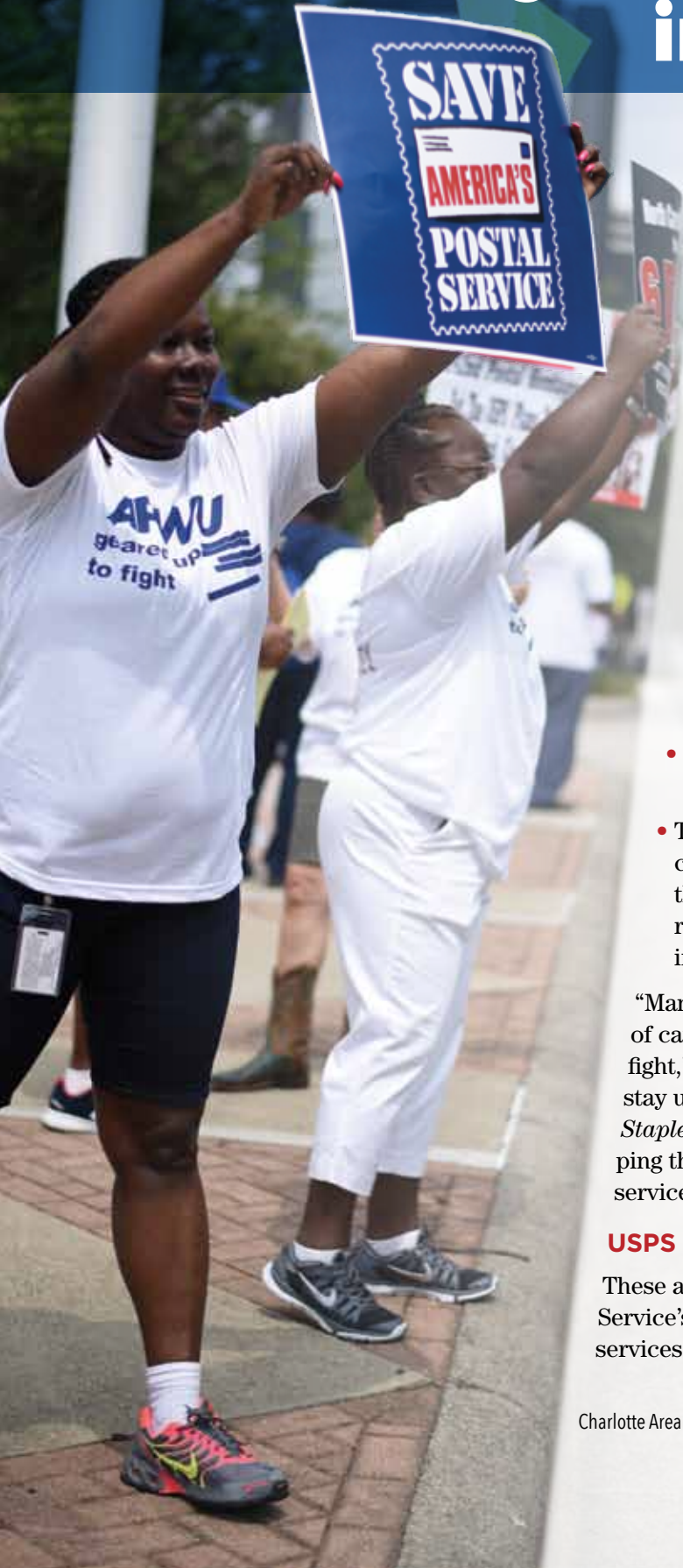
"In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold, greater than the might of armies magnified a thousand-fold, we can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old, for the union makes us strong!" ■

Publication Redesigned

The American Postal Worker has been redesigned! The main aim is to have a more accessible magazine with shorter officer reports, more news articles about member activities and local/state unions' actions, and more educational articles of general interest. In addition, I plan to reestablish a "Letters to the Editor" section – which will only work if you send in your thoughts and opinions. The new format will be a work in progress, so let us know what you think!

UPDATE ON THE **FIGHT BACK**

Against USPS Reductions in Service and Jobs



Following strong resistance from the APWU – and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union (NPMHU) – USPS management agreed to a five-month delay in implementing forced reassignments and excessing of employees out of their installations.

However, this may only be a temporary reprieve as the USPS is planning to move ahead with their outrageous and misguided plans to gut the workforce and service, targeting over 12,000 jobs with their three-pronged assault:

- First, in most facilities postal management is automatically reverting (i.e. doing away with) vacant positions in violation of the contract. Job reversions reduce the workforce and slow or stop conversion opportunities for Postal Support Employees (PSEs) to career jobs.
- Second, management is targeting thousands of bid jobs currently occupied by career employees for abolishment.
- Third, job abolishments can lead to the excessing of career employees out of their facilities and possibly out of their crafts. Furthermore, PSE hours will be significantly reduced if management's ill-conceived actions are fully implemented.

“Management’s proposed plans will severely disrupt the lives of career and non-career employees alike. We are in a big fight,” said President Dimondstein. “If we stick together and stay united, then I am confident that – just like with the *Stop Staples* and contract struggles – we will be victorious in stopping these new attacks on the workforce and on customer service.”

USPS Actions are an Attack on Service

These actions by postal management are counter to the Postal Service’s core mandate to “provide prompt, reliable and efficient services to patrons in all areas.” ➤

Charlotte Area Local members Shannan Martin and Alicia Brown.



“The Postal Service’s decisions will reduce employees at offices which are already short-staffed and where customers are experiencing poor service,” said Clerk Division Director Clint Burelson. “Delays in the mail will increase and there will be longer lines at post offices.”

APWU and Mail Handlers Working Together

In response to these attacks on the postal workforce and service, APWU President Mark Dimondstein and NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian sent a joint letter to Postmaster General Megan Brennan voicing the unions’ deep concerns. Our sisters and brothers in the NPMHU are just as affected by these crippling cuts. Postal management does not discriminate when it comes to attacking its unions.

In the letter, the two presidents questioned “why the Postal Service would choose to declare war on its unions and its employees.”

“The cutting of an already skeletal workforce will not only cause massive disruption to the workforce but will cause further degradation of postal services for

the American people throughout the country,” the letter stated.

Together, the postal unions drew a line in the sand and stood united against Postmaster Brennan’s continuous “cost-saving” shortcuts. The presidents concluded by restating their commitment to work together, “Rest assured that, absent correction, the APWU and the NPMHU will together resist misguided actions and violations of agreements with, and commitments to, our members.”

This recent collaboration, and the decision by the Postal Service to delay for five months, is another demonstration of the value of the *Postal Union Alliance* when addressing joint grievances with management. The USPS sees the collective strength we bring to the table.

Fighting Back with Grievances and in the Streets

The National Clerk Division Leadership immediately organized a coordinated response to the serious contract violations, including provisions that management must create career bid jobs out of all available work hours. They also:

- Planned and coordinated trainings for local/state officers and stewards across the country, with plans to continue trainings, as necessary, moving forward.
- Assigned a Clerk Division National Business Agent (NBA) from each region to assist the local and state affiliates in filing grievances.

In addition, the APWU headquarters leadership is preparing to file national grievances, as appropriate, and the five APWU Regional Coordinators will initiate appropriate area-wide grievances, as well.

Now that the proposed excessing is delayed until Feb. 2018, the APWU and postal management agreed to area-wide meetings to fully discuss staffing and scheduling. “We welcome the opportunity to sit down and discuss these important issues,” said President Dimondstein. “However, APWU representatives will vigorously oppose any unnecessary changes and seek



Greater Seattle Area Local Executive Vice President David Yao Cutting Cake, Not Jobs in celebration of Postal Heritage Day.



Charlotte Area Local members and supporters at their informational picket.



Greater Seattle Area Local President Myrna C. Umali speaking to postal patrons.

constructive alternatives to management's slash and burn approach."

Locals Get Out the Word

Locals are taking their own initiative and getting out in the streets, educating and rallying their communities. As previously reported in the July-August 2017 issue of the *American Postal Worker*, on June 10, the Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local held an informational picket with over 70 members and supporters. Other locals soon followed suit.

On July 26, Postal Heritage Day, two APWU locals held informational pickets informing the public of the cuts.

The Greater Seattle Area Local protested in front of the University Station Post Office in downtown Seattle, WA. Sixty concerned citizens signed postcards to Postmaster General Megan Brennan saying, "We need more, not fewer qualified postal employees to keep service levels high and avoid long lines at the post office."

Greater Seattle Area Local Executive Vice President David Yao explained how in addition to longer lines and delayed mail, the "phone won't get answered and the level of service the public has gotten used to could decline if these job cuts go through."

In North Carolina, members of the Charlotte Area Local protested in front of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center.

"We do not want to see the Postal Service privatized, but every time we turn around we see more and more cuts," National Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy said in Charlotte. "Right now, across the country, they are trying to get rid of jobs. They are reverting

and abolishing jobs. When they do this, it's pretty hard for us to give good service to the public."

Local President Anthony Wilson led chants of "Geared Up, Fight Back," and called for restoration of service standards that were degraded on Jan. 5, 2015. "We need first-class mail to come back to being overnight mail. We need to get the service that we give to every citizen in this country back to service we can be proud of," he said, noting that this rally was "the first of many. You will see us again and we will continue to fight." ■



Greater Seattle Area Customer Service Clerk Craft Director Donna Marshall at the informational picket.



Stay Informed & Involved!

"All APWU members should stay informed and involved," urged President Dimondstein. "As we await new impact statements, any excessing is months away from becoming a reality."

"Furthermore, based on a previously negotiated settlement with the union, management cannot excess APWU-represented career employees more than 50 miles," he continued. "So, there is limited opportunity for postal bosses to currently force employees out of their facilities."

If an APWU member receives an improper notification of an involuntary reassignment, contact a local/state union representative for assistance.

Find out more information on the specific impact to your workplace and how to help fight back, at apwu.org, on Facebook and at local union meetings.

To receive texts or emails directly from the APWU National Headquarters regarding this, and other important issues, go to apwu.org/stay-connected to sign up online or text **APWU** to **91990**.

