

THE AMERICAN

Postal Worker

APWU

July/August 2018



BARGAINING 2018

APWU Members Fight Today
for a Better Tomorrow





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ABOUT THE COVER

From top left, clockwise: APWU leaders, members and supporters rally in DC on June 25; workers at Atlanta P&DC show union pride; members of Western NY Area Local on union gear day; Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, APWU President Mark Dimondstein, Hilary Shelton of the NAACP, and AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka on opening day of negotiations with the USPS.

Photos: Courtesy of APWU Locals; Noel St. John



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PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

Collective Bargaining versus the “Open-Door”

“My door is always open,” is a common refrain by managers at non-union companies. These bosses claim that any individual worker is welcome to just come in and talk about any problem or issue. Such “open door” policies, companies claim, prove workers don’t need unions. But once the talk becomes about raising wages, benefits and improving conditions of employment, the boss will show you the “open-door” exit – to find work elsewhere!

Contrast that with unionized postal workers. We have a voice at work secured by our collective actions. Every few years we bargain with postal management for a new union contract addressing wages, step increases, job security, seniority, bidding, discipline procedures, career conversions, scheduling, overtime, leave, safety, and a host of other workplace issues. This process is called collective bargaining and provides the opportunity to achieve improvements in our working lives and the well-being of our families.

Many APWU members are relatively new hires at the Postal Service and most have come from non-union jobs where workers lack the power of organization. Collective bargaining is likely a new concept. Coming from the world of the “open door” policy, the idea that management is legally obligated to negotiate with workers through our union may be hard to believe. Joining together and acting as a group, we are the “collective” in bargaining.

The collective is always stronger than the individual. This is why union workers achieve wages averaging 15-20% higher than non-union workers within the same occupations and experience levels and receive far greater benefits be it vacation and sick leave, holidays, health coverage and retirement.

Collective bargaining takes different forms. We are currently engaged in more traditional bargaining – sitting across the table from management, exchanging proposals, arguing our positions, and trying to hammer out a good contract. There is also the recent powerful example of teacher and school personnel uprisings that began in West Virginia earlier this year and spread



Members of Central New Jersey Area APWU Local 149 are “fired up and ready to go” on Union Gear day.

to other states. Reminiscent of the Great Postal Strike of 1970, education workers throughout the country have engaged in collective action and “bargained” over wages and other conditions of employment from the streets – winning large pay increases and needed funding for public school students.

Collective bargaining, by itself, in whichever form it takes, won’t topple Wall Street control – that will take a fundamental change in the power relationships in our society. Nor can collective bargaining solve all the problems of staggering income inequality where just six members of the Walmart family have the combined wealth of 40% of the U.S. population, some 130 million people lower on the income ladder; or where Amazon owner Jeff Bezos is “worth” so much that his wealth obscenely grows by \$230,000 a minute! But unionization and collective bargaining create some level of workers’ power, enabling us to gain a greater share of the wealth that we create through what we produce or the services we provide. Whenever there are higher levels of union organization and more collective bargaining rights, there is less inequality.

Collective bargaining for our new union contract with postal management began on June 26. I am honored to be your lead negotiator. Your national negotiating committee is well-prepared and committed to fighting for a fair contract. We will not voluntarily agree to concessions that give away hard-won gains.

But the negotiating committee has no magic wands. We face major challenges during this round of bargaining. But remember, “collective” action is our strength. There is a role for every member to play in securing a new contract that APWU members can be proud of. It will take us all to win! ■

Opening Day



CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN BETWEEN THE APWU AND USPS

The American Postal Workers Union began negotiations for a new union contract with the U.S. Postal Service with an opening session on June 26. In a display of postal union unity, NALC Executive Vice President Brian Renfroe and NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian sat shoulder to shoulder with the APWU leadership. A host of notable labor and community allies, including AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and NAACP national leader Hilary Shelton, were present in support, underscoring the national importance of this round of bargaining.



APWU President Mark Dimondstein addresses negotiations.

day of APWU solidarity and unity thousands of members wore their stickers: "Fighting Today for a Better Tomorrow."

APWU NATIONAL OFFICERS, THE RANK AND FILE BARGAINING COMMITTEE, FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS AND LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES MARCHED TO THE MEETING ROOM CHANTING "FIRED UP AND READY TO GO!"

The APWU delegation of 80 national officers, the Rank and File Bargaining Committee, friends and supporters and local representatives marched to the meeting room chanting "Fired Up and Ready to Go!" In a national

APWU welcoming remarks were given by Industrial Relations Director and chief spokesperson Vance Zimmerman, sharing that "the APWU will work long and hard every day to reach an agreement that acknowledges and appreciates the

dedication, hard work and value of our members." The welcome was followed with main table introductions by Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy and introductions of many guests, such as the APWU National Executive Council, the Rank and File Bargaining Committee and Young Members Committee by Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell.

APWU President and lead negotiator Mark Dimondstein presented the union's opening remarks, pointing out that "Since the advent of true collective bargaining gained as a result of the postal strike of 1970 – postal workers' lives are vastly improved. And representatives of our union sit across the bargaining ►



Noel St. John, photojournalist

Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman delivers welcoming remarks.

Allies Join APWU Bargaining

In a strong display of solidarity, APWU negotiators, national officers, local officers and members were joined by a broad range of labor and community allies on the opening day of bargaining for a new contract with the U.S. Postal Service. Guests included **Rich Trumka**, president of the AFL-CIO; **Paul Hogrogian**, president, National Postal Mail Handlers Union; **Brian Renfro**, vice president, National Association of Letter Carriers; **Hilary Shelton** senior vice president of advocacy and policy, NAACP; **Sara Nelson**, president, Association of Flight Attendants; **Robin Williams**, vice president, United Food and Commercial Workers; **Elissa McBride**, secretary-treasurer, AFSCME; **Levi Allen**, secretary-treasurer, **James Gibbs**, vice president and organizing director, and **Shanna Peeks**, coordinator of civil and human rights, United Mine Workers of America; **Clayola Brown**, president, A. Philip Randolph Institute; **Terry Melvin**, president, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; **Erica Smiley**, organizing director, Jobs with Justice; **Chris Townsend**, field mobilization director, Amalgamated Transit Union; and **Jim Hightower**, former Texas agricultural commissioner.

table from management as equals – not because we have important titles, but because we have a union sustained and supported by our members.”



Noel St. John, photojournalist

Association of Flight Attendants, CWA President Sara Nelson lends support to APWU on Opening Day.

With the recent White House proposal to privatize the United States Postal Service, Dimondstein didn't mince words. “As we enter these negotiations, powerful forces on Wall Street and the likes of UPS continue to push for the breaking up of the postal service and selling pieces off to the highest bidders,” he said, adding that “management should not be afraid of bold and creative thinking and approach these negotiations as an opportunity to discuss various ways to protect and expand the public postal service.”

Dimondstein discussed the union's general goals for bargaining: fair

compensation, safe workplaces free of harassment, job security and opportunity to enjoy secure and dignified retirements. “Our members want an end to the divisive unfair three-tier wage and

“Changes to the mail mix – letters are down while packages are up – create both hardships and hope. The bi-partisan 2006 PAEA, with its absurd pre-funding mandate of future retiree healthcare costs

APWU GOALS FOR 2018 BARGAINING: FAIR COMPENSATION, SAFE WORKPLACES FREE OF HARASSMENT, JOB SECURITY AND A SECURE AND DIGNIFIED RETIREMENT.

benefit structure,” he said. “We want an end to the situation where new hires do not, or barely make, a living wage, and where full-time career work has been undermined.”



Coalition of Labor Union Women President Elise Bryant gets APWU members and supporters singing.

“We also approach these negotiations as an opportunity to promote a vision for a vibrant postal service for generations to come,” Dimondstein continued.

“We know the Postal Service is facing serious challenges,” he said.

and the creation of the artificial postage rate cap, combined with the inability to recoup overpayments to retirement funds and the loss of the exigency price hike at the hands of the Postal Regulatory Commission have undermined our national treasure.”

“But the fix is in the hands of those who created the crisis – Congress and the PRC – and must not be on the backs of the workers who already sacrificed far too much in the 2010-2015 contract.”

“Key to the success of the postal service, past, present and future, has been the workers – from those who sell postage and accept packages, to those who sort medicine and catalogues, to those who transport the mail and repair the vehicles, to those who maintain the equipment and facilities, to those who deliver the mail. These





National Postal Mail Handlers Union President Paul Hogrogian pledges unity among all postal unions as APWU kicks off contract talks.

negotiations are an opportunity for management to honor and reward this commitment and hard work."

President Dimondstein concluded his remarks vowing that the APWU will approach negotiations "with a passion for the public we serve and the workers we represent. We will keep an open mind, forthrightly share our proposals, and be honest in our dealings. We will work hard to achieve a voluntary negotiated collective bargaining agreement."

Both AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka and NAACP leader Hilary Shelton made brief comments as part of the opening ceremony, underscoring the fact that the APWU is not alone in this battle. Shelton emphasized that the largest civil rights organization in the country and a proud participant in "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Postal Service" stands solidly with the workers in their quest for workplace justice. Trumka promised that the APWU would have the full support of the 13 million members of the AFL-CIO.

Negotiators from APWU and the USPS will meet again during the month of July. The APWU leadership will continue to update the members on the progress of the ongoing battle for a good union contract. ■

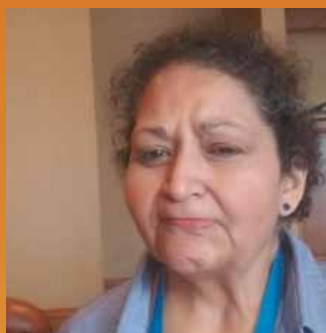


"I want to see wages compatible with today's rising cost of living."

Tony Rocha
Postal Clerk, North Berkeley CA
Chief Shop Steward
East Bay Area Local

"I hope we achieve Postal Banking. That will help us to generate more revenue. And notary services, also to bring more people into the post office."

Shanavas Syed
Window Clerk, Garden City, NY
Long Island Area Local



"We need to make sure everyone is equally represented."

Silvia Reyna
Clerk,
McAllen (TX) Area Local

"I have a family to take care of. Pay raises, that's a big one."

Andrea Jester
Sales and Service Distribution Associate, Fremont, OH
Mansfield Area Local



APWU Puerto Rico Area Local 1070: ¡Luchando hoy por un mejor mañana!





A PACKED HOUSE — AND HOUSE PARTIES Postal Workers and Allies for New

Members of the American Postal Workers Union got fired up for the opening of collective bargaining with a spirited rally on the evening before negotiations began, promising intense member engagement across the country. It wasn't just a packed room of APWU leaders and supporters who participated. In fact, the rally was streamed live online to thousands on both the APWU website and on YouTube, and many members viewed it at "watch parties" organized for the event.

A PACKED ROOM OF APWU LEADERS AND SUPPORTERS IN WASHINGTON DC – AND THOUSANDS JOINING A LIVESTREAM AT APWU.ORG AND YOUTUBE

APWU President and lead negotiator Mark Dimondstein said a threat by the White House to privatize the U.S. Postal Service as part of

a wholesale reorganization and downsizing of the federal government has served to raise the stakes not only for postal workers, but for everyone. "Now we're also bargaining for the American people, to preserve regular mail and package services at an affordable cost to 157 million addresses every day," he said.

APWU Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell introduced a series of fiery speakers – from Tefere Gebre, Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO, to Elise Bryant, President

of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, who led the delegation in songs and chants. Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) vowed to fight postal service privatization, as did Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in a letter read to the gathering.

The room cheered when Vance Zimmerman, APWU's Industrial Relations Director and chief spokesman for the bargaining team, gave opening remarks before sharing a video featuring APWU members who spoke of their pride in their work, their union, and their com-



Jim Hightower joins the chorus against postal privatization.



Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC) vows to fight for good jobs and good wages.

NATIONWIDE Workers Rally Contract

mon belief that obtaining a good contract now is important for all members and their families. The video was a compilation of video clips, shot on cell phones, and submitted by members from coast-to-coast and from all crafts.