All Hands on Deck for

On July 18, APWU members were on the front line protecting our livelihoods from budget attacks. APWU sisters and brothers came out in droves on our joint Day of Action with the Federal-Postal Coalition, making over 5,300 calls in 24 hours to congressional offices.

Together, APWU members urged their Congressional representatives to reject any federal budget proposal including devastating cuts to our pay and benefits. We told our representatives to oppose any budget balanced on the backs of workers.

The House Budget — Beyond the Blueprint

The very next day, the House Budget Committee came back swinging, advancing its Fiscal Year 2018 budget resolution. As anticipated, the 2018 House Budget is in the same mold as the White House budget – it punishes workers and the working-class, while giving big payouts to the rich. The resolution instructs the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee (which has jurisdiction over the Postal Service and postal/federal employee annuity benefits) to cut \$32 billion in the programs and agencies they oversee during ten years.

Like the White House proposal, the House budget recommends big pay cuts to postal workers through increased



ONE ATROCIOUS STEP FURTHER **Proposal to Move USPS from** **'Off Budget' to 'On Budget'**

The 2018 House Budget calls to move the Postal Service from “off budget” to “on budget,” even though it operates without taxpayer money.

This would be a disaster, because being “on budget” would put caps on its expenditures, let Congress dictate how the Postal Service could spend their money and would make it subject to federal government shutdowns. If this is able to stand, the Postal Service will be a prime target for cuts and could result in the further degradation of service. Further, being “on budget” could make the Postal Service a cash cow, with cuts to the USPS budget to pay for non-postal related government expenses.

Instead of providing improved services and investing in infrastructure, Congress could take the Postal Service's operating budget and use it for any purpose, including funding massive tax breaks for corporations and the CEOs who run them.

Call-in Day of Action

**APWU MEMBERS URGED
THEIR CONGRESSIONAL
REPRESENTATIVES
TO REJECT ANY
FEDERAL BUDGET
PROPOSAL INCLUDING
DEVASTATING CUTS TO
OUR PAY
AND BENEFITS.**



Members of the Oakland and San Francisco Retiree Chapters got together to participate in the Call-In Day of Action.

Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) pension contributions and eliminating the special retirement supplement (which helps federal retirees who retire before they are eligible for Social Security benefits). These two proposals alone will take thousands of dollars out of the pockets of postal workers and retirees.

Even more egregious, the House plan calls for replacing guaranteed pension benefits for new hires with riskier 401(k) “retirement” benefits. Postal workers’ retirement savings will be entirely at the whim of the stock market and Wall Street financiers.

The APWU also remains concerned that in the Oversight Committee’s effort to cut \$32 billion they may reduce Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for retirees, as suggested in the White House 2018 Budget Proposals.

These and many other cuts to critical government services would be used to bankroll huge tax cuts for the wealthiest few.

“It’s a stick up,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “They plan to come into our homes and rob us of \$3,000–\$4,000 a year. Then they want to come back next year, and every year thereafter, and do it again.”

“A big thank you to everyone who participated in our Day of Action and for your continued efforts,” said Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard. “However our work did not end on the Day of Action – this budget must be defeated! The phone lines remain open to connect you to your Member of Congress. Our soli-

darity and collective action is paramount if we are to defeat these budget attacks.”

For the latest updates on the House Budget or any other legislation, visit apwu.org. ■



Make the Call!

With Congress coming back from recess, the federal budget will be high-up on their agenda.

Call both **1-844-813-4060** (DC office) and **1-844-402-1001** (district office) and tell your representative that postal and federal workers will not be a piggy bank to finance massive tax cuts for the rich!

On paper, the Heritage Foundation looks like an ordinary “think tank,” a group of experts who research public policy ideas and write reports and articles.

The organization describes itself as a research and educational non-profit, promoting conservative public policy on Capitol Hill. It calls its editorials, “the voice of the American taxpayer.” However, digging beneath the surface, one can easily see the Heritage Foundation is anything but some run-of-the-mill Washington, D.C. policy analysis foundation. It is, in fact, completely dedicated to increasing the wealth and power of its ultra-rich funders, at the expense of working people.

THE HERITAGE a Think Tank on a Mission to Destroy the Public Postal Service

legislation, it promotes a laundry list of regressive ideas, including:

- Sick leave policies should be eliminated;
- Economic inequality doesn’t exist;
- Programs that benefit working families, such as Medicaid, are “wasteful;”
- Social Security and the minimum wage should be eradicated, calling the latter “a toll” on the workforce.

The Heritage Foundation has a long history of pushing policies that encourage its version of “traditional American values,” which include calling for the privatization of public services.

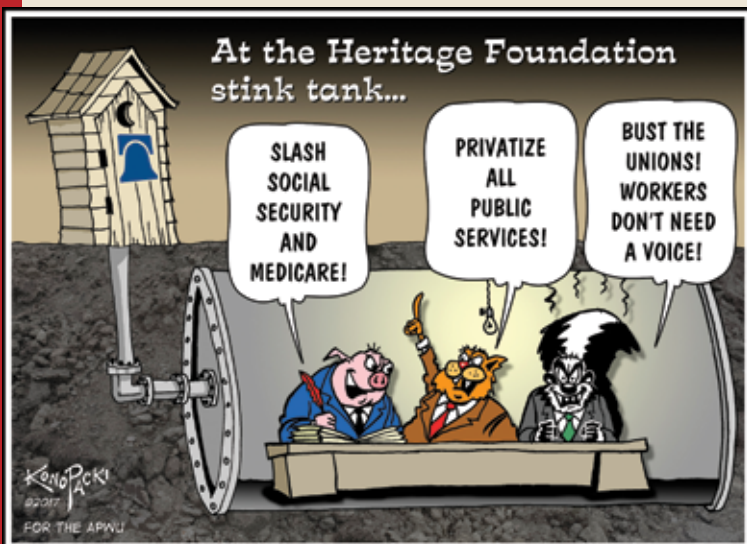
AGAINST THE PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE

For some, the Heritage Foundation’s ideas provide a roadmap for a future that is very different from working people’s goal of a government that protects and supports average American families.

The Foundation’s publications influenced members of Congress to draft an even more harmful 2018 federal budget than expected – hurting workers and their families and providing tax-cuts for the already incredibly wealthy (*see page 8 for more information*).

As reported in the July-August 2017 issue of the *American Postal Worker*, the blueprint for the White House budget (a starting point for Congress) was the Heritage Foundation’s *Blueprint for Balance: A Federal Budget for 2017*. That booklet also called for:

- “Lifting Congressionally imposed restrictions on the closure of USPS processing centers and post offices.”
- “Lifting restrictions on delivery times and schedules, and permitting delivery on a five-day per-week basis or even less.”
- “Eliminating service-level mandates.”
- “Eliminating restrictions on competition in the postal business, including the prohibition on private delivery of letter mail.”



Courtesy of Mike Konopacki

The Heritage Foundation is packed with corporate cash and uses that money to heavily influence politicians as they consider legislation discussed and passed in Congress. Starting in the 1980s with the Reagan administration, and continuing today with the Trump administration, it provides blueprints for budgets that do nothing but gut workers’ rights, wages, benefits and pensions.

Big bankers, real estate developers, hedge-fund owners and CEOs from businesses like Morgan Stanley, Amway and Forbes serve on its Board of Trustees. They receive funding from organizations affiliated with David and Charles Koch, billionaire co-owners of Koch Industries. The think tank’s funders support the organization’s platform of “free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.”

The Heritage Foundation, with its donors and partners, not only attacks workers but also supports policies against the environment, communities of color and women. Besides regularly promoting Right-to-Work

FOUNDATION, Mission to DESTROY Postal Service

The think tank's blueprint also supports the current pre-funding mandate imposed on the Postal Service, saying the agency should "ensure 100 percent prepayment over a defined and limited period of time."

All these goals fall in line with the Heritage Foundation's "ultimate goal... to make the Postal Service a privately run organization... free of restrictions and mandates placed on it by Congress."

SPOUTING LIES

In recent years, the Heritage Foundation published articles such as, *Can the Postal Service Have a Future?* and *You've Got (No) Mail: Is the End Near for the Postal Service?* These publications were slanted hit-jobs filled with blatant lies and misconceptions about the Postal Service's operations, claiming that the USPS is obsolete and that its finances are so far in the red, it can never recover.

On one donor solicitation, it asks, *Is the Postal Service Doomed?*, then proceeds to spout lies written by James Gattuso, someone who is not just a Heritage staffer, but also former vice president of the conservative Citizens for a Sound Economy.

Postal workers can see through this nonsense, but unfortunately, the deception can sway unsuspecting members of the public. Some elected officials also use these false reports as fuel for their mission to reverse working peoples' legislative gains, such as safety regulations and overtime laws.

ANTI-WORKER ROOTS

The Heritage Foundation was created in 1973 by people who thought Republican President Nixon's agenda was too liberal. One of the founders was union-busting Joseph Coors, of the Coors Brewing Company empire. He launched the Foundation with \$200,000 of company money.



The Heritage Foundation's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The Heritage Foundation gained traction when it published *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* in 1980. Nearly two-thirds of its 2,000 recommendations were adopted by President Reagan, including tax breaks for the wealthy, increased military spending and union-busting tactics.

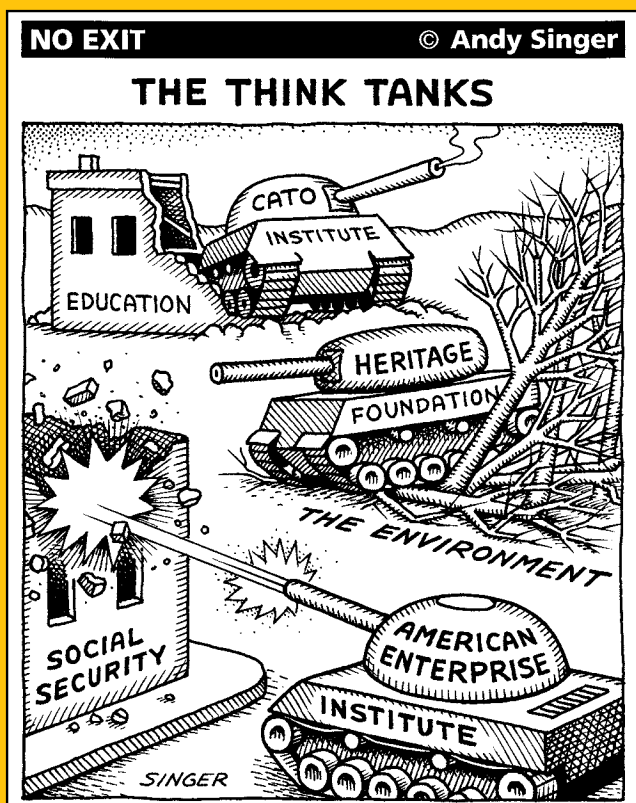
Its donors are among the top one percent of America's wealthy families and corporations – and are hell-bent on keeping it that way. They include many who would love to see a privatized Postal Service, including the United Parcel Service (UPS), which donates hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Foundation.

Under the Trump administration, many of the new legislative staff in the White House's West Wing, as well as the many arms of the Executive Branch, have ties to or are even former employees of the Heritage Foundation.

LEARN MORE AND SPEAK OUT

So if you hear someone mention the Heritage Foundation, be sure to set the record straight. Speak out and let them know the Foundation's corporate donors do not care about working people, they only care about themselves.

The Heritage Foundation's Board of Trustees wants to kill our public Postal Service – and all other services that belong to the American people. ■



Courtesy of Andy Singer



Community Engagement

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

As the APWU gears up for negotiations and continues to address service cuts and proposed staffing reductions, excessing and reassignments, you and I need to be engaged not only with our coworkers, but with our families, friends, allies and communities.

Positive change comes through solidarity – with our friends and allies standing up and fighting for a vibrant Postal Service. Arguing our disputes in the grievance-arbitration procedure, courts, National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), etc., is important, but does not compare with joining hands and moving into the public square. Real progress is made when communities act.

Protecting the well-being of all is the kind of engagement that is meaningful and just. We cannot achieve that goal if we are in a community filled with minimum wage and little-to-no benefit jobs. Postal compensation is compared with private sector compensation. The fewer good jobs in the community, the harder salaries and working conditions are to maintain, let alone improve upon. We have a lot of work to do if we want to have strong communities with affordable housing, good schools and children who have hope in a great future.

Hostile Management

As the work environment at the post office changes for the worse, the balance of power shifts even further away from the worker. One employee is doing the work of two or three, and we are losing full-time jobs.

We just won the *Stop Staples* battle, halting the privatization of retail, not in the grievance procedure or the NLRB (although we used these forums), but in the streets with community allies. The Staples campaign was just one battle in our fight to protect service and jobs. We cannot relax and rest on our laurels.

Management recently initiated plans to abolish jobs held by current workers, as well as reverting jobs that members could bid out or retire from (*see page 5 for more information*). The pressure and workload continues to increase, with no end in sight. Understaffing is a chronic issue. Plants are over-crowded, leading to health and safety issues and delayed mail.

Postal Support Employees (PSEs) have an almost 37 percent turnover rate. Many say they are overworked and experience a hostile work environment. The

USPS continues to defend abusive managers, simply moving them from facility to facility, while new workers quit.

If you are fed up with how management is treating you and your co-workers, do not give up. Join with your coworkers. Raise the issues with your family, friends, political and community leaders. It takes *you* to improve the work environment and provide excellent service to our communities. Contact your local now. Find out how you can be a part of the APWU's resistance against these attacks. **You can make a difference.** ■



Charlotte Area Local Research & Education Director Shenita Bost, Charlotte Area Local member Roxanne Graham, APWU Vice President Szeredy and Charlotte Area Local Legislative Director Cindy Foster at a protest against job and service cuts in Charlotte, NC.

AS WITH CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE, Are Blue Boxes a Thing of the Past?

The familiar blue collection boxes are vanishing from our streets. A recent USPS Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit report charges that the Postal Service is not taking into account community need and service when removing the signature mail boxes. In the Eastern Area alone, the Postal Service did not follow proper procedure for 75 percent of the removed collection boxes between Oct. 1, 2014 and Feb. 29, 2016 (322 out of 432).

According to the report, titled *Where Have All the Mailboxes Gone?*, in the past five years the number of collection boxes fell by more than 7 percent, from 166,461 at the start of Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 to 153,999 when FY 2015 began. That is over 12,000 collection boxes across the country.

The OIG found the methods the Postal Service used to eliminate the

CUSTOMERS ARE COMPLAINING THAT THE USPS WENT TOO FAR BY REMOVING THE MAJORITY OF COLLECTION BOXES ON THE STREET, LEAVING THEM WITH NO CONVENIENT, AROUND-THE-CLOCK PLACE TO DROP OFF MAIL.

boxes were not effective and **will cost the Postal Service more money** in the long run.

The convenience of collection boxes located throughout communities, along with centrally located post offices, goes hand-in-hand with the Postal Service's mandate to provide universal service. Customers are complaining that the USPS went too far by removing the majority of collection boxes on the street, leaving them with no convenient, around-the-clock place to drop off mail.

Dedicated to Service?

The Postal Service's main responsibility is to provide the best possible service for all. Yet management continues

to make decisions that prevent postal customers from getting fast, reliable, convenient service.

The Postal Service is part of a community's fabric. Those familiar blue boxes sprinkled throughout communities not only keep the USPS brand visible and reliable, they make life easier.

How does the USPS decide to remove a box? It does a "density check" to identify the under-performing collection boxes.

In this process, an employee counts and takes note of how many pieces of mail are put into a particular collection box each day, over a period of two weeks. However, it is required to post a 30-day notice on the box before it is taken away, inviting customers to comment. The report found in addition to the procedure not being effective, the USPS rarely distributed the required notification of removal or chance to comment. ■

Table 1: USPS Collection Box Decline from FY 2011-2015

	Fiscal Year 2015	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2011
Fiscal Year Collection Box Totals	153,999	156,345	159,729	164,099	166,461
Collection Boxes Removed from Last Year's Total	2,346	3,384	4,370	2,362	

Source: USPS Office of Inspector General report's analysis of collection box removal.

Table 2. Number of Collection Boxes, 1995 to 2015

Year	Number of Boxes
1995	336,000
2000	365,000
2005	345,000
2010	170,120
2015	153,999

Sources: USPS and Universal Postal Union's Postal Statistics



SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Article 3, Membership

Membership in the APWU determines who can vote, run for office, and attend meetings to discuss and decide the business of the union. There are four primary categories of membership in the APWU: postal employees, full, part-time, Members-at-Large (MALs) and Postal Support Employee (PSE); cash pay members, full-time local/state officers and retired full-dues paying members; Retiree Department members and Associate (Health Plan) Members.

Article 3 of the National Constitution of APWU contains the guiding language regarding membership.

SEC. 1. Any non-supervisory employee, regardless of level or grade, within the jurisdictional claim of the APWU is eligible for membership. There is no requirement to automatically accept any eligible member's application. The members of the local or state union must approve a membership application. Many local unions have standing motions to accept all applications for membership unless challenged.

Local and state unions may establish their own dues structure, which is independent of the national union per capita tax or dues.

A member's good standing status is not affected if their postal wages for a pay period are insufficient to deduct dues by reason of illness, injury, military leave, pregnancy leave, lay-off, disciplinary suspension, or workers compensation. The members' dues are waived – both local and national.

SEC. 2 (a) No person can be denied membership because of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, handicap, political affiliation, age, or religion.

SEC. 3. Local unions may confer honorary membership but these members cannot hold office, serve as delegates or vote.

SEC. 4. (b) The constitution of APWU permits a retired member to have all the rights of membership as long as full dues are paid to the national union and whatever dues are required by the locals. **A retired member must satisfy this requirement to hold any local, state or national office.**

(d) Retired members who wish to become full-dues paying members of their former locals must apply for reinstatement with dues assessed from the date of reinstatement.

(e) Retired members may join the APWU Retiree Department and only pay \$36 a year. Retiree members have limited membership rights and may vote for the following national officers, President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Legislative & Political Director, Human Relations Director, and APWU Health Plan Director, as well as regional retiree convention delegates only. Retiree Department members may form local and state retiree chapters.

SEC. 5. Federal-Classified, EAS, Mail Handler, Carrier, Rural Carrier and tribal or tribal organization employees may be accepted as Associate Members for Health Plan participation only. Associate members have no membership rights within the union. They are only special members allowed to enroll in the health plan.

SEC. 6. If a member works at an office that is not within the jurisdiction of a local or area local union, these Members-at-Large are represented by their respective state union.

SEC. 7. Every member is assigned to a craft/division. ■

Rights of Membership

Membership Type	Full Membership Rights	Partial Membership Rights
Career/PSE member	Yes	n/a
*Cash pay member	Yes	n/a
Member-at-Large	Yes	n/a
**Retiree	No	Yes
Associate member	No	No

***Cash Pay member**-full-time local/state officers on a leave of absence from the Postal Service and full-dues paying retirees.

****Retiree members**-may vote for the following national officers, President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Legislative & Political Director, Human Relations Director, and APWU Health Plan Director as well as regional retiree convention delegates.

MEMBERS IN ACTION



PROTESTING HEALTH CARE BILL

From L-R: President Joe Cogan, Vice-President Bill Martin, Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Legislative & Political Director Daniel Cortez and Director of Associate Offices Verna Mathews.

Members of the Portland Oregon Area Local attended a rally protesting Republican health care legislation on July 6. At rallies all over the country, people protested against the drastic bill that would leave millions uninsured with the slogan, "Kill the bill, don't kill us."

YOUNGER MEMBERS REPRESENT AT STEWARD CONTRACT TRAINING



The Great Plains Contract Training Steward Camp was held in mid-July at the University of Nebraska Omaha.

Pictured are members under 35 who attended the training. Front row L-R: Janette Rompot, Hilary Jones, Stephanie Moore, Emily Weber, Angel Clayborn, Lisa Dunbar and Olivia Zarazua. In-between rows: Ashley Cargill and Gina Wells. Back row L-R: Teresa Peterson, Rodrigo Olivares-Yanez, Brian Brommel, Marnel Desir, Sam Nyland, Michelle Sewel and Richard Rosenthal.