With the rally livestreamed, postal workers and allies across the country could also watch as Texas prairie populist Jim Hightower delivered his pokes at privatizers with a serious appeal to organize the people to fight postal privatization. United Mine Workers Secretary-Treasurer Levi Allen thundered the words of Mother Jones, "I'm not a humanitarian. I'm a hell-raiser," drawing whoops and hollers from the crowd.

The solidarity was heartening. Officers of the National Association of Letter Carriers and the National Postal Mail Handlers Union said they would join APWU at the bargaining opener, and pledges of ►



"I would like to see better job protections in the motor vehicle craft, which includes the return of PVS work we've been promised for years."

Mike Fincher

Motor Vehicle Services Craft Director
Toledo Area Local

"We need respect in these mail facilities. If you don't respect yourself, no one else will."

Sandy Dobbins

Clerk, Baltimore, MD
Baltimore Francis Stu Filbey Area Local



"My hope is that the USPS will take these round of talks seriously and understand that this union is going to stand strong and persevere over anything they do try to jeopardize our future."

Karl Tyler

Laborer Custodial
Cumming (GA) Lanier Carrier Annex
Atlanta Metro Area Local

"Good jobs to help pay for colleges and families, vacations, benefits."

Dorene Schmitz

Clerk, Fremont, OH
Toledo Area Local



Keystone (PA) Area Local: No weak links!



Tefere Gebre, executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, says APWU is "leading the charge" against federal policies unfair to workers.



United Mine Workers Secretary Treasurer Levi Allen: "I'm not a humanitarian, I'm a hell raiser!"

Hilary Shelton of the NAACP said his organization is fired up and ready to help, including representing the Grand Alliance at the bargaining table. Robin Williams, a vice president of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) also pledged her union's support "as one of the 86 partners standing with you in this fight."

"WE ARE PART OF A GRAND ALLIANCE THAT IS FIGHTING NOT ONLY FOR THE FUTURE OF THE POSTAL SERVICE, BUT ALSO FOR THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY."

— McKenzie Baris, senior organizer, Jobs with Justice

support were delivered in person by leaders of other unions and coalitions, including the NAACP, Jobs with Justice and the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Larry Cohen, former president of the Communications Workers of America, promised to mobilize the new group, Our Revolution, building on the issues of the Bernie Sanders political campaign.

"WORKERS UNITED CANNOT BE STOPPED BY ANY GOVERNMENT, ANY CORPORATION, BECAUSE WE ARE FIGHTING FOR JUSTICE!"

— Tefere Gebre, Executive Vice President, AFL-CIO

The AFL-CIO's Gebre praised the APWU for "leading the charge" against an administration and Congress that devalues working people. "They don't understand that workers united cannot be stopped by any government, any corporation, because we are fighting for justice, for what's right. So fight on! Right on!"

McKenzie Baris, a senior organizer for Jobs with Justice and the granddaughter of a postal worker, promised to bring the nationwide network of activists to bear in the fight for a good contract. "We are part of a Grand Alliance that is fighting not only for the future of the Postal Service, but also for the future of this country," she said.

Longtime friends of the APWU Arlene Holt-Baker, the former Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO, and Bill Lucy, former Secretary-Treasurer of AFSCME and founder of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), joined in to add their support. Current CBTU President Terry Melvin, also Secretary-Treasurer of the New York State AFL-CIO and an ordained minister, gave an inspirational speech that had everyone on their feet, ready to fight for a good contract. ■

The crowd gets fired up and ready to go!



THE POSTAL PRIVATIZATION THREAT IS REAL AND NOW!

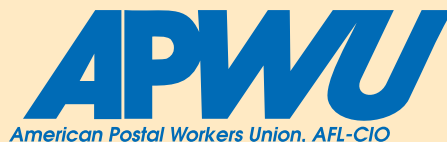
White House Drops a Bombshell

On June 21 the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) dropped a bombshell – sell-off and privatize the Postal Service. The president had already established a Postal Task Force due to report its recommendations in August (See “Postal Unions Stand Together in Opposition to Privatization,” next page.) The OMB documents make it crystal clear what the White House task force will propose next month.

“Our union is made up of members from the entire political spectrum and we vote for what

we think is best for our families,” said APWU President Dimondstein. “But I am confident that however one voted in the last election, no one voted to put themselves out of a job and destroy all the good the post office means to the people of this country. We are now in the fight of our lives. We must unite with each other, postal unions, individual and business customers and our many supporters from labor and the community, for what is right.”

Here is the official APWU statement released on the day of the OMB report:



June 21, 2018

The White House proposal on restructuring the federal government released today, *“Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century,”* delivered nothing but misinformation and, if implemented, would end regular mail and package services at an affordable cost to 157 million addresses every day. Furthermore, the White House plan is an attack on many federal agencies and the public services they provide.

The White House’s plan states, “Like many European nations the United States could privatize its postal operator...” What’s left unsaid is European nations charge substantially more for mail services delivered in a much smaller area. They also regularly raise the cost of delivery. For example, the cost of sending a letter in the United Kingdom has increased 80 percent over the past decade. By comparison, the U.S. has the lowest postage rates in the industrialized world.

Eliminating the universal service obligation, as the plan suggests, would hurt business and individuals alike, and would be a dagger aimed at the heart of rural America and undermine e-commerce.

The draconian plan uses “burdening the taxpayers” as justification to promote the privatization of the U.S. Postal Service when the truth is USPS is self-supporting and receives no tax dollars for postal operations.

And, while letter mail volumes are lower, package delivery is up substantially. No institution is better suited for the e-commerce revolution than the USPS. The public postal service serves each and every person and belongs to the people of this country. According to recent surveys by Gallup and the Pew Research Center, it enjoys the highest level of satisfaction and trust of any government service or agency, rating the highest among young people.

Privatizing the Postal Service is not in the public interest or the interest of postal workers and would be nothing more than a raid by corporate pirates on a national treasure.

This outrageous White House plan should be a wake-up call to every postal worker and APWU member. The threats of postal privatization, the threats to decent union jobs and threats to good services, are real.

The American Postal Workers Union stands with the people of the country and our many allies in the ongoing fight to ensure a vibrant public Postal Service for generations to come.

More information and calls for action will be forthcoming.

Postal Unions Stand Together in Opposition to Privatization

Federal Task Force Considers Changes to USPS

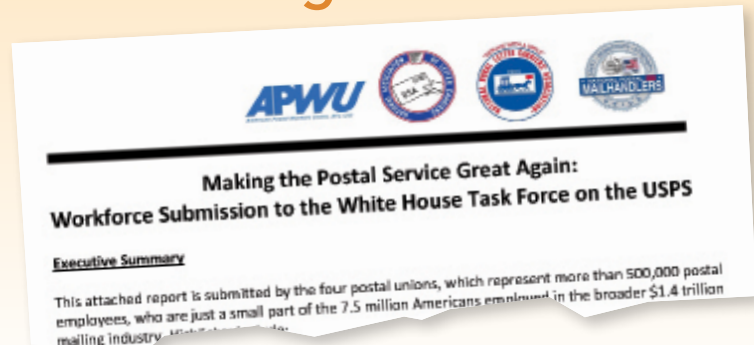
The APWU has joined with other postal unions, the National Association of Letter Carriers, the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and the National Rural Letter Carriers' Association in opposing a White House plan to privatize the United States Postal Service. Jointly the four unions developed briefing materials and policy recommendations to present to the White House Task Force on the Postal Service. The Trump administration has made it clear that the task force will present a plan to privatize the USPS and also is considering eliminating the universal service requirement that requires the Postal Service to provide affordable service to everyone, regardless of who they are or where they live. Together, the four unions represent a half million postal workers.

Each of the postal unions met independently with the task force. APWU President Mark Dimondstein, joined by Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard and Manager of Negotiation Support Phil Tabbita, met with the task force on Tuesday, June 6.

President Trump created the task force in April. It is being led by Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Jeff Pon and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Mick Mulvaney. The President's executive order charged the task force with evaluating and reporting on the operations and finances of the United States Postal Service, such as pricing, policies and the cost of the workforce. The task force's report, with legislative and executive proposals, is due in August.

The executive order is modeled after one President George W. Bush issued in 2002 and came after President Trump released a series of tweets critical of the U.S. Postal Service's relationship with Amazon. Even more controversial than the Bush-era executive order, Trump said the task force should examine the obligation to provide universal service "in light of changes in technology, e-commerce, marketing practices and customer needs."

"In our discussions with the task force we spoke some plain truths about what the U.S. Postal Service needs and what it doesn't," said Beard. "We also shared materials we developed in coordination with other postal unions."



Among those plain truths:

- The U.S. Postal Service's unparalleled national network fulfills the Founders' directive to bind the nation together, providing affordable, universal service unlike any private entity.
- The U.S. Postal Service's workforce represents the nation's largest civilian employment of veterans, and our work enables a \$1.4 trillion dollar mailing industry employing 7.5 million American workers.
- The U.S. Postal Service operates without a dime of taxpayer money, but Washington's political malpractice has put it in a financial bind – crushed by a scheme to pre-fund years of retiree healthcare benefits, a burden that no other agency or company must bear.
- The U.S. Postal Service has already undergone dramatic restructuring since the Great Recession. The U.S. Postal Service has eliminated 200,000 career positions, closed or consolidated hundreds of mail processing facilities, dramatically slowed the mail with lowered service standards, and reduced the hours of operations at 13,000 primarily rural post offices (some to as few as two hours a day). The APWU emphasized to the task force that USPS managers have cut jobs and services to the bone and the U.S. Postal Service and its workforce should not be cut further. APWU's representatives called for a full restoration of service standards that were diminished in 2012.
- The U.S. Postal Service cannot cut its way to profitability. However, by addressing the congressionally-manufactured prefunding crisis, setting appropriate postage rates, and properly accounting and investing postal funds, USPS can generate the necessary capital to fulfill its obligations, replace its aging vehicle fleet, and provide quality service to the American people. ■

In May, with media attention focused on the U.S. Postal Service, APWU President Mark Dimondstein wrote a guest column for The Boston Globe. He informed readers about the real problems at the USPS and offered real solutions for a stronger, thriving people's postal service.

The Boston Globe

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

Let's deliver the mail, not myths

By Mark Dimondstein

President Trump's attention of late has been focused in part on the United States Postal Service and Amazon, resulting in a new executive order calling for an evaluation of USPS finances. This is a good opportunity to underscore some important facts regarding the Postal Service, a national treasure belonging to all the people of the United States.

Tax dollars do not fund Postal Service operations. Instead, it operates on earned revenue from postage and other products and services. As a self-funding independent agency, the Postal Service provides universal service at uniform and reasonable rates, delivering to 157 million addresses six (and sometimes seven) days a week, no matter who customers are or where they live.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the primary source of current Postal Service financial challenges is not the decline of letter mail. Rather, the red ink derives almost entirely from the bipartisan congressional enactment of the 2006 Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act. The act compelled the Postal Service to pre-fund 100 percent of future retiree health care costs, 75 years into the future, for workers not even born yet. This mandate transferring postal revenues to the federal treasury bilked the Postal Service out of \$5.6 billion a year over a 10-year period. No other company or agency faces, or could survive, such an onerous financial burden. Adding to the absurdity is the fact that, prior to the new law, the Postal Service had been reliably paying the retirement health benefit premiums as they arose, as do other companies and agencies. Without this manufactured pre-funding crisis, the US Postal Service would have shown a

positive net income in four of the last five years averaging close to \$1 billion annually – again, without a dime of taxpayer money.

The same 2006 law placed further strain on postal finances with an unreasonably restrictive price cap on postage rates. While it helped the profits of huge mailers, it diminished services for the general public. Combined with the pre-funding debacle, this price cap contributed to reduced hours, closing of post offices, slower delivery standards, and severe short staffing, leading to longer lines and later delivery times.