APWU EDITORS RECEIVE PPA AWARDS

Winners proudly display awards at the 2017 APWU National Postal Press Association (PPA) Biennial Conference in Altoona, IA. Awards in 14 categories were presented at this year's conference. The PPA Awards Program was established for the purpose of recognizing editors and newsletter contributors for outstanding work in writing, editing and publishing.



SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

Many APWU members are active in their local unions, as well as in their communities. Did you hold a union poster while marching in your city's Labor Day parade? Maybe you handed out some flyers at a community barbecue or football game? Let us know what you've been up to!

Please send high-resolution photos to communications@apwu.org to be featured in this publication and on apwu.org.

Seated L-R: Nora Taggart, *The Union Mail*, New York, NY; Diane North, *Florida Postal Worker*, Davie, FL (representing Martha Shunn-King); Florence Summergrad, *The Union Mail*; Phillip Breunig, *Tour's End*, Gainesville, FL; Cindy Housh, *DMI News & Views*, Des Moines, Iowa (representing Brian Brommel & Sara Cart); Bonnie Sevre, *News & Views*, St. Anthony, MN and Louise Balog, *The Newsroom*, Mentor, OH. Standing L-R: John Miceli, *The Hi-Lites*, Milwaukee, WI; John Greathouse, *The Pacer*, Lansing, MI; PPA President Tony Carobine; National President Mark Dimondstein; Mike Bates, *DMI News & Views*; Bruce Clark, president, Iowa Postal Workers Union; Robert Dyer Jr., *Evergreen State Postal Worker*, Mountlake Terrace, WA; Sarab Singh, *Greater Seattle APWU News*, Seattle, WA and Jim Balog, contributing photographer, *The Newsroom*, Mentor, OH.



2018 CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Preparations Underway

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

Although it seems like we just finalized our current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), time is rapidly approaching for the next round of negotiations to begin. Your National Officers and the Industrial Relations Department have already begun planning and preparing for 2018 contract negotiations.

Article 43 of our contract requires the parties begin negotiating a new CBA no earlier than 120 days and no less than 90 days from the expiration of the current agreement. Based on the Sept. 20, 2018 CBA expiration, negotiations will open June 2018.

UNITY DURING THE CONTRACT CAMPAIGN CAN TRANSLATE INTO A SHOW OF STRENGTH.

What we attempt to negotiate is determined by you, the members. As this issue arrives in mailboxes, local/state unions or Members-at-Large (a member who does not belong to a local) are submitting the last resolutions to be voted on by individual crafts at the All-Craft Conference (submission deadline is Saturday, Sept. 2). These resolutions become the basis of our goals and priorities for negotiations.

Your National Negotiating Committee will review the resolutions that have passed and use them for guidance based on our bargaining objectives and goals, to uplift those we represent and the labor movement as a whole. So, if a resolution is submitted and approved at either the All-Craft Conference or the Biennial National Convention, that does not guarantee it will be included.

Not only will you have a committee of your elected National Officers representing you in these negotiations, you will also have the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee representing you. These members will be appointed by the National Executive Board before bargaining begins in 2018. They will advise the Negotiating Committee on bargaining demands and will also be responsible for approving whether or not any negotiated tentative agreement is submitted to the membership for a ratification vote.

Standing Resolutions

Over the years and during APWU conventions, many resolutions have been passed (known as “standing resolutions”) and we will be going back through them to guide us in our negotiations and to help determine our priorities. We invite you to look at these standing resolutions. Remember that previously adopted resolutions do not need to be resubmitted. They can be found at apwu.org.

We want to know about your experiences in your everyday work life, and how you feel they should be prioritized in our contract talks. We want to hear from individuals on the workroom floor. Email your ideas and suggestions to the Industrial Relations Department at 2018contractnegotiations@apwu.org. You can also mail them to: 2018 Contract Negotiation Items, C/O Industrial Relations Department, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Strength in Numbers

These will be challenging negotiations for us. However, with preparation, as well as your support and participation in our contract campaign, we can show management how we are a united workforce.

Unity during the contract campaign can translate into a show of strength and force that leads to success in negotiations. With numbers comes strength. We challenge you to reach out to non-members you know and encourage them to join the union.

The people who live in the United States of America have access to the most efficient postal system in the world because of the hard work you – the members – do to move the mail and serve our customers. You deserve a contract that reflects your contributions and protects the People's Post Office.

We, the National Officers, are optimistic about the upcoming negotiations. I look forward to receiving your input and utilizing your participation to obtain a fair and reasonable contract that uplifts all workers protected by the APWU contract, setting standards for the entire labor movement. ■

GEARING UP FOR THE 2018 Contract Campaign

The APWU National headquarters is gearing up for the upcoming 2018 Contract Campaign.

The current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), also known as a union contract, between the APWU and the USPS expires on Sept. 20, 2018 – just a little over one year from now. The contract determines wages, benefits and conditions of employment.

In June 2018, the APWU will open formal negotiations with management, and preparations are already underway. Some of the APWU's major goals for upcoming negotiations include:

- Ensuring job security, including protecting no lay-off provisions and limiting subcontracting;
- Providing fair pay raises that reward postal workers for their hard work and contributions;
- Bridging the gaps between the divisive “three tier” wage and benefit structure;
- Protecting and expanding career jobs;
- Uplifting the Postal Support Employee (PSE) workforce;
- Holding abusive managers accountable;
- Expanding and enhancing postal services.

Negotiations are never easy. Especially in the current political environment, they will be extremely challenging. The APWU's success will depend on how much power and leverage can be mustered with **member involvement** and support from the public. By successfully doing this in 2015, the union made real progress in the last contract.

Over the next year, the APWU will be building momentum, establishing contract action teams, wearing union gear and educating postal customers. There will be many opportunities – and much need – for members to get involved. ■



Images from the 2015 Campaign



Enter Your Ideas for the Contract Campaign Slogan

APWU headquarters is having a contest to determine what the 2018 Contract Campaign slogan/theme will be. The theme of the APWU's last contract struggle was “Good Service, Good Jobs, Good Contract!”

The winning entry will receive either an expense paid three-day trip for two to Washington, D.C. to coincide with the opening day of negotiations or will be guests to the four-day 2018 APWU National Convention in Pittsburgh, PA.

All members and locals are encouraged to submit their ideas either by filling out the form on the back page of this publication and mailing it in, or by emailing nccc@apwu.org. The contest rules are on the submission form.

Submissions are pouring in! Get yours in today. The deadline is Sept. 20.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Bargaining for the Common Good

All over the country, public sector unions and their community allies are beginning to think outside the box when it comes to collective bargaining. The new strategy, called Bargaining for the Common Good, seeks to forge coalitions that can use the leverage of collective bargaining to benefit the broader community. Furthermore, community involvement puts more pressure on the employer to act on the shared demands.

For example, when the impact of the 2008 financial collapse resulted in a smaller tax base, the city of Los Angeles went into austerity mode, slashing spending on government services by 19 percent. In response to the cuts in service, SEIU Local 721 and AFSCME District Council 36 initiated a broad coalition of community and faith-based organizations called the Fix L.A. Coalition.

“The city has all but stopped repairing sidewalks, clearing alleys, and installing speed bumps,” the coalition reported. By “following the money,” they revealed that in 2013 alone, the city spent \$290 million on Wall Street financial fees in contrast to \$163 million maintaining city streets. The Fix L.A. Coalition demanded that the city negotiate better deals with Wall Street and use the savings to restore city services.

UNIONS AND THEIR ALLIES BUILT A COMMON AGENDA.

By using the bargaining process to shed light on city finances and standing together with a set of joint demands, the union and their allies successfully bargained for gains in wages and benefits, the creation of 5,000 new jobs and restoration of the city’s budget for street services.

Bargaining for the Common Good represents a realignment of “community and labor organizations, a potentially potent melding of their interest, organizations energies, and agendas that [go] well beyond the merely transactional forms of coalition-making that we have often seen between labor and community organizations in the past,” according to Professor Joseph A. McCartin (Georgetown University). “Unions [are not] merely enlisting community groups to support their contract campaigns; instead unions and their allies built a common agenda from the ground up.”



Activists at a Fix L.A. Coalition rally.

APWU and A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service participated in a three-day Bargaining for the Common Good conference in April 2017. Our sisters and brothers in other public sector unions and in community groups around the country, shared their strategies and experience for building coalitions, aligning union members’ interests with those of community members, as well as techniques for researching and analyzing the financial players who often impact the bargaining process even if they are not sitting at the table.

“Our union brought many elements of Bargaining for the Common Good to our 2015 contract fight, including the interests and influence of the more than 75 national organizations of A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service,” said President Dimondstein. “We will continue to fight to protect the public Postal Service and to expand services that the public wants and so richly deserves.” ■

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



Payday Lenders Trapping Senior Citizens

Although the payday lending industry slowed in California in 2016, it increased dramatically among senior citizens. For the first time, seniors took out more short term loans than any other age group, according to a study California's Department of Business Oversight released in July.

Overall, both the total number of payday loans and the dollar volume of payday loans declined in 2016. However, the number of loans taken out by seniors nearly tripled in 2016, totaling 2.7 million.

Payday loans are still trapping millions into cycles of debt. The industry depends on it – repeat customers account for 83 percent of the total number of payday loans.

The Wrong CHOICE Act

Seven years ago this past July, the Dodd-Frank Act was signed into law, setting in motion measures to protect consumers and make the financial system more stable. Unfortunately, some lawmakers want to undo these reforms.

PAYDAY LOANS ARE STILL TRAPPING MILLIONS INTO CYCLES OF DEBT.

The misleadingly named “Financial CHOICE Act” not only guts many of the commonsense reforms adopted after the Great Recession to prevent another financial crisis and protect consumers from predatory loans, it eliminates investor protections that have existed since the Great Depression. It would eviscerate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the agency which guards consumers against deceptive and predatory financial products.

At press time, the bill had passed the House and had been referred to the Senate. It will likely face a challenge in the Senate, but key sections of it may still be passed. Urge your Senators to reject this bill.

The Take on Wall Street Campaign, which includes a call for postal banking, not only defends Dodd-Frank, but also advocates for building a financial system that works for working people, not just the wealthy and the well-connected.

The Unbanking of America

In 2015, 26.9 percent of U.S. households were either unbanked or underbanked – meaning they have a bank account but also use alternative financial services. In *The Unbanking of America*, author Lisa Servon takes an in-depth look at why millions of Americans do not use traditional banks.

An increasing number of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, and 47 percent of Americans cannot come up with \$400 for an emergency, according to the Federal Reserve.

As the economic situation for workers has worsened, banking also has changed dramatically. The number of small banks declined by 85 percent between 1985 and 2013. Bank practices have altered as well. Banks that historically made money by lending money now generate profit from charging fees. Average ATM fees more than doubled between 2001 and 2014, and the average overdraft charge increased from \$21.57 in 1998 to \$31.26 in 2012.

Servon concludes that people use non-banks because they cannot afford to wait for a check to clear or get hit with unexpected overdraft fees. For many consumers, alternative financial services can be a more rational choice than banks or, in other words, the lesser of two evils.

The most compelling need is, of course, to reverse declining wages and income inequality. However, given the poor choices currently available, Servon explores ideas, including postal banking, which she calls “a compelling idea” that “should be considered and, if it makes sense, backed by the government, simply because it’s the right thing to do.” ■

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.

MINIMUM WAGE RAISED



Workers march in Los Angeles during a 2015 Fight for \$15 protest.

SEIU Local 99 Flickr/Creative Commons

Voters in several states and cities approved ballot initiatives to raise the minimum wage, which were enacted this summer.

Minimum wage workers in the states of Maryland and Oregon, as well as in the cities of Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, received a pay raise July 1. Minimum hourly wage in D.C. increased to \$12.50, in Maryland to \$9.25 and in Oregon to \$10.25. In Los Angeles, minimum wage rose from \$10.50 to \$12, except for workers who are employed by a company with 25 workers or less.

None of this progress toward a livable minimum wage would have happened without the Fight for \$15 movement. Since 2012, workers from all industries have been demanding a standard \$15 an hour minimum wage and union representation, putting pressure on corporations with massive rallies across the country.

Voters in many other cities raised the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. In Minneapolis, workers will get a raise by 2024. In Atlanta, the minimum wage for city workers will

increase to \$15 an hour by 2019. By 2022, minimum wage workers in the state of California, and cities of Seattle and New York City, will receive \$15 an hour.

CELEBRATE LABOR DAY

Labor Day is celebrated the first Monday in September, to commemorate the work the labor movement does to improve the lives of working people.

APWU members are encouraged to take part in Labor Day activities on or around Sept. 4. March in a parade! Join your fellow workers at a city/town meeting, rally or barbecue! Many local, state and

affiliate organizations hold parades, picnics and other fun family events. Ask your local union representative about what is happening in your area.

After you participate, let us know! Send pictures of you, your coworkers and/or family to communications@apwu.org to be featured online or in this publication. Wear your union gear!



APWU members in Philadelphia, PA, marching with local brothers and sisters in the NPMHU and NALC.

SAKUMA BERRY WORKERS WIN CONTRACT

After years of strikes, rallies and a Driscoll berry boycott, Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ) members ratified a two-year contract on June 15, with over 85 percent approval.

FUJ President Ramon Torres called the contract with Sakuma Brothers Berry Farm “historic.” Workers will receive a \$15 an hour minimum wage, no matter how many berries they pick, along with:

- ✓ Union recognition for all Sakuma Farms workers,
- ✓ A grievance procedure,

- ✓ No firing without just cause,
- ✓ Union representation during disciplinary meetings,
- ✓ A Labor Management Communications Committee that informally resolves union issues, and will also develop a retirement plan for members by the end of the next contract,
- ✓ The company cannot lock out workers.

After ratification of the contract, FUJ declared the Driscoll berry boycott lifted.



FUJ workers marching outside strawberry fields in Bellingham, WA.

Alexandria Jonas Flickr/Creative Commons

New York Times Reporters Walk Out

Hundreds of *New York Times* reporters walked out of their jobs in late June, to protest the paper's decision to lay-off over half its copy editors.

Reporters, who are members of the News Guild of New York, held purposely misspelled signs during the action, to shine a light on the importance of their editors.

Reporters also sent a letter to *Times* management, showing solidarity with the copy editors. In it the reporters explained how the decision will damage the newspaper's quality. “It will undermine the reputation that generations have worked to build and maintain, the reputation that keeps readers coming back.” the letter said.



Photo courtesy of Earl Wilson

VA Accountability First Act is a 'Union Busting Bill'

The Department of Veteran Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act (H.R. 1259) was signed by President Trump in late June. The law does not do anything to make quality health care more accessible for veterans, and is nothing but bad news for unions.

Introduced by Rep. David Roe (R-TN-1), the bill was passed by both Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate with an overwhelming majority. It contains language that essentially destroys job security for Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) workers. Although the 230,000 affected workers are represented by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the bill aims to weaken the union's ability to represent them. The following measures could be implemented if management chooses:

- Less documentation will be required to remove or demote workers.
- Management will no longer be required to dole out progressive discipline.
- Arbitration and appeal rights will be restricted.

“The VA Accountability First Act of 2017 is a union-busting bill – plain and simple. It will only advance the agenda of the Koch brothers, anti-union lawmakers, and private, for-profit corporations that would reap the benefits of a dismantled VA medical system. Backhanded efforts to eliminate employees' workplace rights does nothing to improve the VA or veterans' care,” said AFGE President J. David Cox.

'Ongoing, Willful, Contractual Violations'



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

The APWU won another important victory in a national arbitration case regarding violations of POSTPlan agreements.

The violations were twofold: The Postal Service's improper use of Postmaster Reliefs (PMRs) working in Level 4 and Level 6-hour Remotely Managed Post Offices (RMPOs) and the use of Postal Support Employees (PSEs) instead of career employees in Level 18 offices. The Postal Service admitted to these violations of the POSTPlan agreements. Arbitrator Stephen Goldberg held that the USPS owed the bargaining unit for all the hours improperly worked by PMRs and PSEs.

LONG LINES AND DELAYED MAIL ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE FACT THAT MORE WORKERS ARE NEEDED, NOT LESS.

The victory on the PMRs and PSEs is the latest in a series of arbitration wins where the Postal Service engaged in willful and blatant violations of the contract and the main focus of the arbitration was remedy. Management regularly makes cruel and calculated decisions to violate the contract on the premise that they will benefit more by violating the contract than the cost of breaking it (*for more information see page 5*).

Eliminating Jobs and Potential Excessing

One of the Postal Service's current ongoing, willful, contractual violations is the practice of eliminating duty assignments, despite clear evidence the duty assignments are needed. The USPS is mostly eliminating duty assignments that are temporarily vacant (reversions), but in some cases are eliminating duty assignments that are filled (abolishments). In eliminating duty assignments, the Postal Service avoids the conversion of PSEs to career because if there are not enough duty assignments, the PSEs have no duty assignment they can convert to.

In addition, management is threatening the excessing of employees, claiming they are overstaffed by over 12,000 Clerk Craft duty assignments. However, the long lines and delayed mail are a testament to the fact that

more workers are needed, not less. Even if excessing did not actually occur, wielding the threat of excessing allows the Postal Service to withhold vacant duty assignments for potentially excessed employees. The withholding of duty assignments means that Part-Time Flexibles (PTFs) and PSEs are not converted to full-time career duty assignments, as again, there are not duty assignments available to fill.

APWU Fighting Back

Once a contract is agreed upon, the grievance procedure is in place to handle honest disagreements, which should be rare. Management is instead willfully violating the contract when it is to their selfish advantage to do so. While we must be even more vigilant in filing grievances, we also must engage in other creative actions so management loses more by violating the contract than when they honor it.

The APWU has been implementing a plan to fight back against the elimination of duty assignments that are clearly needed and any resulting cuts in service. We are meeting with management at every level, providing stewards with training on how to demonstrate new duty assignments, and assisting with the grievances.

It is very important to shine a light on management's bad behavior. Locals in Baltimore, Seattle and Charlotte held events to inform the public about the Postal Service's plans for more cuts in service. National officers at APWU headquarters will continue to actively lend support in public relations and organizing for local and state organizations which decide to hold press conferences, rallies and other events to inform the public that our Postal Service is under attack.

As postal workers, we deserve and expect management to treat us with respect, to honor their contracts with us and to provide good service to the American people. We are not going to wait for some in management to change their dishonest behavior. Instead we will work together, with all four postal unions and our community allies, to provide the necessary motivation for everyone in postal management to honor the contracts made in good faith with postal workers and to provide consistently excellent service to the public. ■

Moving Forward



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

The Maintenance Division had a productive first half of 2017.

We completed arbitration on the Article 19 revisions to the MS-1 Handbook (case numbers Q10T-4Q-C 14171644 /81407) which affects Building Equipment staffing and work. Hearings were held Nov. 15-16, 2016, Feb. 2 and April 25-26. Post-hearing briefs were exchanged June 26.

Maintenance Assistant Director 'A' Idowu Balogun was our case officer and we enlisted the assistance of many Building Equipment Mechanics during preparation and presentation. Our sincere thanks to all rank-and-file members who participated, with a special shout out to those who testified as witnesses – Ken Allen, Chicago Local; Russ Siebert, San Diego Area Local; Steve Vaughn, Indianapolis Area Local, and Scott Nowaczck, Upper Piedmont Area Local (South Carolina). We are awaiting the decision of Arbitrator Goldberg as this issue goes to press.

On May 12, the parties signed a Question and Answer document, applying the MOU Re: *MS-47 TL-5 Implementation*. This significant Q&A reiterates in clear language the obligation of the Postal Service and the right of the union in determining compliance with item 6 of the MS-47 T/L-5 resolution. This is popularly referred to as enforcing **Line H**, in recognition of the line item on the custodial staffing PS4852.

Our members in custodial duty assignments must communicate with their union representatives about their work. The point of this is worth repeating – this is about your job security and our collective right to the scheduling and performance of our work. This is something to zealously guard and protect.

On June 27, we reached an agreement just before the opening arbitration hearing on the unilateral modification of leave and overtime provisions covering our Level 11 Electronic Technicians. Maintenance Craft Director Steve Raymer signed the agreement resolving case numbers Q15T-4Q-C 17340522 /40479.