With the growth of the Internet, letter volume has declined over the last decade. And yet a massive amount of mail is processed and delivered, some 500 million pieces a day – including messages of love and sympathy, medicines to seniors and veterans, financial and business transactions, periodicals, catalogs, and packages. Indeed, what the Internet “taketh” the Internet “giveth,” as package volume has skyrocketed with the explosion of e-commerce.

The public post office, established by the Constitution, is a democratic right of the population and has helped bind the people of this country together for the last 240 years. The Postal Service, with its dedicated and accountable workforce, is consistently rated the most trusted and respected government agency. In these days of the e-commerce revolution, it is as vital as ever. Noteworthy is that in the Internet age, lack of security and invasion of our privacy has become the norm. The US mail may just be the last bastion of private and secure communication.

New challenges certainly exist, but the solutions are not complicated. Congress should fix the pre-funding fiasco. Common-sense bipartisan bills, currently stalled in both the Senate and House, would do just that. The Postal Regulatory Commission can eliminate the arbitrary and artificial price cap and give the USPS more pricing flexibility so large mailers pay their fair share. This still will allow the Postal Service to maintain the lowest postal rates in the industrialized world.

Postal workers and millions and millions of customers certainly hope that the task force created by the executive order has as its starting point a sincere commitment to helping the Postal Service thrive. However, if the task force proves to be a smokescreen to promote the postal privatization agenda of the likes of the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute and their billionaire benefactors' efforts to turn the common good over to private profiteers, then postal workers will be on the front lines fighting back, united with our communities and the people of this country, to ensure a vibrant public postal service for many generations to come.

Mark Dimondstein is president of the American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO.





Honoring our past, fighting for our future

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

Remembering Bill Burrus

It is with great sadness that I write this column. Recently we lost former APWU President William Burrus (See “A Powerful Advocate for Postal Workers,” p. 38-39.) I met Bill when I was 25 years-old, when he was running for the position of APWU’s executive vice president, the position I hold today. His leadership and his example have been an inspiration to me.

Bill was a trailblazer, serving as the first African-American president of the APWU. During the years he served as our top leader, he was recognized by *Ebony* magazine as one of the “100+ Most Influential Black Americans.” His leadership and legacy continue to live on, pushing us to make history by building our union movement and continuing to save the USPS from privatization. We do this, not because it’s easy, we do this so that we can provide an important and necessary service to our communities. William Burrus’ union spirit remains with us always, as you can learn by checking out his book, *My Journey: A Postal and Unique American Experience*.

Update on Phase II Consolidations

As we move forward, I want to give an update about the work being done to save Phase 2 Plants from consolidation. Locals around the country are getting ready to stand up and that includes our members on the workroom floor. The last few months we have visited or met with local members providing strategy training for Augusta and Athens GA; Rocky Mount, Asheville and Fayetteville, NC; Florence, SC; Gainesville, Manassota and Mid-Florida FL; Stamford and North Haven



Tour 1 members of APWU Greater Oregon Area Local 555 from Bend gathering to discuss how to fight back against Phase 2 Plant consolidation.

CT; Central MA, Boston, Middlesex and Essex, MA; Bend and Eugene OR; Tacoma, Seattle and Wenatchee WA; Pocatello, ID; Mid-Hudson, NY; Fox Valley, IL; Industry, Redding, Eureka and North Bay CA; Grenada, Hattiesburg and Gulfport MS; North Alabama, AL; and Memphis and Chattanooga TN. By the time this magazine is in print we will have also provided training for Corpus Christi, Houston, Abilene and Beaumont TX; Rock Springs, WY; Provo, UT, and Tucson, AZ.

It is extremely important that we build strong relationships with community organizations, customers, mailers, city, town, county, state and federal legislative representatives, along with local media. We can’t accomplish our goals without more members from the workroom floor stepping up and becoming activists willing to volunteer their time and energy to help their local unions connect and build these great relationships. Many members I have spoken with are ready to stand together – they just need to be asked. It is important that we ask everyone to join with us – including our sister postal unions: NALC, NPMHU, and the NRLCA.

Taking our fight to the bargaining table — and beyond

As a member of the APWU negotiating committee, I can assure you we will continue our quest to save the Phase 2 Plants and protect locals from any new consolidations. Negotiating to keep our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that limits excessing more than the 50-mile radius also will be important.

Every local should have a Contract Action Team working to build community support for a new contract that will deliver better and expanded services. A Contract Action Team is critical at this time when we are confronted with unprecedented privatization threats. Negotiations this year will be difficult with all the pressures surrounding us, but everyone should know that we will do our best for our members and our communities. If your local doesn’t have a Contract Action Team, now is the time to start one. Thanks to all of you who have chosen to stand up by “Fighting today for a better tomorrow.” ■

YOUNG WORKERS

Long Beach APWU President Tells CLUW Rally:

We're Fighting for Everyone

A DYNAMIC YOUNG APWU LEADER
FROM LONG BEACH, CA,
TAKES THE STAGE AT A
CLUW RALLY IN WASHINGTON, DC.

When APWU member Denisha Dean decided to step up and run for president of the Long Beach Area APWU Local, there were those who believed was too black, too young and too busy as a single mother to compete for such an important position.

"The idea of 'I can't'," Dean recalls "made me hit the pavement even harder."

MY UNION HAS ALLOWED ME TO RAISE
MY SON ON A DECENT POSTAL WAGE.

Instead of considering age, race, parental status or other irrelevant factors, APWU members in Long Beach saw a dynamic leader standing up for a strong union. Dean was elected president with 13 percent more votes than her nearest competitor.

At age 28, Dean is one of the youngest local union presidents in the APWU. She represented our union at a Coalition for Labor Union Women (CLUW) "Young Sisters Not Afraid of Power" rally in Washington DC on May 4.

"I am grateful and thankful to my APWU sisters and brother allies who encouraged me and have made me understand that this is my time," Dean told a cheering crowd. "So I say to you, it is the time of equal pay. It is the time of economic security. It is the time for 'Time's Up.'"

"My union," said Dean, "has allowed me to raise my son on a decent postal wage. That's something not every woman has. The issues we're fighting for are not just for the young – but for everyone." ■

APWU Union Gear is Here!

Order online, by fax or mail and show your union pride

With negotiations for a new APWU contract underway, now is the perfect time to show your union pride at work and in your community. Let your co-workers, friends, neighbors – and USPS management – know exactly where you stand.

Caps, t-shirts, aprons, APWU flags, decals and more are available at the APWU online store. You can shop online or print out a form and return by mail or fax.

Have a look – and let everyone see you are a proud APWU member!

www.APWUStore.org





We Are Stronger with Our Allies

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) has begun bargaining with the United States Postal Service (USPS) for a new contract, and members know this is our bread and butter. This is one of the primary reasons why we signed up to join our union. We are focused on getting the best deal possible for our members and their families while securing the future of the postal service.

Because our members have been united, in the past we've been successful. If we stay united, with a broad vision of social justice, I believe we will be successful now and into the future.

Let's not forget that unions like the APWU achieve success when we unite with others to fight for social and economic justice. Union members win – along with all working people – when we take on concerns like racial discrimination, public education, voting rights, women's issues, child labor, minimum wage, Social Security, unemployment insurance and more. These are issues that affect all of us – our members, our families and our neighbors.

Workers do not live in a vacuum, we live in communities. When services are cut, roads and bridges start to crumble and schools lack sufficient funding, postal workers suffer the consequences.

There have been times, however, when our union – and our labor movement – didn't get fully involved in social issues. Some members think we should only be involved in bread-and-butter issues on the job, restricting our efforts to fighting for workers in the workplace.

When you say we shouldn't take a position on an issue of social justice or human rights because it's "controversial" or "not our fight," you actually are taking a position. When you ignore or evade injustice, you are making a decision to allow injustice to continue.

We Have to Get Involved

Some union members are content because they feel fortunate to have a union job, believing they can isolate themselves from problems affecting the rest of society.

But we can't just concentrate on our own interests and hope some benefits will trickle down to other workers.

We have to join with teachers across the country demanding money for education, and better pay.

We have to raise our voices against the violations of human rights at our borders, when our own government is seizing children and breaking up families.

We have to join the fight for a living wage – a higher floor that eventually will raise us all up. We have to fight for equal pay, against discrimination and against exploitation of working people and their families.

Three years ago, here in the pages of *The American Postal Worker*, I called for a new model of unionism that goes beyond the "service model" – simply filing grievances and fighting over workplace issues. I argued we should move toward "social movement unionism," working with our allies jointly on social and economic justice issues. In the current environment, the need to create a broad, inclusive alliance of working people inside and outside our union is greater than ever.

We Can't Go It Alone

With postal workers under attack like never before, and a new threat by the White House to privatize the Postal Service, we need allies. We will find them – and we are finding them – when we join broad coalitions fighting for social and economic justice, united against those who perpetrate and perpetuate injustice.

A united campaign for economic inequality leads directly to issues that concern us as postal workers. Working people everywhere – union and non-union – have a common interest in preserving a strong public Postal Service, which is a benefit to every community in our nation. Our allies will be eager to help us, especially if we stand beside them in their fights.

The old model of just concentrating on our internal issues will not save the people's postal service and protect the jobs, wages and economic security of our members. We have to change if we expect to win this fight. We must broaden our efforts and include natural allies who will strengthen our hand. Truly, we are stronger together. ■

A Bold Vision for the U.S. Postal Service

What if, instead of reducing hours, closing post offices, slowing delivery standards, and cutting staff, the nation's largest retail network offered a wide array of services to our communities? What if the nation's most trusted federal agency delivered ballots for national, state, and local elections? What if the U.S. Postal Service used its vast infrastructure to support a green economy?



Speaking out for better, expanded postal services at A Grand Alliance field hearing in Baltimore, March 2016.

The future of the U.S. Postal Service is the subject of hot debate. President Trump issued an Executive Order in April to form a task force to review the financial position of the U.S. Postal Service. This debate is an opportunity to continue to make our voices heard on the value of a strong, public Postal Service. It is also an opportunity to advocate for expanded services and an expanded role for the USPS – goals laid out in the 2016 field hearings held around the country by A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service (AGA).

AGA is working with our allies to create a vision for an expanded Postal Service that uses its vast network and infrastructure to provide affordable financial services, improve and enhance civic life, expand retail and delivery services, and fight climate change. “We look forward to working with our allies to imagine the multitude of

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

New National Signatory

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) is the latest national signatory to A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service. We thank them for their support and look forward to working with them to defend our public Postal Service! In signing on, the CBC wrote: “It would be a dishonor to the American public to not fight for [the USPS’] continued existence.” Welcome aboard!

new and innovative ways our public postal service can continue to serve the common good for generations to come,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

With more than 30,000 retail offices – more than McDonalds, Starbucks, and Walmart combined – the U.S. Postal Service could offer a full spectrum of retail services including Wi-Fi access, notary public and 3-D printing. Post offices could also offer a non-profit, affordable array of financial services like paycheck cashing, ATMs, money transfer, and bill payment. USPS is already a leader in one financial service: the sale of money orders. An average of 286,137 money orders are sold daily.

The USPS could also play an important role in the civic life of our communities with robust Vote by Mail elections at all levels of government. Letter carriers could check in on senior citizens and other isolated or vulnerable populations.

With one of the largest civilian fleets in the world – more than 230,000 vehicles – the Postal Service could lead the way in promoting renewable-powered vehicles. Expansion to locations all over the country of solar power generation systems like the one at its Los Angeles mail processing facility and green roofs like the one on top of the New York Morgan Processing and Distribution Center could make a significant contribution to fueling a green economy.

Our brothers and sisters at the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and their community allies have been busy thinking about the vital role of a public postal service. For inspiration, check out their proposal, Delivering Community Power (www.deliveringcommunitypower.ca), on how Canada Post can be the hub of their Next Economy. ■

MEMBERS

PORTLAND, CINCINNATI LOCALS RALLY AGAINST CUTBACKS IN JOBS AND SERVICE

In June, as the APWU bargaining team prepared for contract talks with the U.S. Postal Service, union members in Portland, Oregon and Cincinnati, Ohio rallied with supporters to protest job and service cuts that have led to long lines and delays in mail service.