This was a groundbreaking resolution of disputes, including the second National Labor Relations Board

(NLRB) charge on management actions at the Maintenance Technical Support Center (MTSC). This agreement restored the status quo for these members and made them whole for the malicious treatment they were subjected to. The parties continue to move forward on implementing the contract under the new language of Article 38.7.F, including the new concept of a “virtual” installation.

On June 30, Arbitrator Goldberg issued his decision in case number Q10T-4Q-C 15206030, POSTPlan, Custodial Staffing.

The award determined that a POSTPlan cluster of an APO and associated Remotely Managed Post Offices (RMPOs), is an installation as defined in Article 38.2.B and the custodial staffing formula outlined in the Maintenance Craft “Subcontracting Cleaning Services” Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) applies.

Locals and state organizations representing POSTPlan “clusters” should determine whether the above MOU is being complied with. If the result of applying the formula is 1 or greater, then management is prohibited from contracting out our Craft’s work. The accuracy of the complete MS-47 staffing package for each facility is critical to establishing custodial duty assignments. Please contact your Maintenance Division NBA for assistance.

In a somewhat rare circumstance, on July 67, we completed the arbitration hearing in case Q00T-4Q-C 06175320 in two days. The issue is whether the USPS violates Article 32 when subcontracting the Automated Package Processing System (APPS) installation.

Maintenance Assistant Director 'B' Terry B. Martinez was our case officer. The USPS presented a defense that since the APPS was not accepted by the Postal Service until it passed certain performance tests, it was still the contractor’s machine.

Our position included the fact that the Postal Service did own the APPS and paid for it prior to installation. The assembly of modular components which comprise an APPS were clearly within the abilities of the skilled Maintenance workforce.

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

USPS Concedes that Schedule Examiner Work is Bargaining Unit Work



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster

As we mentioned in a previous article, the union put its case for preserving the Schedule Examiner Vehicle Runs position before Arbitrator Shyam Das on Feb. 27 as the first case on the docket this year. As a long-standing issue, we considered this case an important step in preserving skilled Motor Vehicle Service work. It was the union's position that the Postal Service was in violation of Article 1.6 of the National Agreement by assigning work normally performed by the Schedule Examiner to supervisory and Executive and Administrative Schedule employees; the Postal Service took the position that the case should be bifurcated on the grounds of arbitrability.

WE CONSIDERED THIS CASE AN IMPORTANT STEP IN PRESERVING SKILLED MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICE WORK.

On June 7, Arbitrator Das ruled that the APWU and the Postal Service do not have an interpretive dispute of general application over the assignment of Schedule Examiner work. The case did not go forward, but the arbitrability hearing scored us an important victory nonetheless.

The union pointed out that Schedule Examiner work exists in all offices where there is a Postal Vehicle Service operation, but there are very few incumbent Schedule Examiners.

In response, the Postal Service conceded that:

“The Postal Service does not dispute that Schedule Examiner work is bargaining unit work, and that supervisors and EAS employees cannot perform bargaining unit work unless one of the exceptions provided for in Article 1.6 applies.”

Article 1.6 exceptions include:

1. Emergency;
2. For the purpose of training or instruction of employees;
3. To assure the proper operation of equipment;

4. To protect the safety of employees;
5. To protect the property of the USPS.

So while Arbitrator Das determined that the case is not arbitrable, the more important point is that the parties are in agreement that Schedule Examiner work *belongs to the bargaining unit*. National Motor Vehicle Service Craft Director Michael Foster, reacting to the decision, stated: “The concessions made by the Postal Service to get this result will give our local officers what they need to file successful grievances over these Article 1.6 violations.” The Arbitrator's decision not to move forward with this case, therefore, is not a loss for the union but rather a significant tool we can use in our ongoing efforts to preserve skilled work in the Motor Vehicle Service Craft. ■

Air Conditioning Repairs

Earlier this summer, we sent out a letter to the locals in reminder of the following management instruction to the field concerning the timely repair of PVS vehicles with air conditioning:

“During summer months or times when the temperature is expected to exceed 75 degrees, these vehicles must have the air conditioning system repaired within one week from the date the VMF is notified. In the event parts must be ordered to perform the repair, the vehicle may be placed back in service for a period of up to one week until the parts are received. When the heat index is above 100, the vehicle must be repaired immediately and not delayed for the one week. Parts must be ordered in an express manner when the weather conditions are expected to exceed 75 degrees. Air conditioning repairs may be postponed until the scheduled maintenance occurs when that delay would exceed the one week time frame if temperatures are projected to remain below 75 degrees for the entire time until the next scheduled maintenance.”

What we'd like to know from local officers is:

1. Was management in full compliance?
2. If not, were you able to use these instructions to bring them into compliance?
3. In terms of timely repairs and driver satisfaction, how effective was this policy overall?

IT/AS Tentative Agreement Reached



Director Steve Brooks

We reached a tentative agreement for the Information Technology/Accounting Services Bargaining Unit.

The non-economic items in the agreement will shore up some language in the grievance procedure, job postings, voluntary transfers, career development and the voluntary 10/4 program. In addition, we created a task force to review Accounting and IT testing procedures, as well as Accounting duties.

As for economics, we obtained general increases for 2017 and 2018 and retained two Cost-of-Living-Allowances (COLAs) per year.

Two new DCS-18 level positions were created in both the IT Help Desk, and the TACS Help Desk areas. DCS-18 is the highest level in those units. We obtained a career ladder structure for our Quality Assurance DCS-16's to go to the higher level 18 after two years of service.

We achieved another career ladder upgrade in Accounting Services, the DCS-13 will become a DCS-15 after two years, which previously upgraded to a DCS-14. This means all current DCS-14's who have served two years at that level will be automatically upgraded to a DCS-15. The last increase obtained was to add a Step Q to the end of the pay schedule for all DCS-14, 15 and 16 levels (currently Step P).

In our last CBA, the parties agreed to create 50 new Computer Programmer positions to the IT unit. In this contract, we successfully negotiated to create 20 additional positions. The goal here is to shift the work from contractors to our bargaining unit. This will take some time, but we are taking steps to achieve this goal.

The ratification vote on this tentative agreement took place as this article went to press. Visit apwu.org to see results. ■

SUPPORT SERVICES SOLIDARITY

IT/AS Support Service Division members rocked Union Gear Thursdays during their contract negotiations. Pictured are members of the St. Louis Area Gateway Local.

Front row L-R: Mia Smith, steward, Field Sales Branch and Janis Dumas, Assistant Craft Director. Back row L-R: Orlando Anderson, Support Services Craft Director; Robin Robertson, steward, International Accounting Branch and Brandon Kraft, steward, Information Technology.



Members from the Accounting Help Desk in St. Louis. George Brazier is seated front row. Standing L-R: Kim Jones, Tony Howard, Joann Jamison, Angie Graden, Yoshi Pryor, Johna Webb, Lydia Jackson, Rhonda Butler, Marcena Martin-Thomas, Bridgett Silas, Denise Kroeger, Yvette Brown, Diane Yates, Marsha Collins and Pamela Mcneal. Andrew Hentz is standing in the far back.



Mike Gallagher, Eastern Regional Coordinator

Assault on Jobs

As you may know, the USPS embarked on a strategy of reducing the number of duty assignments in an installation to correspond with their earned work hours, not with the actual hours that people are working. Management's actions will lead to a wholesale reduction in the number of jobs in an installation.

They are reverting vacant duty assignments, claiming to abolish jobs but leaving individuals in the same hours, duties and non-scheduled days. This is not an abolishment as defined in our Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Postal Service is also sending your Regional Coordinators excessing notices claiming the need to reassign clerical employees outside of craft and/or outside of their installation, while retaining the same complement of Postal Support Employees (PSEs) and working the same high rates of overtime. These are clear violations of our contract.



In the Eastern Region, I received 100 notices impacting 545 employees. In the Northeast Region, Coordinator John Dirzius, has an incredible 650 excessing events impacting 3,254 employees. Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez reports he received 42 events with 477 employee impacts. Central Regional Coordinator Sharyn Stone reports of 621 events impacting 1,096 employees. Finally, Kenneth Beasley, the Southern Regional Coordinator has 579 events involving 996 people.

This is madness.

My fellow Coordinators and I challenged the Postal Service by filing Step 3 Direct Appeals on a number of issues. One is, the USPS did not provide six months notification at the Regional level of these excessing events. It can designate a shorter period of time if there is a *clear* reason that they cannot provide the appropriate advance notification. No such rationale has been expressed by the employer at this point.

Following their mad rush to give us Regional notifications, they then insisted that we have Regional/Area meetings within the very week they provided us the notices.

The contract provides there will be Regional/Area Labor/Management meetings related to any Article 12 excessing event a minimum of 90 days in advance of the next Area Move Date.

The Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local Clerk Craft Director Gloria Drake at the local's protest against USPS job cuts on June 10.

The Postal Service originally designated the next Area Move Date as Sept. 16. Therefore, the Regional/Area meetings had to take place by June 16. Yet, we were receiving excessing notices at the Regional level right up to that very date, June 16. So having Regional/Area meetings prior to that date was impossible. Your Regional Coordinators filed Step 3 Direct Appeals on this violation as well.

After the APWU fought back against these improper reversions, abolishments and excessing, the Postal Service agreed to push the move date to Feb. 2018. However, this issue is far from over.

Extreme Excessing

It is clear that the Postal Service's overall plan is to identify thousands of excessing events throughout the U.S., so the entire country will essentially be under withholding of all residual vacancies, in all crafts for placement of the employees from impacted installations.

This scheme will preclude PSEs, Mail Handler Associates and City Carrier Associates from being converted into these withheld assignments and from achieving career status, thereby saving the Postal Service the increase in salary and benefits that would come with these individuals being converted to career.

We are fighting this assault on jobs at every level – the local level, the regional level and at the national level. ■

FAKE NEWS

During and after the 2016 Election, the term “fake news” became widely used in American political conversations. *PolitiFact.com*, a fact-checking website, defines fake news as, “made-up stuff, masterfully manipulated to look like credible journalistic reports that are easily spread online to large audiences willing to believe the fictions and spread the word.”

With the rise of satellite radio, the internet and social media, more organizations and political commentators are presenting themselves as legitimate news sources, when in fact they present only sensationalized gossip to send listeners/viewers to the source’s website. They do this to drive their political agenda and make money from the advertisements on the site.

Lands One Man in Prison

Believing fake news can have dangerous repercussions.

Last year, a fake article accused Hillary Clinton of running a child prostitution ring out of a Washington, D.C. pizzeria. The rumor stemmed from a white supremacist’s Twitter account, which falsely claimed that there was a secret child sex ring run out of the Comet Ping Pong pizza shop. The conspiracy theory spread like wildfire over social media.

North Carolina resident Edgar Welch felt it was his duty to investigate. He traveled to the pizzeria with an assault rifle to “rescue” the trafficked children. Of course, he found no evidence of foul play, but fired his weapon three times. No one was hurt, and Welch was arrested without incident. He was sentenced to four years in prison for assault with a deadly weapon.

Harder Than You Think

One may think you have to be pretty out-of-touch to do something like Welch, but according to a study by the *Washington Post*, fake news is harder to spot than you think.

Dominik Stecula, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council doctoral fellow at the University of British Columbia, conducted a study on roughly 700 undergrads. They were shown images of actual news sites, varying from established daily newspapers, mainstream online publications and partisan outlets, as well as content from three completely fake news sites: *ABCnews.com.co*, the *Boston Tribune* and *World*

True News. The students rated the legitimacy of each source. The results showed the two daily newspapers were viewed as most legitimate; however, two of the fake news sources also did very well, scoring higher than almost half of the legitimate news sites.

Stecula’s results were consistent with other recent studies. A few months ago, Stanford University researchers found 82 percent of students in grades 6-12 could not tell the difference between “sponsored content” (paid for by a business, organization or campaign) and a real news story.

In today’s digital age, it is more important than ever to fact-check information before you post, especially if you are forwarding or retweeting. Nobody wants to broadcast lies, hateful information, political propaganda or fake news. ■

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What’s the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn’t mean they’re relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

IFLA
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

2017 APWU SCHOLARSHIP

The APWU proudly presents the winners of three scholarship programs: the E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship, the Vocational Scholarship and the Best Essay Award for 2017.

Hallbeck winners will receive a \$2,000 award each year for a period of four years to be used in an undergraduate program.

The Vocational Scholarship winners will receive up to \$3,000 to be used for three years of study in a trade, technical, industrial or vocational school. The Best Essay winner will receive a one-time award of \$2,000.

Winners are selected from applicants who are the children or grandchildren of current, retired or deceased APWU members.

HALLBECK WINNERS

Lindsey Chludzinski, daughter of **William Chludzinski, Jr.**, of the Youngstown Area Local



Devin Sigley, son of **Steven Sigley**, of the Youngstown Area Local



Sophia Colon, daughter of **Ricardo Colon**, of the Albuquerque Local



Dominic Brock, son of **Darryl Brock**, of the Sacramento Area Local

Julia Duffield, granddaughter of **James Duffield**, of the Hartford Local



Andrew Smith, son of **Priscilla Smith**, of the New York Metro Area Postal Union



Julia Parrick, daughter of **Joseph Parrick**, of the Wilkes Barre Area Local



Justin Simpson, son of **Elizabeth Simpson**, of the Baltimore Francis "Stu" Filbey Area Local

Kennedi Gordon, daughter of **Rosalyn Phillips**, of the Houston Area Local Retiree Chapter



Christian Sanchez, son of **Luis Sanchez**, of the Upper Piedmont Area Local



WINNERS

The scholarships are funded by donations, and the APWU is extremely grateful for contributions by union members. To make a contribution, please send a check or money order to: APWU Scholarship Fund, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. Your tax-deductible donation may specify "Hallbeck," "Vocational" or "Best Essay."



VOCATIONAL WINNERS



Dylan Tarbutton, grandson of **Walter Tarbutton, Jr.**, of the Eastern Montgomery County PA Area Local

Paige McMorrow, daughter of **Biyi Huang**, of the North Jersey Area Local



Jason Kroeger, son of **Dawn Kroeger**, of the Iowa Postal Workers Union



Jane Brusilovsky, of Centennial, CO whose father, **Eugene Brusilovsky**, is a member of the Denver Metro Area Local, was awarded a \$4,000 scholarship.

BEST ESSAY WINNER



Grace Moses, daughter of **Robert Moses**, of the Daniel Boone Area Local



UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Congratulations to the following APWU family members who were awarded scholarships from Union Plus. For more information about Union Plus scholarships and other higher education resources, visit www.unionplus.org/education.



Ivy Vuong, of San Francisco, CA whose father, **Le Vuong**, is a member of the California Area Local, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.





Judy Beard, Director

Bill to Improve Thrift Savings Program Introduced

The 2017 Congress introduced legislation to improve the Thrift Savings Program (TSP). It addresses shortcomings in the withdrawal rules which have not been changed since 1986. The current rule allows for active postal employees, upon reaching age 59½, to make only one withdrawal from their TSP account. Similarly, retirees can only partially withdraw from their TSP a single time. This inflexibility often leads retirees to fully withdraw their money and move it into private investment plans which have pricier maintenance fees.

To address this problem, the TSP Modernization Act of 2017 was introduced in the House and Senate and provides much needed flexibility to retiring postal workers, lifting the current restrictions and allowing them to make multiple, partial post-separation withdrawals from their TSP savings. It would also give TSP contributors the choice of quarterly or annual payments.

The bipartisan authors of the House bill (H.R. 3031), Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD-7) and Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC-11), highlight the value of this reform for postal workers. The bill would “encourage participants to keep their TSP accounts to take advantage of low administrative fees,” Cummings said. It would “give TSP participants what they want: greater flexibility to withdraw money from their accounts to address unexpected life events.”

In a climate where bipartisan solutions are often hard to come by, the TSP Modernization Act is a notable exception. The APWU supports the TSP Modernization Act and encourages congressional action on the bill. ■

Legislative and Political Conference

Rep. John Lewis (D-GA-5) once said, “Sometimes you have to not just dream about what could be – you get out and push and you pull and you preach. And you create a climate and environment to get those in high places, to get men and women of good will in power to act.”

Do you want to learn how you can enact change at the state and local level? Do you want to help elect Congressional, state and local leaders in 2018 who will fight for workers and their families?

Join us Oct. 1, at the APWU Legislative & Political Conference, being held in conjunction with the All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas. This conference will focus on building political, union, and community strength, and its attendees will learn new ways to protect workers’ rights and prepare for the 2018 midterm elections.

A variety of workshops will be offered. The final date to register for the conference is Sept. 15. To view a list of workshops and register, please visit apwu.org/events/legislative-conference.

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 and Commerce Committee, as well as the Ways and Means Committee.

TSP Modernization Act of 2017 (S. 873) – Initial Sponsors: Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE). **H.R. 3031** – Initial Sponsors: Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD-7) and Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC-11)

Raise the Wage Act of 2017 (S. 1462) – Initial Sponsor, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT). **H.R. 15** – Initial Sponsor, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA-3) – The Raise the Wage Act of 2017 will incrementally raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024 and would index

the minimum wage to rise with inflation, making sure low wage workers are not left behind, as they have been in recent decades.

Oppose

House Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 2018 (H. Con. Res. 71) – This resolution has disastrous implications for postal and federal employees. It targets hard earned pensions and FERS retirees’ vital annuity supplements. More egregious is the assault on the USPS by calling for the Postal Service to be placed “on budget.” This would make the USPS subject to federal government shutdowns and turn it into a piggy bank for non-postal related government expenses (see page 8).

For a full list visit apwu.org/departments-divisions/legislative-and-political.



Anna Smith, Director

Building Your Bulletin Board

How can you stay informed and be involved? It's not as hard as you think. Bulletin boards are a way for us to not only communicate with our current members, but also can be utilized as an avenue to reach our non-member coworkers.

Article 22 of our Collective Bargaining Agreement provides, *"The Employer shall furnish separate bulletin boards for the exclusive use of the Union party to this Agreement, subject to the conditions stated herein, if space is available."*

"If sufficient space is not available, at least one will be provided for the Union signatory to this Agreement. The Union may place their literature racks in swing rooms, if space is available."



Colorful and creative bulletin board in Hilo, HI, Big Island Area Local

As a local leader, if you do not already have someone to update the board, try recruiting someone within the installation. Any reliable member who will keep information current and be a contact for when new information needs to be posted will be helpful.

How does your board advertise that there is new information? If you simply just change a piece of paper on the board once a month, that's not enough to catch someone's eye. Typically, if they looked at the board last month, and nothing appears to be different at a glance, chances are they are not stopping to read it.

The dull brown background, simply put, isn't inviting. Use background paper that is noticeable, such as seasonal decorations, a specific theme, or pictures of a current event (picnic, pizza party, local barbecue, rally signs). Create a plan to update the board regularly, set a schedule and stick to it.

Here are some suggestions for content:

- APWU News Service Bulletins, which are designed to help keep our members informed of important news updates,
- Local happenings notices,
- Local MOUs/settlements that affect those in specific installations,
- General membership meeting dates,
- Local officers and stewards' contact information,
- Members-only benefit information/fliers,
- PSEs brochures/benefit information,
- APWU Health Plan information.

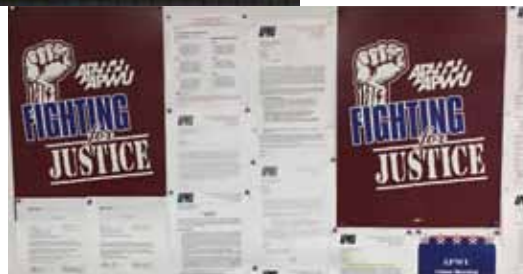
Consider doing shout-outs when members have great news they don't mind sharing, a "Member of the Month" section or membership drawing winners.

Make it an avenue for non-members to join. There is nothing wrong with having 1187s available. Be sure to make note letting them know what to do with the form once it is completed.

Do NOT include USPS postings, which should and/or could be posted on bulletin boards that are maintained by the Postal Service. Examples include wage and hour postings, scanning requirements and USPS policies.

These boards are for the exclusive use of the APWU, so we, as members, are responsible for their upkeep, or lack thereof.