On June 18, members of the Portland Oregon Area APWU Local Union were joined by Letter Carriers, Jobs with Justice and the Oregon AFL-CIO

in downtown Portland. With signs calling to “Save the People’s Postal Service” and “Portland needs MORE Postal Clerks,” the spirited crowd protested the reduction of almost 300 clerk craft jobs, which has led to severe delays in service.

On June 25 members of Greater Cincinnati Ohio Area APWU Local Union marched at the city’s main Post Office. More than 50 open clerk positions have not been filled in the Cincinnati area since April 2017. The highly visible event drew attention from local television stations, radio broadcasts and newspapers.

“In low income neighborhoods, they’re claiming not enough revenue as an excuse to close small offices, or severely reduce service hours,” said Cincinnati Local



Teresa Oller, steward from Portland Oregon Area Local, helps lead a rally against jobs and service cuts.

President Mike Smith. “APWU members find that totally unacceptable, because we are pledged to deliver universal service to everyone, regardless of where you live or how much money you make.”

“We’re going to raise these issues when we meet with USPS management,” said Smith. “Our members believe that delivering quality service to our customers and keeping our nation connected are

among the most important issues facing the Postal Service. So we’re going to give them an earful.”



Rally at USPS main Post Office in downtown Cincinnati.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



When North Carolina teachers and school workers rallied in May in the thousands at the State House, protesting low salaries and underfunded schools, APWU members from the Charlotte Area Local and the Raleigh Cosmopolitan Area Local were on the scene to show solidarity and support. From left: Charlotte Area Local Clerk Craft Director Tiffany Alexander, Charlotte Area Local Organizing Director Debra Geter, Tanya Hardin, Stephanie Smith, Venus Abaoag-Smith, Raleigh Cosmopolitan Area Local President Peter Gilmartin, Charlotte Area Local and NC State President Anthony (Tony) Wilson.

IN ACTION



APWU members at the Seminole Processing and Distribution Center. From left: Marisol Sampoll, Joel Reyes, Suzanne Teal, Central Florida Area Local President Joe Paul, Mona Charles and Jeremiah Carlson.



Members of the San Jose Area Local observing Workers Memorial Day with Sal the Safety Eagle.

STANDING UP FOR SAFE JOBS

In Postal Service facilities from Florida to Hawaii and all points in between, APWU members showed off stickers and signs in their workplaces on April 28 to mark Workers Memorial Day. The annual event remembers workers who have been hurt or killed on the job and their families, and is an occasion to recommit ourselves and our unions to the fight for safe workplaces

Sadly, the U.S. Postal Service is a dangerous place to work. Twelve USPS workers died on the job between Oct. 1, 2016 and Sept. 30, 2017 (the USPS fiscal year), and more than 42,000 injury claims were approved. In the U.S. as a whole, more than 5,100 workers died from workplace trauma in calendar year 2016, and an estimated 95,000 workers lost their lives due to long-term exposure to toxic chemicals and other workplace hazards.

Kansas Postal Workers Union members Melissa Parker, Helen Letchworth and Joanne Jones in Columbus, KS.



From the Big Island Area Local in Hawaii: Stuart Barte, Ellen Poai, Luana Glory and Jill Ruiz.

The message of solidarity in USPS workplaces on April 28 was unmistakable; we let management know we won't tolerate unsafe conditions. If you see a hazard or are asked to perform an unsafe assignment, contact your union steward and fill out Form 1767 to report a hazard, unsafe condition or practice.

Management has a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for all postal workers – and workers are sticking together to make sure they meet their obligations.



Workers Under Attack – and Fighting Back!

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

Today, more than ever, I am thankful to be a member of the APWU. Throughout my career the union has stood up when management may have wronged me and my coworkers and represented us all in negotiations that have provided a good living, benefits, and retirement. You and I are some of the fortunate in America today who have a union to do this for us. Most American workers do not have a union to represent them. Because they don't have a union, along with their families, they are suffering.

The current administration has taken actions to curtail worker rights that have been in place since 1925. The administration is proving that all its rhetoric about caring for the American worker during the campaign was nothing more than lip-service.

In May 2018, the Supreme Court rendered a decision on *National Labor Relations Board v. Murphy Oil USA, Inc* that will affect 25 million workers. This decision stripped workers of the right to take claims for things like wage theft to a court for adjudication. Now workers will be required take individual complaints to arbitration, at their own cost, rather than sue as a class in court over large-scale infractions. Unfortunately, claims of workplace harassment, equal employment opportunity offenses, and discrimination will now be forced into individual and costly arbitration.

In June, five out-of-touch justices ruled against workers once more, in *Janus v. AFSCME*. This ruling will allow workers employed in state and local government to skip out on paying dues, but still receive the benefits of union representation. It's another example of rich corporate interests trying to destroy our labor movement.

Our enemies will soon learn it's harder than it looks to squash the democratic rights of working people. The *Janus* decision, for example, won't change how APWU operates. Under federal law, our union is already required to provide services to non-members. That hasn't stopped APWU members from building an

active, militant and effective union – and the same is true of many of our brother and sister labor unions in “right-to-work-for-less” states like Nevada, Florida and others.

Did Trump stand up for workers? Of course not. Instead the administration took a stance that *Janus* should not have to pay fees, that “right-to-work-for-less” should be the law of land in the public sector, and that unions should be weakened.

Meanwhile, postal workers are under direct attack by the administration. The 2019 budget calls for increases to your cost for your retirement by 6%, decreasing the employer share of health insurance costs to 65% from its current level of about 73%, eliminating the annuity supplement if you retire before you are eligible for Social Security, and eliminating any cost of living allowance raise on your retirement. The proposal calls for cuts to your leave time by changing annual and sick leave to “paid time off.”

In June, President Trump released a plan to end universal service and privatize the U.S. Postal Service, a national treasure. (See “Privatization,” p. 11) And in August the President's Task Force on the Postal Service is due to report. The order creating the Task Force claims “the USPS is on an unsustainable financial path and must be restructured....” They will report on the USPS business model, and on USPS costs, including the costs of the workforce. The task force is also required, after considering the mailers and our competitors views, to make recommendations for legislative and administrative reform. Likely, they will call for cuts to our compensation packages and to the service the American people deserve.

These are challenging times for postal and American workers. But as we stand together, fight together, and work together we can overcome all these challenges. Together we will prevail against those intent on destroying the working class and protect our basic rights to fair wages and a fair standard of living. Solidarity! ■



FROM the FIELD

Below are quotes from various APWU local and state publications throughout the country. All the publications listed are part of the Postal Press Association.

"Did you know unions are what brought races and genders together more than any other type of organization, including government? We're all brothers and sisters in the union. And we don't have to be forced into this unity. In the common struggle for a better life, a decent income and respectable retirement, the divisions fade away."

— Loren Adams, Arkansas Postal Workers Union Editor,
The Arkansas Postal Worker

"Management continues to do bargaining unit clerk work daily. This is happening at the plant and at most, if not all, stations. We have filed multiple grievances on the 1.6 and 7.2 violations. These grievances have resulted and continue to result in the post office paying thousands of dollars as remedy to these violations. Regardless of what management wants to tell us, the clerks in the Denver Region are understaffed!"

— Laviena Vargas, Director Clerk Craft Denver Metro Area Local,
The Mountaineer

"The message to management is that we are one united workforce vested in the success of the Postal Service. United we stand! Remember, the union is not just the stewards and officers. The union is all of us working together to bring justice to our workplace."

— Grace Baer, Southwest Florida Area Local
Clerk Craft Director, *The Eagle's Eye*

"The union isn't just the officers and stewards working in the office, we are simply your representatives .. We need all of us standing in solidarity to make our union work. In the Minneapolis area we are doing a good job. We have several new members and that shows me people believe in our union and want to belong."

— Teresa Hable, Minneapolis Area Local Assistant
Clerk Craft Director Tour 3, *The Northern Light*

"USPS continues to hammer us with the employee opinion surveys. 'BEWARE,' don't be fooled by what it's called. We already have many ways for input. This is just another way to circumvent the union from bargaining for their members."

— Joe Lewis, State President,
Nevada Postal Workers Union

"Just remember that your workplace benefits and wages are because of the union. If you have ever taken a day of annual or sick leave, received overtime pay, converted to career from PSE, were hired as a PSE, receive holiday pay, bid a job – you can thank the union! We are a team! Our union will only be as strong as each of us makes it!

— Amy Puhalski, Western Michigan Area
Local President, *The WMAL Voice*

"Any employee with common sense can see that we need more help in mail processing. On the maintenance side, PMs (preventive maintenance) are not being done like they used to be which causes more down time. In some cases, management just runs the equipment nonstop. If management is requiring you to do mail searches with equipment running, [exercise your right to work safely and] file a safety hazard report immediately."

— Edward Traeger, President
Jacksonville (FL) BMC Local
The Local View

"There is more to being a union member than just paying your dues. When was the last time you participated in a local membership meeting? Notifying your steward or local officers of possible violations of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)? Signing up nonmembers? Volunteering to assist your local union as a committee member or just help with promoting union functions? Inquire as to being a steward to help police the CBA? We are in this together as we face the current challenges and the challenges that are in the future."

— Larry DeNayer, Area Local 960 (CA) Editor, *960 Dispatch*

A Culture of Solidarity



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

The owners of large corporations and their allies are behind the push to degrade and dismantle the Postal Service. Their money largely controls Congress, the media, and the USPS. However, we outnumber the corporate interests 99 to one. We outnumber management 25 to one and to be successful we need to use our advantage in numbers. The national APWU has been assisting our locals to inform the public and utilize collective actions so we can fight back and build a movement. But the question is: how do we get from here to there? How do we create successful collective actions?

Knowing Who We Are

Part of the answer is knowing who we are. Mass participation in strikes, boycotts, and other collective actions is the proven recipe for success that has given postal workers and other working people all that is decent in our lives. This history is not told in the corporate media because it does not benefit business owners to do so. Our bold actions are often not taught in our classrooms except by brave teachers who go outside the pages of corporate textbooks. It is up to us to know who we are in the context of history and carry on the struggle.

Friendship and Community

Part of the answer is to build friendships and community amongst ourselves. At all levels of the union, the gatherings where we participate in discussion, eat and socialize together all serve to increase our love for each other and our ability to act in a collective manner.

Many locals rightly include social activities as part of our movement. Dances, sports, music, picnics, and parties all bring us together and build community. The best local organizing includes whole families so that our children and grandchildren are involved and our culture of union values is passed on to the next generations of fighters.

A Culture of Solidarity

When I started at the Postal Service, my elders in the union set a good tone by being very welcoming to new employees. Although not all stewards or officers, their

smiles and advice to the new people helped maintain a culture of solidarity on the work floor. Because we cared for one another, we took the union slogan of “an injury to one is an injury to all” to heart.

MASS PARTICIPATION IN STRIKES, BOYCOTTS AND OTHER COLLECTIVE ACTIONS IS THE PROVEN RECIPE FOR SUCCESS THAT HAS GIVEN POSTAL WORKERS AND OTHER WORKING PEOPLE ALL THAT IS DECENT IN OUR LIVES.

This culture of solidarity was partly a result of the fact that many of the workers in my local were veterans of the Vietnam War and some from the Korean War and even World War II. Many of them lived through active combat and had harsh words for what the government did to them and others. For many, protecting their brothers next to them in battle was their motivation during the war. Many brought their ethic and brotherhood from military service to the United States Postal Service and continued caring for each other in the workplace. Both veterans and everyone else worked to make the Post Office a place where our most vulnerable were loved and protected.

Small Actions to Big Actions

When a group of friends participate in small group actions they learn from that experience and utilize that education for the next action, leading to better actions in the future. Small actions like signing a petition, wearing t-shirts on the same day, addressing the supervisor at the same time and informational pickets are experiences that can lead to larger successful collective actions necessary to create positive change.