If you have a great looking bulletin board in your facility, we want to see it! Please email pictures to organization@apwu.org. ■



Informative bulletin board in the Seminole P&DC, Central Florida Area Local



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

The Status of Unions in 2016

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that union membership has declined across the United States since the early 1980s.

In 1983, more than a fifth of the nation's workers were unionized. The union membership rate was 10.7 percent in 2016 and the number of workers belonging to unions was at 14.6 million, a decline of 240,000 from 2015.

Excerpts from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' news release "Union Members Summary" are reprinted below.

Findings

- Public-sector workers had a union membership rate (34.4 percent) more than five times higher than that of private-sector workers (6.4 percent).
- Workers in education, training, and library occupations and in protective service occupations had the highest unionization rates (34.6 percent and 34.5 percent, respectively).
- Men continued to have a slightly higher union membership rate (11.2 percent) than women (10.2 percent).
- Black workers were more likely to be union members than were White, Asian, or Hispanic workers.
- By age, union membership rates continued to be highest among workers ages 45 to 64. In 2016, 13.3 percent of workers ages 45 to 54 and ages 55 to 64 were union members.
- The union membership rate was 11.8 percent for full-time workers, more than twice the rate for part-time workers at 5.7 percent.
- Among states, New York continued to have the highest union membership rate (23.6 percent), while South Carolina continued to have the lowest (1.6 percent).

Industry and Occupation of Union Members

- Within the public sector, the union membership rate was highest for local government (40.3 percent), which includes employees in heavily unionized occupations, such as teachers, police officers, and firefighters.

- In the private sector, industries with high unionization rates included utilities (21.5 percent), transportation and warehousing (18.4 percent), telecommunications (14.6 percent), construction (13.9 percent), and educational services (12.3 percent).
- Low unionization rates occurred in finance (1.2 percent), agriculture and related industries (1.3 percent), food services and drinking places (1.6 percent), and professional and technical services (1.6 percent).

Earnings

Among full-time wage and salary workers, union members had median usual weekly earnings of \$1,004 in 2016, while those who were not union members had median weekly earnings of \$802. In addition to coverage by a collective bargaining agreement, this earnings difference reflects a variety of influences, including variations in the distributions of union members and nonunion employees by occupation, industry, age, firm size, or geographic region.

Union Membership by State

- In 2016, 27 states and the District of Columbia had union membership rates below that of the U.S. average, 10.7 percent, while 23 states had rates above it. Union membership rates decreased in 31 states and the District of Columbia, increased in 16 states, and was unchanged in 3 states.
- Nine states had union membership rates below 5.0 percent in 2016, with South Carolina having the lowest rate (1.6 percent). The next lowest rates were in North Carolina (3.0 percent), Arkansas (3.9 percent), and Georgia (3.9 percent). New York was the only state with a union membership rate over 20.0 percent in 2016 at 23.6 percent.
- The largest numbers of union members lived in California (2.6 million) and New York (1.9 million). Over half of the 14.6 million union members in the U.S. lived in just 7 states (California, 2.6 million; New York, 1.9 million; Illinois, 0.8 million; Pennsylvania, 0.7 million; and Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio, 0.6 million each), though these states accounted for only about one-third of wage and salary employment nationally. ■

TSP—It's Your Money!



Nancy Olumekor, Director

The USPS reports that each year postal employees throw away almost \$200 million in retirement benefit matching funds by failing to save in their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

It is never too early or too late to start planning for retirement. You need to be clear about what you want your “golden years” to look like.

If you are a Federal Employee Retirement System employee, by putting just five percent of your income into your TSP, the Postal Service will match the amount you contribute with an additional five percent. That means you'll have twice as much going into your TSP as you originally contributed. Plus, you could benefit from lower taxes on your current income. Can't afford five percent? Every dollar makes a difference.

Investing in the TSP is easy. It is made up of five core funds that you can mix and match. Or, if you aren't sure which funds to choose, you can invest in a Life-

cycle fund that is professionally designed based on when you'll need your money.

An employee earning \$50,000 per year who contributes five percent to their TSP – about \$95 per paycheck – and earns an average annual rate of return of six percent, can potentially have a TSP account worth nearly \$420,000 after 30 years.

Time is your biggest ally when it comes to the growth of your TSP account, so starting early and saving consistently can make a tremendous difference.

If you need to, go smaller and deposit \$20 a week, which is only approximately \$1,000 out of your paycheck each year.

You can make or change TSP contributions at any time. For more information on TSP and your investment options, visit <https://liteblue.usps.gov/tsp>.

Consistent and early savings can be the difference between a comfortable retirement and a difficult one. It is never too early or too late to save. ■

Retirees in Action



Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL-14) with members of the Tampa Area Retiree Chapter at her legislative office celebrating Medicare's anniversary.



Members of the Tampa Area Retiree Chapter celebrate Medicare's anniversary with Rep. Charlie Crist (D-FL-13).



Nation's Capital Southern Maryland Area Local Retiree Chapter members participate in a press event held by Senate Democrats to highlight the negative effects of the proposed health care bill on seniors.



John Marcotte, Director

USPS ‘Shirks Responsibility’ to PSEs

The APWU Health Plan receives complaints from members who were converted from Postal Support Employee (PSE) to career status and claim the USPS cancelled their health insurance without notification. My office deals with this situation as best as we can, but this is an issue that is the employer’s full responsibility.

THE OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (OPM) REQUIRES THAT THE USPS GIVE 61-DAY NOTICE WHEN CANCELLING HEALTH INSURANCE.

The situation is unique for PSEs who have the USPS PSE health insurance, which is not part of the Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) system. Upon conversion to career status, these employees are eligible for 60 days to sign up for FEHB health insurance plans. At the same time, the USPS determines that these employees are ineligible for their USPS PSE insurance and cancels their insurance.

My office is getting complaints from across the country that the USPS is not informing these new career conversions of their ability to sign up for FEHB health plans – and more importantly – that they are losing their USPS PSE coverage. Members are first becoming aware that they have no coverage while receiving medical care, being told they are uninsured!

This problem not only causes a gap in coverage between the date when the USPS plan was dropped and the start of their new FEHB insurance, but also means that if these unsuspecting members exceed the 60 days to sign up for career health insurance, they cannot sign up until the next open season or a “qualifying life event” – making their families uninsured that whole time.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requires that the USPS give 61-day notice when cancelling health insurance. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires 30-day notice when health insurance is being cancelled. The USPS shirking its responsibility to notify APWU members that their health care is getting cancelled is inexcusable.

Consider the APWU CDO

I want you all to be aware of this gross injustice so we can educate our brothers and sisters who are being converted. This situation will not happen to any PSE who has the APWU Consumer Driven Option (CDO) because it is a FEHB health plan. The only change these new careers will notice is a drop in premiums when they attain career status – with NO gap in coverage.

While the APWU CDO provides superior health care coverage at a lower cost to our PSE families, this situation is yet another reason to ensure all PSEs who have been reappointed after a year learn about the advantages of signing up for the APWU CDO. PSEs are eligible for the APWU CDO upon reappointment after a 360-day appointment, with a break in service of no longer than five days. After they are eligible and if the 60-day window elapses for PSEs to sign up for the APWU CDO, they can still sign up after any qualifying life event or during the next open season after reappointment. ■



Open Season Seminar

Health insurance is the highest dollar value benefit our members receive through union negotiations and is of paramount importance to every family. I urge all union leaders to learn as much as possible about the health benefits available to our members, and personally invite you all to attend the 2017 APWU Health Plan open season seminar, Oct. 17–19 in St. Louis, Missouri.

At this seminar, you will receive two days of intensive federal health insurance education, including a Question and Answer session with senior management of the APWU Health Plan and time to chat with the APWU Health Plan Board of Directors about your concerns.

What is your Suggestion for our Contract Campaign Slogan/Theme?



CONTEST RULES

- 1) Open to all Active and Retiree APWU Members and Auxiliary Members.
- 2) Must be submitted no later than September 20, 2017 (exactly one year before our Contract Expires!).
- 3) Enter as many times as you wish by reproducing and mailing-in this form to:
APWU Contract 2018
National Contract Campaign Committee
1300 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
or by emailing additional entries to nccc@apwu.org.
- 4) By entering the contest, participants agree to grant the APWU exclusive rights to use the chosen entry.
- 5) Use the form below and complete all the questions.
- 6) Return in the enclosed postage paid envelope.
- 7) Remember to keep the suggestions focused and short – It will need to fit on T-Shirts, buttons and stickers.
- 8) The winning entry will be determined by the APWU National Executive Board. The Board reserves the right to pick a second and third place entry to be used as a secondary slogan.
- 9) The “Grand Prize” winner will receive either an **expense paid three-day trip for two to Washington, D.C.** (to coincide with the opening day of negotiations) or as **guests to the four-day 2018 APWU National Convention** in Pittsburgh, PA (expenses include travel, hotel and food). If a second and/or third place entry is picked, winners will receive an array of APWU union gear.



2018 CONTRACT THEME/SLOGAN CONTEST ENTRY FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Cell Phone number _____ Email _____

Local/State/Chapter Name _____ Union Position (if applicable) _____

SLOGAN/THEME ENTRY:

AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS



HOSPITALITY, TRANSPORTATION & TRAVEL

SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Please support the workers in these hotels by continuing to boycott the following properties:

- **ANCHORAGE, AK:** Hilton; Sheraton
- **Hilton LAX**—This includes the Crowne Plaza Hotel LAX, Yokoso Sushi Bar, the Landing Restaurant, Century Taproom, and the Boulevard Market Cafe.
- **CALIFORNIA:** Hyatt Regency Santa Clara, Hyatt Regency Sacramento, Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf San Francisco, Hilton Long Beach, Le Meridien San Diego
- **RHODE ISLAND:** Renaissance Providence Downtown Hotel
- **SEATTLE:** Grand Hyatt Seattle and Hyatt at Olive 8 Seattle

FOOD

SUBMITTED BY United Steelworkers (USW)

- **PALERMO PIZZA**

SUBMITTED BY Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

- **Mondelez International Snack Foods** (those made in Mexico)

LEGAL

SUBMITTED BY American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

- **Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea**
- **McDonald, Lamond, Canzoneri and Hickernell**

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.