To achieve a better world, working people will need to engage in mass collective actions such as strikes and boycotts to counter the corporate interests keeping us down. Learning who we are, building friendships and community, creating a culture of solidarity and engaging in small collective actions that develop into something bigger is one way to get from here to there. ■



Postal Banking is Successful Around the World — Could it Work Here?

Postal services across the world provide tried and tested and successful models for postal banking, or the provision of financial services via the post. New research by Holly Feldman-Wiencek, Research Assistant at the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC), shows differing models for postal banking across the world and the factors that drive their success.

While services and how they are provided vary, 91 percent of postal services worldwide offer financial services, serving 1.5 billion people. According to the Universal Postal Union, this makes the postal sector “the second largest contributor to financial inclusion worldwide,” right behind the banking industry.

Financial inclusion is the idea of increasing access to banking services for people who have traditionally been excluded. The concept of postal banking is not new to these shores. During the first half of the twentieth century, the United States Postal Savings System was a great promoter of financial inclusion, especially for new immigrants.

In some countries, the postal service rents out space to third-party providers and in others, the post operates under its own banking license. The United Kingdom’s Post Office Money, for example, is operated by Post Office Ltd., the government-owned retail side of the UK’s postal service. It offers services in partnership with a financial services provider, most commonly the Bank of Ireland UK. In France, Banque Postale is a wholly-owned subsidiary of La Poste, the national postal service in France, and it operates under its own universal banking license.

The management of Poste Italiane, the national postal provider in Italy, surveyed models of postal banking around the world and identified three key factors that determine the success of a postal bank. The first is the postal network itself. The report finds that “Posts that have broad networks and infrastructures, have control over their networks, and maximize the use of their networks had more success because they are able to reach more potential customers.”

This is good news for the potential of postal banking in the United States. The U.S. Postal Service, with more than 30,000 retail locations, is the world’s largest retail network. And many of those post offices are located in bank deserts. Fifty-nine percent of post offices are in zip codes with zero banks or just one bank branch. The U.S. Postal Service is geographically well-positioned to reach people with little-to-no access to retail banking services.



Services that could be available to U.S. consumers with a postal banking system in place. From a report by the USPS Office of the Inspector General, January 2014.

The second factor the Poste Italiane study identified was the strength of the postal service brand. They found that many postal services worldwide are “seen as more reliable, convenient, transparent, and safe than private banks.” This is more good news, as Americans consistently rank the USPS highest among all federal agencies. More than 70% of respondents rate USPS performance “excellent” or “good.” Our public postal service enjoys much higher public confidence than banks or payday lenders.

Finally, Poste Italiane’s study recommends that postal services respond to the needs of the people in their country with the right products. That’s why the APWU has joined with the Campaign for Postal Banking. We’ve been working with unions, consumer rights and civil rights groups, financial reform organizations and people who’ve been fighting back against banks that serve Wall Street and the predatory lenders that rip off our communities. We’re pushing the U.S. Postal Service to leverage its strong infrastructure and its mission to provide reliable, low-cost financial services that the people of this country need, want and deserve. ■

Filling Maintenance Vacancies – Part I



Assistant Director Terry Martinez and Director Idowu Balogun



With great sadness, we share news of the passing of Steve Raymer, former president of the APWU Madison (WI) Area Local and director of the APWU Maintenance Division. (See “A Brother, A Good Friend, A Mentor,” next page.) Our hearts go out to his family for their tragic, unexpected loss.

During the last days of his life, Steve was putting the finishing touches on this column about enforcement of the APWU contract. We publish it in honor of his life and work as a fierce and dedicated advocate for APWU members and for all working people.

The Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM) is the mutually agreed upon explanation on how to apply our contract to filling vacant maintenance positions.

The May 2017 JCIM included the *Order for Filling Vacant Maintenance Positions*. The contractual definition is to duty assignments. Within the craft, we refer to this as the “pecking order.”

The preamble paragraph is frequently overlooked.

The appropriate PAR and PER must be exhausted before considering other hiring options. To be considered qualified an employee must either be eligible under the current in-craft process for the position in question or be a Maintenance Craft employee in the same level and occupational group as the vacancy.

To be qualified, one must qualify for placement on the Promotion Eligibility Register (PER). The following addresses filling of vacancies and the proper way to merge in consideration of retreat rights.

Once a notice of intent (NOI) is posted and closed for a vacancy duty assignment, the pecking order is in play. First it must be determined if there are any retreat rights outstanding, as these rights may become effective

during different stages of filing the vacancy posted or any subsequent vacancies.

For instance, if there are outstanding retreat rights as the result of a local level excessing, then the determination must be made if the present vacancy is within the section where the retreat rights attach. If the vacancy is an ET on tour 3, for example, and tour 3 had previously excessed ETs, then the NOI would be posted to a “closed section.” This allows the preferred assignment register (PAR) to be applied only to those ETs remaining in the section (tour 3 ETs). Once the closed section PAR is completed, the remaining vacancy on tour 3 is then offered to the employee with retreat rights to the locally identified section. The vacancy created by the retreat of the employee to tour 3 as an ET then goes back to step 1 and is filled following the same pecking order.

Note that it is not possible to have an unassigned regular in a local section where there are retreat rights.

If there are no retreat rights, the initial NOI will result in the ranking individual on the PAR being chosen. Once all members of the occupational group have the PAR applied, a vacancy will remain and we move on to #2.

If an unassigned regular exists within the occupational group, that person should be assigned and everything is then complete as all available vacancies are filled.

Normally, step 2 isn’t applied and we go to step 3. Consideration of retreat rights from a previous excessing action are applied if that excessing occurred under Article 12.5.C.4.

Under step 4, higher level “qualified” employees can request change to lower level, and, the vacancy will now be in the higher level occupational group. This will NOT result in a new NOI. The process will continue by going back to step 1 (PAR), this time applying it to the higher level occupational group.

The next step is #5, the promotion eligibility register (PER), which will be covered with the other steps in Part II in the next edition of *The American Postal Worker*. ■



Steven G. Raymer

APWU Maintenance Division Director

OCTOBER 6, 1956 – JUNE 16, 2018

“A Brother, A Good Friend, A Mentor”

Brother Steven G. Raymer, who served as the union's Maintenance Division Director for the past 17 years, was on the union's National Executive

Board and a lifetime trade unionist, died suddenly from a heart attack on June 16, 2018. Steve was 61 at the time of his death.

“We are all deeply saddened and still in shock over the untimely passing of Brother Raymer. Our heartfelt thoughts go to his wife Nancy, daughters Allison and Jessica, his three grandchildren and his extended family,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “Up until the last days of his life, he was working on behalf of our members – getting ready for contract



arbitrations and planning for our convention. We salute his many contributions over the years and his deep dedication to the APWU and its members.”

Brother Raymer, a proud veteran of the U.S. Marine Corp., was hired into the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) in 1982 as a clerk prior to transferring to the maintenance division in 1987. In 1989, he was promoted to Mail Processing Equipment Mechanic (MPE).

In 1990, Brother Raymer was elected by his co-workers as president of the Madison Wisconsin Area APWU Local Union. He served in



Counterclockwise from top left: Steve Raymer with his family, supporting his Green Bay Packers, with one of his daughters and helping to lead the APWU "Stop Staples" fight.

that position until 2001, when he was elected as APWU National Maintenance Division Director.

As a national officer, he was fully involved in every National Negotiation since 2001. “I served with Steve for 17 years on the National Executive Board. I know how hard he worked, how much he loved the union and how deeply he cared about our members,” said APWU Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell.

During his tenure as National Maintenance Division Director, Brother Raymer negotiated hundreds of settlement agreements on behalf of the Maintenance Craft. He played a major role in issues that affected not just the maintenance division, but all members of the union. He also represented the APWU on the postal and logistics committee of UNI, the global union.

“The APWU has lost a union brother, a good friend, and a mentor,” said Idowu Balogun, who will replace Steve as director of the APWU Maintenance Division. ■



Can We Trust USPS Management?



Assistant Director Javier Piñeres and Director Michael Foster

Can we ever trust USPS management to live up to their agreements and obligations?

On August 18, 2016, during our last convention in Orlando, the Motor Vehicle Division received one of the most important arbitration decisions relating to Article 32.2.B and the renewal of Highway Contract Routes (HCRs).

In Case No. Q06C-4Q-C 11182451, arbitrator Shyam Das sustained the union's non-notification of HCR routes dispute and awarded the Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) 110 HCRs for four years, the life of a regular term contract within six months of the award. This was a significant award for the Motor Vehicle Craft, because it gave us momentum in fighting back against the US Postal Service's attempts to privatize PVS.

The APWU had been complaining for years about the Article 32.2 process, to no avail. On numerous occasions, the union raised legitimate concerns with the Postal Service, but those concerns fell on deaf ears. The Das 110 Arbitration is one of several pending Step 4 disputes in which the union charges the USPS with the same or similar violations.

The primary issue is that the Postal Service violated the National Agreement by notifying the union of HCR contracts after they had been let, or not giving the union notification at all.

The APWU was able to prove to the arbitrator that despite claims these violations were isolated incidents, the Postal Service had breached the Article 32.2.B process in such a broad manner that we were entitled to a meaningful remedy. The Postal Service has been extremely reluctant to comply with the Das award. This is an arbitration award that they would not like to honor.

One of the glaring significances of the award is that a national level arbitrator agreed with the Union's assessment of the USPS mishandling of the Article 32 process and the obstacles facing the APWU in trying to secure work for the bargaining unit.

In the spirit of good faith cooperation, the APWU entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

with the USPS on May 17, 2017, extending the deadline for implementing the Das Award.

As of January 2018, USPS notified the APWU that they had insourced 39 of the 110 HCR routes to PVS. They complained about the difficulties they were experiencing with hiring efforts and their attempts to recruit drivers.

On May 14, 2018 the parties entered into a subsequent MOU, which allows for hiring of additional Part Time Flexibles (PTFs) instead of PSEs. The MOU states that local grievances shall be held in abeyance and requires USPS to provide the union with a monthly report on compliance of the Das Award.

The union warned the Postal Service in advance that many of the problems they would experience would be due to their attempts to modify the HCR routes to create less than eight-hour PVS schedules. The APWU for many years has extolled the values of the PVS operators who are highly skilled employees for the services they perform for the USPS.

The APWU continues to remain vigilant in our attempts to win compliance with the Das Award. If we have to invoke the arbitrator's retained jurisdiction, we will have demonstrated that the union has taken every step possible to work with the Postal Service in implementing this award.

POM 713 Dispute

The MVS Craft on April 17-18 presented the language in 713 Vehicles Used by USPS of the Postal Operations Manual (POM).

713.1 Postal Vehicle Service

"PVS vehicles are under the jurisdiction of managers at designated offices. They are operated by USPS personnel..."

The MVS Craft has been in dispute with the USPS to replace language that was removed from the POM since 1995.

Our position is that the language in 713.1 prohibits the USPS from providing vehicles, including trailers, to HCR contractors. The issues have been remanded back to Step 4 for further development between the parties, and then come back before the arbitrator. ■



Eastern Region Coordinator Mike Gallagher

The Function One Fiasco

The USPS embarked on a mission to staff all Function One Mail Processing operations using a program that sets up staffing based on a time and work measurement system (earned hours) rather than hours actually used. This program has been the basis for a substantial number of Regional Notifications for clerks to be reassigned out of craft and/or out of installation nationwide.

When reassigning career employees, the employer is contractually obligated to minimize their use of Postal Support Employees (PSEs) and reduce or eliminate overtime (OT) work hours.

My office has received notices for reassignment of employees from 10 Processing and Distribution Centers and one Network Distribution Center (formerly BMC) announcing the reassignment of 371 clerks.

At the contractually required Regional/Area meeting, I pointed out that the post excessing work hour data, which showed an incredibly high number of PSE and OT workhours, would be a contractual violation.

Management agreed that the post excessing profile showed high PSE work hours, but claimed PSEs would only work four to six hours concurrently a night and therefore would not be a violation. We knew they would not be able to process the mail with this arrangement and would work the PSEs full-time while reassigning full-time career employees out of craft/installation.

Thankfully, the Eastern Area agreed with me, complied with the contract and cancelled Function One events. Unfortunately, the Capitol Metro Area would not listen to reason and insisted on reassigning a number of employees to residual vacancies.

They reassigned quite a few of these clerks to carrier jobs that the employees were not physically qualified to perform. This is a violation of the recent Goldberg award, in which the arbitrator defined our contract as providing for employees to meet the minimum qualification for a cross craft assignment prior to reassignment. Almost comically, a few clerks were reassigned to carrier jobs that required driving even though they did not have driver's licenses.

After a reassignment, the union is entitled to a Comparative Work Hour Report (CWHR) which shows the hours before and after the excessing of employees. If the CWHR establishes that work hours are still there for full-time employees, employees are granted the right to return to their original craft and installation.

In Cap Metro events, I am sorry to say we were proven right. The PSEs were worked as full-time employees after the employer reassigned career employees and management was required to return all employees from every one of the installations from which they had been reassigned. I signed an agreement returning all the

employees back to their craft and installation.

This is a substantial victory for our union and workers who were displaced. It would have never have happened if the employer in the Cap Metro Area just listened to reason and complied with our Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Bill LaSalle

It has been my privilege over the past 12 years to serve with one of the finest National Business Agents the APWU has had. Bill LaSalle has announced his retirement and we wish him and his family the very best. Bill is one of the sharpest people in our organization and he will be dearly missed for his drive, capability and dedication to this union. I will miss him personally as a close friend.

John Dirzius

For many years I have served on the National Executive Board with Northeast Regional Coordinator John Dirzius, who represents the best in what a union representative can possibly be. He is a man of character and high intelligence and it has been my honor to have served our union with him for many years. John is retiring and with my fellow coordinators Sharyn Stone, Omar Gonzalez and Kenneth Beasley, I wish John and his wife Diane a long, happy and healthy retirement. For me, the union will not be the same without John as he is like a brother to me. ■

Anti-Union Janus Ruling STIFFENS LABOR'S RESOLVE

As expected, the conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court overturned 40 years of established law, ruling that municipal and state public sector unions cannot require nonmembers to pay for the costs of representing them. The case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, was brought by an Illinois state worker Mark Janus, but paid for by billionaires and corporate interests including the Ed Uihlein Family Foundation and the Charles Koch Institute.

The ruling overturns a unanimous 1977 Supreme Court decision in *Abood vs. Detroit Board of Education* that allowed local and state public sector unions to collect “agency fees” to cover the costs of nonpolitical union activity.

In a scathing dissent written for the minority, Justice Elena Kagan said the ruling “overthrows a decision entrenched in this Nation’s law – and in its economic life – for over 40 years. As a result, it prevents the American people, acting through their state and local officials, from making important choices about workplace governance. And it does so by weaponizing the First Amendment, in a way that unleashes judges, now and in the future, to intervene in economic and regulatory policy.”

“This Supreme Court ruling is a blow to the entire labor movement” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

Photo courtesy of the TWU



New members of the TWU:
Jet Blue InFlight Crewmembers

JetBlue workers vote FOR UNION FUTURE

Workers are standing up for a better deal at JetBlue. It’s one of the few companies in the airline industry that has operated in the past as a non-union carrier.

The future will be different. In April, flight attendants at the New York-based airline overwhelmingly voted for representation by the Transport Workers Union (TWU). In May, the Air Line Pilots Association announced a tentative agreement on a first contract with the airline.

TWU President John Samuelson credited the 66 percent vote by Jet Blue flight attendants in favor of union representation to TWU’s aggressive record in negotiations. “If you have the audacity to stand up and fight, workers are drawn to that,” he said. TWU also represents flight attendants at Southwest Airlines.

“The billionaire class for years have been trying to defund and destroy unions. They funded this Supreme Court case and are certainly celebrating for the moment. But the APWU has shown that strong unions can be built and maintained in a post-Janus environment. And the West Virginia teachers and school personnel showed that even with the ‘open-shop,’ workers can – whether courts are on our side or not – build powerful movements and win.”

Anticipating the ruling, AFSCME, the American Federation of Teachers and other public-sector unions have been developing new internal organizing strategies. The International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, for example, asked each of its 11,000 public sector bargaining unit members in the California Bay Area to sign a new union membership card. Ninety-one percent of IFPTE’s Local 20 members have done so and the numbers continue to increase.

Protecting workers' rights

Sanders, Pocan introduce “Workplace Democracy Act”

On Wednesday May 9, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the Workplace Democracy Act, with Representative Mark Pocan (D-WI) introducing a companion bill in the U.S. House of Representatives.

This Act would protect the rights of the working class to form a union and collectively bargain for fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions. “It is no secret that stagnant wages and the growing economic injustice in the United States has been the direct result of the all-out assault on working families and our unions over the past few decades,” said APWU Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard.

Key provisions of the Workplace Democracy Act

- Allow for workers to organize through a majority sign-up process
- Require employers to begin negotiating within 10 days of receiving a request from a new union
- Eliminate deceptively named Right-to-Work (for less) laws
- Eliminate loopholes which allow employers to classify employees as independent contractors/supervisors to prevent organizing
- Allow for secondary boycotts or pickets, reinstating workers' freedom of speech
- Require companies to disclose anti-union information they disseminate to workers

“The deck is stacked against workers,” said APWU President, Mark Dimondstein. “We welcome the introduction of pro-worker legislation which will put more power back in the hands of the people.”

The bill is co-sponsored in the Senate by Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Edward Markey (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

The House bill is co-sponsored by Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Katherine Clark (D-MA), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA), Mark Takano (D-CA), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ).



Coast-to-coast solidarity: Members of Machinists Union District 751 from Boeing in Puget Sound, WA celebrate a successful union vote with new IAM members from Boeing in North Charleston, SC

Boeing Union Breaks Through in South Carolina

In a major organizing victory in the unorganized South, flight-readiness technicians at a Boeing plant in Charleston, South Carolina, voted to join the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). Sixty-one percent of workers voted in favor of the union

“They stood up to a Goliath of a company,” IAM lead organizer Mike Evans told the *Post and Courier*. “We stayed on course with education and opportunity and respect and dignity going forward, and here we are today with a win.”

The vote creates a bargaining unit of about 200 workers out of 3,000 who work at the North Charleston plant. The IAM represents 35,000 Boeing workers in 24 locations, mostly on the West Coast.

Boeing workers are joining a growing labor movement in South Carolina. The labor movement's ranks grew by 62 percent in the Palmetto state in 2017, adding 20,000 people for a total of 52,000 workers who are now represented by unions.

Cheated TOYS “R” US Workers Go to Capitol Hill

Over 30,000 retail workers recently lost their jobs after Toys “R” Us filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy and closed their stores. Even though the company brought in billions of dollars in sales, crippling long-term debt from mismanagement by Wall Street fund managers, Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co. and Bain Capital, forced the retailer to close its doors. According to *The Nation*, the “vulture capitalists” caused a multi-billion debt with a leveraged buyout when it purchased the company in 2005.



While workers are struggling to find another job, the Wall Street robber-barons who created the problem are walking away with \$16 million in golden parachutes. “This is what happens when you have a system that allows private equity firms to destroy profitable businesses and throw workers out on the streets with no severance,” said Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

In May, Toys “R” Us workers went to Capitol Hill and demanded legislators act to fix this legal injustice. “Politicians need to step up and help us,” said Ann Marie Reinhart Smith, who worked for the retail chain for 29 years. “It’s not fair that executives, who already were getting a handsome salary, get millions in bonuses and we, who built their brand, get nothing.”

Sri Lanka Postal Workers VOW the STRUGGLE CONTINUES



Postal workers in Sri Lanka rally during their strike for better pay, promotions and benefits.

Postal workers in Sri Lanka on June 27 resumed the delivery of mail after a 16-day strike, but warned they would resume the strike if their concerns are not addressed in bargaining. The main issue for the workers is a government rule that sets salaries and benefits without direct negotiations.

“We ended our strike temporarily, but we may have to resume it if these longstanding issues are not resolved at the talks,” said United Postal Trade Union Alliance Convenor Chinthaka Bandara. Besides the bargaining issue, the union insists that workers also receive back pay for the time they were on strike.

The action resulted in a massive backlog of mail. It also disrupted government operations that rely on the postal services, such as the Department of Examinations, the Education Ministry and the court systems.

The union said workers would return but “work to the rule” until the dispute is settled, essentially refusing overtime. But they quickly reversed that decision to help clear up the backlog. The threat to resume the strike is still on the table, however.

At issue is the Sri Lanka government postal reorganization in 2006 that allowed the government to set postal worker compensation without workers bargaining directly with the postal service. As a result, postal workers’ pay, promotions and other benefits have been degraded.



Judy Beard, Director

The attacks from all sides can only be fought through solidarity

White House Proposal to Privatize the Postal Service

In June, the White House proposal, “Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century,” was released. This proposal puts forth a restructuring plan for the federal government which includes the privatization of the Postal Service. It was crafted around a slew of untruths including the implication that the Postal Service relies on taxpayer dollars.

We know the USPS is funded by the sale of its products and doesn't use taxpayer dollars. We need to educate our co-workers, communities and public officials every chance we get. The Postal Service belongs to the American people. It remains one of the highest rated and most trusted government services, and the call to privatization by the White House mirrors the agenda of the Heritage Foundation and its wealthy corporate backers.

Task Force

The White House issued an Executive Order in April creating a “Task Force” to evaluate the finances of the Postal Service. President Dimondstein and I met with the Task Force in June to present our recommendations (as did the other postal unions). As we await the final report of the Task Force, we are concerned their recommendations will echo the call to privatization, especially since political appointees are influencing both processes.

OPM Attacks

The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Jeff T.H. Pon, sent a letter dated May 4th, 2018 to the Speaker of the House of Representatives in pursuit of pay and benefit cuts for federal and postal employees, active and retired. These unfair cuts include:

- Increased Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) contributions by 1 percent a year up to 7.25%
- Elimination of the FERS Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and reducing Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) COLAs by 0.5%

- Elimination of the Social Security retirement supplement and significantly reducing retirement benefits by using your high five salary average in lieu of the current high three years.

We worked with allies and successfully fought back OPM's attempt to add these catastrophic provisions to the National Defense Appropriations Act (NDAA).

Educational Trainings

These attacks demonstrate the need for our membership to remain actively engaged in the political process and to stand in solidarity with other organizations. In anticipation of attacks such as these, the Legislative Department launched *APWU Legislative and Political Trainings*. These trainings are designed to re-energize our members and create a path for each of us to get involved. Kicking off in March and ending this June, the Legislative and Political Department brought our training to 25 states and the District of Columbia. ■

Legislative Events at the APWU National Convention

With the APWU National Convention right around the corner, we invite you to join the Legislative and Political Department at three important sessions:

POLITICAL ACTION SESSION

Sunday, August 19 from 3:30 pm to 5 pm

A panel of speakers will discuss how to build a broad movement with a progressive agenda for workers. Speakers will address the fight for workers' rights in 2018, ranging from the teacher strikes to the fight for \$15.

COPA NIGHT - A PARTY WITH A PURPOSE TO THANK OUR EAGLE, CAPITOL AND PRESIDENTS CLUB CONTRIBUTORS

Tuesday, August 21 from 7 pm to 11 pm

2018 MIDTERM ELECTION BRIEFING

Thursday, August 23 from 8 am to 9:15 am

Be a part of the Union Excellence Team as we discuss the AFL-CIO Get Out the Vote (GOTV) program, community election efforts, ballot initiatives, and Hatch Act guidelines.

For a list of APWU's legislative priorities, please visit apwu.org



Anna Smith, Director

Many Hands Make Light Work

Sometimes it seems like we are our own worst enemy. When I first started my postal career there was always gloom and doom rhetoric going around the workroom floor. Talk that frankly scared the heck out of me. What I learned though, is that I don't get to complain about what someone else isn't doing for me if I'm not willing to step up to the plate and fight for myself.

THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO STAND ON THE SIDELINES. IF YOU WANT TO SEE CHANGES, EVERYONE MUST STEP UP AND GET INVOLVED.

One person or even a small group cannot carry all the weight. At some point, it will be more than they can carry. As the saying goes, many hands make light work – this holds true for our struggles. If each of us does one small task, it can make a difference.

This isn't the time to stand on the sidelines. If you want to see changes, or perhaps just wish to maintain the benefits we currently enjoy, everyone must step up and get involved. This includes organizing our non-members and asking them to stand with us and get involved. They should understand that by choosing to remain a non-member they are working not only against their best interest, but every one of us as well!

Ask yourself this: Would we willing to perform the same work we do each day, but for only 80 percent of current wages and benefits? This isn't just a gloom-and-doom forecast, it is the reality we live in. As the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported earlier this year, "Nonunion workers had median weekly earnings that were 80 percent of earnings for workers who were union members." You can be sure that the same politicians and corporations who are pushing to privatize our U.S. Postal Service will also push to take away our union and our collective bargaining rights.

Don't let your vision be blurred by a faulty expectation that someone else is going to do all the work in our contract fight. Everyone needs to get involved. Throughout our upcoming negotiations you may be called on to

wear stickers, attend rallies, and to be actively involved in our effort to win a good contract. I encourage each of you to consider for a moment what you are capable of doing in the interest of your future, and that of your family, friends and co-workers.

Organizing Aids — Help Us Help You

The Organization Department supplies materials to all APWU locals and members in an effort to help organize the unorganized. For information about the resource materials available and the Material Order Form, please visit www.apwu.org under Department & Division/Organization.

You can mail your order to the Organization Department at APWU, 1300 L St NW, Washington, DC 20005. You can also email to organization@apwu.org, or fax to 202-216-2639.

Orders are typically processed and shipped the same day and an email with tracking information will be provided to the recipient. If you would like a call to acknowledge receipt of an order, please state so on the fax cover sheet or in voice message. All orders and messages should include the below information for prompt service:

Full name and title
Local name
Shipping address
Phone number
Email address

What's working and not working?

The Organizing Department is looking to compile a list of what locals and members are doing in their efforts to organize our coworkers. If you have something that's working well, let's share it. If you have had some stumbling blocks, or have found some techniques that just aren't working, we want to hear those as well. Please take a moment to either write or email the department with details and we'll be looking to include those responses in upcoming issues of the magazine.



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

The Struggle to Win the 40-Hour Workweek

The upcoming celebration of Labor Day is a good time to remember the role labor unions have played in raising living standards and improving the quality of life for working people in the United States. While most people recognize that unions have been beneficial for their members, there is little known about the role of labor unions in winning the 40-hour workweek.

In the 1800s, many Americans worked seventy hours or more per week and the length of the workweek became an important political issue. In the United States, a few limited eight-hour-day laws were on the books shortly after the Civil War. One, in Illinois, was passed in 1867, followed in 1868 by a law covering certain classes of federal workers. So a reduction in the work week became a leading issue for the labor movement and the struggle to win the 40-hour work week is the thread that ties together the history of American Labor.

**WE MUST FOREVER REMAIN VIGILANT IN
OUR FIGHT FOR RESPECT, JUSTICE AND
SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS.**

40-Hour Workweek Timeline

1866 – The country's first union federation, The National Labor Union, urged Congress to pass a law mandating the eight-hour workday.

May 1, 1867 – The Illinois Legislature passed a law mandating an eight-hour workday. Many employers refused to cooperate, and a massive strike erupted in Chicago.

May 1, 1886 – The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (later the AFL) called for a national strike. Nearly one million American workers stopped work that day. The purpose of the “**May Day Strike**” was to bring pressure on employers and state governments to create an eight-hour workday.

May 4, 1886 – The “**Haymarket Affair**” took place at a labor demonstration at Haymarket Square in Chicago. It began as a peaceful rally in support of workers striking for an eight-hour day. An unknown person threw a dynamite bomb as police acted to disperse the

public meeting. The bomb blast and ensuing gunfire resulted in the deaths of seven police officers and at least four civilians; dozens of others were wounded.

May 19, 1869 – President Ulysses S. Grant issued a proclamation that guaranteed a stable wage and an eight-hour workday for government workers only. “Whereas the act of Congress approved June 25, 1868, constituted, on and after that date, eight hours a day's work for all laborers, workmen, and mechanics employed by or on behalf of the Government of the United States.”

1898 – The United Mine Workers won an eight-hour work day.

1906 – The eight-hour day was widely instituted throughout the printing industry.

1910 – Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, and Utah, reduced the legal workweek limit for women from 54 to 48 hours.

1914 – Ford Motor Company instituted eight-hour shifts and raised wages. However, many Ford workers still worked six days a week.

1916 – Congress passed the Adamson Act, a federal law that established an eight-hour workday for interstate railroad workers, with additional pay for overtime work.

June 25, 1938 – President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act, that creates the right to a minimum wage, and time-and-a-half overtime pay when people work over forty hours a week. It also prohibited most employment of minors in “oppressive child labor.”

1940 – Congress amends the Fair Labor Standards Act, reducing the federal workweek limit to 40 hours.

The realization of the 40-hour workweek that has become standard across many American industries was hard fought. It took deadly accidents and employees banding together to make it happen. Let's not take these gains for granted. We must forever remain vigilant in our fight for respect, justice and safe working conditions. ■

Sources: *Entrepreneur*, *NBC news*, *Economic History Association*, *PBS*, and *Wikipedia*

Hearing Loss

Twenty percent of Americans report some degree of hearing loss but those who serve are far more impacted by auditory disorders than the general public due to their exposure to artillery gunfire, battlefield explosives, loud machinery, aircraft noise and traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). Hearing loss and tinnitus, a perceived ringing in the ear that often accompanies it, are the top two service-connected disabilities afflicting service members and generations of veterans. These maladies are often overshadowed by other challenges our service men and women face.

In 2016, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reported, more than 1.6 million veterans received disability compensation benefits for tinnitus, and another 1.1 million received monthly payments for hearing loss. A staggering 60 percent of the troops who returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan sustained some degree of hearing loss, causing the military to take preemptive measures to curtail hearing loss.

These statistics also prompted the VA to recognize the importance of connecting veterans, friends and family with resources that promote understanding and ultimately provide solutions.

Tinnitus and CAPD

There are two types of tinnitus: subjective, when only the sufferer can hear the sound in their head or ear when no external noise is present; and objective, when crackling or clicking inside the middle ear can be heard by others. Both forms can be slight to severe, occur intermittently or constantly. For some it is a nuisance, for others, like those experiencing hearing loss, it can be life altering.

In addition to being disproportionately affected by tinnitus and hearing loss, military members and veterans are more susceptible to developing central auditory processing disorders (CAPD), which is similarly caused by exposure to loud noise, percussion and TBIs. Individuals with CAPD can hear sounds but are unable to understand spoken words.

Auditory conditions intertwine physically and emotionally – as a trigger, a consistent reminder or a daily frustration that creates unique and personal challenges for veterans. According to the VA, left untreated hearing loss and other auditory disorders can lead to harmful health

effects such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and dementia; cause social, psychological, and cognitive issues that can negatively impact work and personal life; and potentially lead to isolation and depression.

Solutions

Fortunately, there are a variety of options available to veterans who have or suspect they have hearing-related issues. Local VA medical centers and community partners offer screening, treatment and/or management services for varying degrees of hearing loss, tinnitus, CAPD and balance disorders.

Some forms of hearing loss, such as those that affect the middle ear, can be successfully treated with surgery. Alternatively, where damage to the inner ear and auditory nerve cause permanent hearing loss, modern technologies such as discreet hearing aids, TV and telephone amplifiers, and auditory implants can optimize residual hearing by amplifying sounds. Assistive/alerting devices and service animals can also prove helpful.

Although there is no specific cure for tinnitus, doctors are often able to find and eliminate the underlying cause. Many patients have had improvements with medicine, sound therapy and the use of white-noise machines. Others have benefited from controlled counseling exercises that focus on increasing relaxation and improving circulation to alleviate tinnitus. Some research suggests tinnitus can be induced or aggravated by stress, anxiety, fatigue and other external factors, making cognitive behavioral therapy a viable treatment choice.

Seeking evaluation may seem daunting but taking this initial step through the VA, or a preferred ear, nose and throat specialist, can connect veterans with successful treatment options and other services offered through community partners to meet their needs.

To apply for service-connected disability benefits associated with auditory disorders or to be scheduled with an auditory specialist, visit www.ebenefits.va.gov. To discover other free and discounted resources, visit the solutions page found at www.heroeswithhearingloss.org ■

– Human Relations Department





Sue Carney, Director

Who We Are

There is no doubt our country is divided, whether it is because of opposing political views and party allegiance, or because of differing opinions pertaining to copious social issues. With all that divides us, it is a good time to remind ourselves who we are, where we come from and what we stand for.

We Are Labor

Bound together, our fundamental purpose has always been to seek political, social and economic justice for the disadvantaged. We are not a fee-for-service organization or a group of self-serving individuals simply looking to make gains for ourselves. We seek fairness, equality, dignity and respect for all common people, including those beyond our workroom floors and borders.

Throughout history, we and our immigrant forefathers and mothers have been in fields, factories, kitchens and mines. We drive trucks, build infrastructures, teach, heal the sick, fix machines, clean toilets, fly planes, process mail and more. We've increased wages, gained benefits, improved safety; stood against child labor, and stood for civil rights, human rights, and women's rights. We stand on picket lines, sign petitions and vote. We've been bloodied, beaten and killed. We are not just names on the membership list. We stand for humanity. We speak for those who cannot. We fight for the living. We are the ones who built this country; we are who keep it running and we are who makes America great.

**WE ARE WHO BUILT THIS COUNTRY;
WE ARE WHO KEEP IT RUNNING AND
WE ARE WHO MAKES AMERICA GREAT.**

Or Are We?

There are 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United State who, like our relatives, came to find a better life; to provide for their families or to escape the atrocities of a war-torn country or an oppressive government. It seems we are watching in silence while they live in fear of being ripped from their families; re-

turned to their country to a sentence of homelessness, poverty, starvation or death. Children stripped away from their parents. Dreamers banished from the only country they know – a country they have allegiance to and make contributions to.

With the exception of a few within our ranks who are indigenous or naturalized citizens, the overwhelming majority of us are Americans simply by luck. We could just as easily been born elsewhere and be in their shoes had we not had the good fortune of our immigrant ancestors migrating here.

Absent a piece of paper, they, like our ancestors, are just like us. They are hardworking, decent people who have motivations consistent with the American dream. We benefit from their labor, their skills, their military service, additional tax revenue and increased money circulation.

So where is Labor? Aren't these our people? Shouldn't we be demanding an easier path to citizenship without deportation; without treating human beings like livestock? If we are Labor, why do some among us cry for deportation, arguing they are economic and social burdens who are violating the law?

It begs the question, is being legal always right? We don't have to look back too far in history to answer, no. Slavery was legal. People of color were denied access to businesses; relegated to different restrooms and fountains. Women couldn't vote. There were no laws preventing child labor, unsafe work practices, and discrimination. All were legal. None were right.

So can we say we are the same Labor of our predecessors or have we forgotten our roots and let our core principals fall to the wayside because we inherited a legacy from those who toiled without having to endure the struggle? Have we become a generation of unionists in name only – failing to rise up to speak for the disenfranchised because the plight of another is not our own, or worse has our standing manufactured elitism causing us to vehemently speak against those less fortunate than ourselves?

Be who we are. ■

Celebrate, Protect Your Benefits



Nancy Olumekor, Director

Every year we recognize and celebrate the Social Security Act, enacted on Aug. 14, 1935, 83 years ago, and Medicare, enacted on July 30, 1965, 53 years ago. These two important laws were established to benefit workers in their old age, as retirees.

Our celebration this year during July and August includes continuing the fight to protect these earned benefits. All APWU members, along with their families, friends and neighbors, can participate in an action of recognition by supporting APWU legislative priorities for fair benefits for American seniors.

For Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) annuitants, the Social Security benefit is drastically reduced by the Windfall Elimination Provisions (WEP), enacted in 1983, and Government Pension Offset (GPO), enacted in 1977. The WEP/GPO are penalties imposed on CSRS annuitants who worked two jobs and paid into CSRS as well as Social Security.

Reach out to your members of Congress and Senators by telephone, email, mail or in person to tell your story, and ask them to support legislation to repeal the WEP/GPO. The “Social Security Fairness Act of 2017,” H.R. 1205 and S. 915, are two bills which would repeal the GPO and WEP. These bills have bipartisan cosponsors – 25 in the Senate and 181 in the House of Representatives.

Also, ask your representatives to support “Medicare For All” legislation (H.R. 676 in the House and S. 1804 in the Senate). These bills ensure universal access to high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans, regardless of employment, income or health care status.

Good News! Congress eliminated the annual therapy caps on how much Medicare pays for therapy, and streamlined the medical review process for therapy. An edited version of the CMS revised May 2018 Beneficiary Fact Sheet on Medicare Limits of Therapy Services is provided below.

Medicare Coverage of Therapy Services:

Important: This information only applies if you have Original Medicare. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO), check with your plan

for information about your plan’s coverage rules on therapy services.

In 2018, Congress eliminated the limits on how much Medicare pays for therapy services in one calendar year (also called “therapy caps” or “therapy cap limits”). However, for Medicare to pay for your services, the law requires your therapist or therapy provider to confirm that your therapy services are medically reasonable and necessary when they reach certain amounts each calendar year.

Your therapist or therapy provider will need to add information to your therapy claims and your medical record if your therapy services amounts in 2018 reach \$2,010 for physical therapy (PT) and speech-language pathology (SLP) services combined or \$2,010 for occupational therapy (OT) services. By adding this notation, the therapist confirms that your therapy services are reasonable and necessary and your medical record will include an explanation of why the services are medically required.

ASK YOUR REPRESENTATIVES TO SUPPORT “MEDICARE FOR ALL” LEGISLATION.

In addition, a Medicare contractor may review your medical records to be sure your therapy services were medically necessary when your therapy services amount in 2018 reach \$3,000 for PT and SLP services combined or \$3,000 for OT services.

Medicare doesn’t pay for therapy services that aren’t reasonable and necessary, therefore your therapy provider must give you a written notice before providing services that aren’t medically necessary. This notice is called an “Advance Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage” (ABN). The ABN lets you choose whether or not you want the therapy services and you will pay for them.

Call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to get free personalized health insurance counseling. To get the phone number for your state, visit shiptacenter.org, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. ■



John Marcotte, Director

Postal Support Employees Deserve Better

The USPS continues to fall short in its obligation to provide Postal Support Employees (PSEs) health insurance information that is vital to them and their families.

As I wrote in the September/October 2017 issue of *The American Postal Worker*, PSEs are not being informed upon conversion to regular that their USPS PSE insurance will be cancelled and they have 60 days to choose a FEHB health plan. If these new career employees do not choose a plan within 60 days, they will have no health insurance because the USPS will drop the USPS PSE insurance after conversion. Those PSEs who already have APWUHP Consumer Driven Option (CDO) plans are not being dropped, since APWUHP CDO is a high-performing FEHB plan and the coverage continues.

Now PSEs are suffering under an additional lack of information – or, quite frankly, misinformation – about the PSE health insurance offered by the USPS. I am getting heart-wrenching calls from PSEs who, after being informed that they are no longer eligible for Medicaid or subsidies for the Affordable Care Act insurances, have signed up for the USPS PSE insurance, the only health insurance available to them. Neither their local management nor HR Shared Services informed them of the high cost of getting sick with this insurance. The deductible for the individual is \$2,000 and \$4,000 for family! This is simply an unaffordable amount for working people to come up with before insurance starts to pay benefits.

USPS SHOULD PROVIDE HEALTH INSURANCE THAT IS AFFORDABLE FOR ALL ITS WORKERS.

Worse yet, some PSEs are being informed that once they signed up for USPS PSE insurance they are not allowed to cancel the insurance, threatening their ability to pay for rent and food. This is only true if PSEs select to pay premiums before tax. If PSEs select this insurance on a pretax basis they cannot cancel this insurance unless it is open season or they have a qualifying life event. We need to make sure our PSE brothers and sisters know this important information.

The truth is that the USPS should provide health insurance that is affordable for all its workers and not make employees pay for insurance that isn't there for them when they get sick or injured. Please reach out to all our PSE brothers and sisters, and try to get the USPS to provide all the information necessary for them to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

New 'Right to Try' Law

The President has signed the Right to Try Act, which is effective immediately. This law permits terminally ill patients, under certain conditions, to request drug manufacturers to supply them with investigational drugs that have passed the initial human safety test. The manufacturers are not required to participate. The APWU Health Plan should treat these claims most like we do clinical trials. If you have questions about this or any other APWU Health Plan issue, please contact me at 410-424-1504. ■

REGISTER NOW

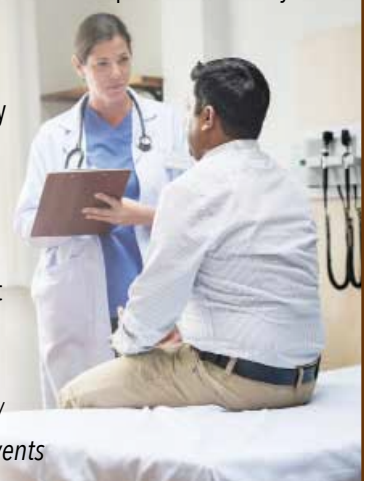
33rd Annual Health Plan Open Season Seminar

October 26-28, San Antonio, Texas

Registration is now open for the 2018 APWU Health Plan Open Season Seminar, which will take place from Friday, October 26 through Sunday, October 28.

This is a unique opportunity for APWU local union, state organization and retiree chapter to learn about recent changes in health care and how this will affect APWU members.

Online registration is available at www.apwu.org/events/category/national-events



Remembering APWU President Emeritus WILLIAM BURRUS

1936-2018

The APWU honored the legacy and celebrated the life of former President William Burrus, who died May 19 at the age of 81. At a memorial service in Washington, D.C., President Mark Dimondstein praised Burrus's leadership, calling him "a skilled negotiator and powerful advocate for postal workers and a strong postal service."

Burrus, the first African-American president of a national union directly elected by members, overcame poverty and discrimination growing up in Wheeling, West Virginia, serving first in the U.S. Army before settling in Cleveland in 1958 as a mail clerk at the Post Office. He quickly rose through the ranks of his union, joined in the Great Postal Strike of 1970 and was elected to serve as president of the Cleveland Area Local in 1974.

Burrus joined Moe Biller in 1980 to form a winning combination in the union's highest offices. With Biller serving as national president and Burrus as vice president, the two reshaped the union – putting the "fight" back in the organization, professionalizing representation and placing the union on a firm financial footing. Their partnership lasted more than two decades.



Staying in touch:
As APWU president, Burrus frequently visited postal facilities to hear about issues and concerns from APWU members.

As vice president, Burrus was instrumental in negotiating many of the union's most important achievements, including the "maximization clause," which resulted in the conversion of hundreds of thousands of part-time flexible employees to full-time; the return to the USPS of Priority Mail, which had been subcontracted; the application of the Family and Medical Leave Act; lifetime "saved grade" for thousands of LSM operators; and much, much more.



A Powerful Advocate

As President Dimondstein noted at the memorial service, Burrus is a guiding force in the union even today. "He was responsible for countless arbitration settlements and memorandums of understanding ... Local and state officers throughout the country still rely on what we affectionately call the 'Burrus Book,' a compilation of hundreds of settlements negotiated with postal management."

A Steady Leader Confronts Crisis

In the fall of 2001, as Biller prepared to retire and Burrus was elected president, the postal workplace was awash with fear: Anthrax in the mail killed two APWU members and sickened others. As the crisis unfolded, Burrus worked around the clock to protect employees and to restore the public's confidence in the mail system. He met with management and federal safety officials daily and held frequent conference calls with union members across the country.

His goal was to allay the fears of APWU members and the nation. At the same time, he warned management, "We will take whatever action is necessary to protect the health and safety of those we represent."

Early in his tenure, Burrus concluded that major mailers had hijacked the postage rate-setting process, robbing the Postal Service of desperately needed revenue through excessive "worksharing" discounts. Burrus understood that the discounts undermined the financial integrity of the Postal Service and circumvented the legal requirement of "universal service at uniform rates."



President Burrus addresses union members during a rally at the 2006 APWU convention.

for Postal Workers

And he never missed a chance to say so. In frequent testimony before Congress, as well as in scores of media interviews and editorials, Burrus routinely exposed excessive USPS postage discounts for what they are, telling a congressional hearing in May 2010 they amount to “a Ponzi-like scheme” hatched by the mailing industry that “Bernie Madoff would be proud of.”

Calling Out Postal ‘Reform’

Burrus also recognized the dangers inherent in postal “reform” and in the Postal Service’s frequent restructuring proposals.

He was harshly critical of the USPS “Transformation Plan” in April 2002, which called for the closure of small post offices, plant consolidations, increased worksharing opportunities and presort discounts for large mailers. “Postal officials have been brainwashed into believing that the concerns of the major mailers and the direct mail firms are superior to the financial stability of the Postal Service itself,” Burrus said at the time. “We cannot permit these cannibals to dismantle the best postal system in the world.”

In 2003, he denounced the formation of a commission handpicked by then-president George W. Bush established to propose structural changes to the USPS. He predicted that the panel would produce “a reform scheme that pleases major mailers and conservative ideologues.”

When the commission released a report to Congress six months later, it proposed to cut workers’ wages and benefits; end no-layoff protection; derail union bargaining rights; close postal facilities; end Saturday delivery, and privatize many aspects of the postal system.

With the future of the USPS at stake, Burrus launched an aggressive campaign to increase the union’s grassroots lobbying efforts and fundraising for the Committee on Political Action (COPA). As a result, the APWU was an important force in congressional deliberations, and the commission’s most objectionable proposals were dead on arrival on Capitol Hill.

Helping Members

In his final round of contract negotiations in 2006, Burrus helped the union make significant advances for postal workers. The Part-Time Flexible (PTF) category was eliminated from large offices and thousands of PTFs were converted to full-time. All APWU-represented employees were upgraded and the Transitional Employee category was eliminated from mail processing and customer service. Restrictions were placed on the number of casuals that could be employed, along with other negotiated improvements.

In his remarks at Burrus’ memorial service, President Dimondstein said, “Brother Burrus was forever proud that he and the union made a huge difference over many decades in the economic wellbeing of millions of postal workers. We can best honor Bill’s life by giving our best to our continuing just and noble fight.” ■

A Note from Ethelda Burrus to APWU Officers and Members

I just wanted to thank all of you for the flowers, fruit baskets, cards, phone calls and friendships.

I am so proud of my husband because he was a true union man and wanted the very best for working people.

I would like to wrap my arms around each and every one of you for giving us so many wonderful years.

As Burrus would say, “The Struggle Continues.”

Yours in Solidarity,

Ethelda Burrus and the entire Burrus Family



SOLIDARITY WORKS!

Union pride
on display at
Bakersfield
P&DC.

How You Can Join the Fight Today for a Better Tomorrow

The APWU bargaining team sitting across from USPS management is only as strong as our union is in all our workplaces. Here's how you can make a difference:

➤ **Participate in in your local Contract Action Team:** Sticker up on Gear Day, dial in for telephone Town Halls, and join APWU rallies and other events.

➤ **Bring a friend and co-worker:** There is strength in numbers! Invite a co-worker to join in the excitement of building a strong, active union.

➤ **Reach out to non-union members:** This is no time to sit on the sidelines. If there are non-dues payers in your facility, let them know that when they join APWU, we'll be stronger and have a better chance to deliver the wages, health care and retirement security we all deserve.

For the latest updates on contract negotiations, please visit:

APWU.org