

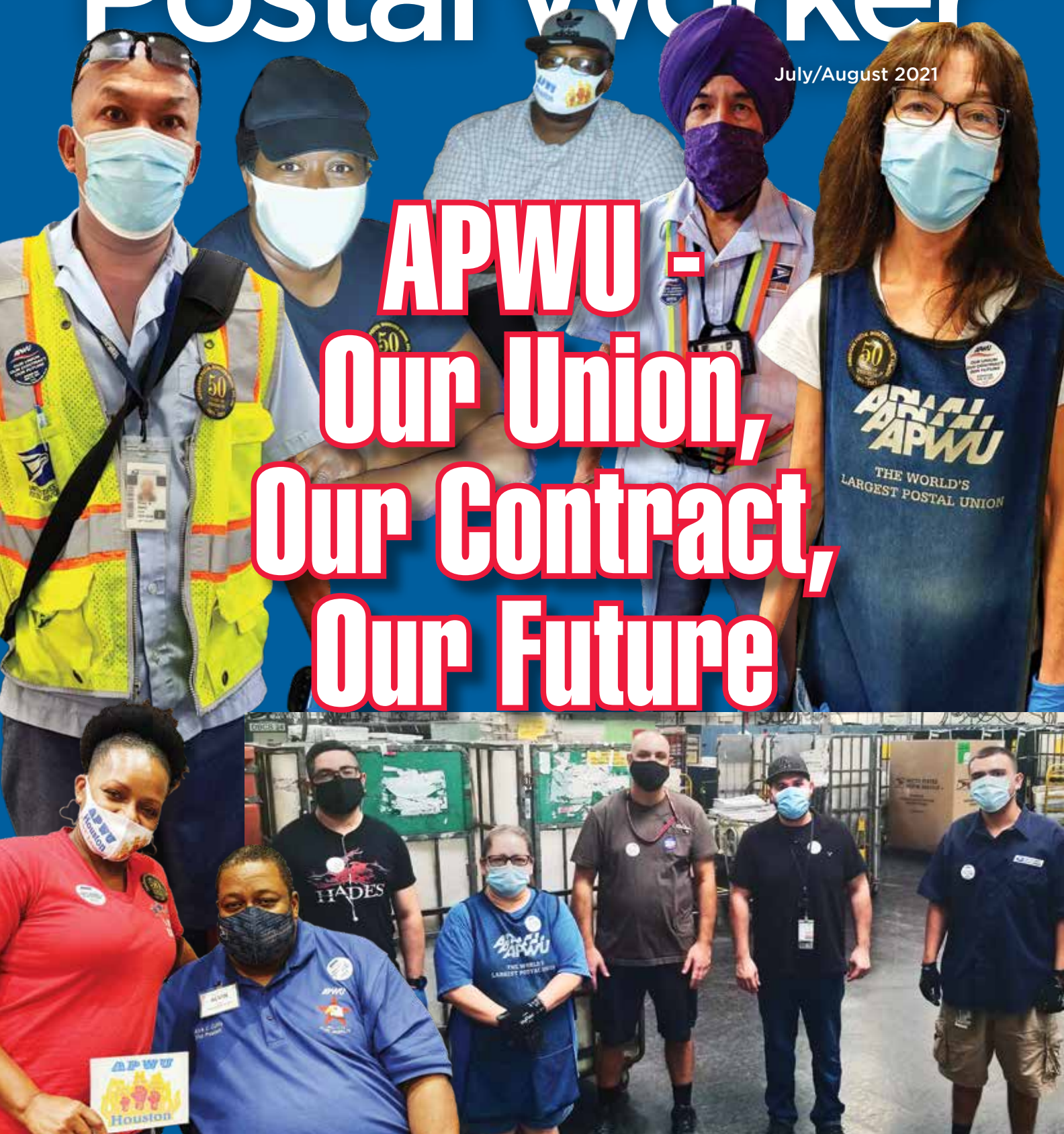
THE AMERICAN

# Postal Worker

APWU

July/August 2021

**APWU -  
Our Union,  
Our Contract,  
Our Future**



**Negotiations Start for New Union Contract. See p. 4-7 and 16**



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## ABOUT THE COVER

Contract negotiations for our new collective bargaining agreement with the USPS opened on June 22. Across the country members 'stuck' with the union, wearing stickers proclaiming APWU: *Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future!* See pages 4-7 and 16 for more information.

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## The American Postal Worker

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

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

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

Mark Dimondstein	President – Editor
Debby Szeredy	Executive Vice President
Elizabeth Powell	Secretary-Treasurer
Vance Zimmerman	Industrial Relations Director
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### SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENT

Judy McCann

### OTHER NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENTS

Daniel Soto	Rufina Pagaduan
James M. Patarini	

### PRODUCED BY THE APWU COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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



# Opening Day: Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

*As your lead negotiator, I was privileged to present the main comments for the APWU at the Opening Day of negotiations on June 22. Below are excerpts. My entire remarks are available at [apwu.org](http://apwu.org).*

**T**he American Postal Workers Union welcomes this opportunity to represent approximately 200,000 postal workers in these important negotiations for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement between our union and the United States Postal Service...

These negotiations take place in the shadow of the last seventeen months of the COVID pandemic, and there should be full recognition on management's part that postal workers have courageously stepped up to the challenge as front-line, essential workers. Under severe stress, we carried out our invaluable mission to the people with great pride and dedication – at a time when the people needed us the most...Postal workers have earned a good and improved union contract.

We have clear goals for these negotiations. As postal workers pour our lifeblood into the institution and its mission, we should be justly compensated for our hard work and enjoy an ever-improving standard of living. We should be provided a safe workplace, free from hostile work environments and sexual harassment, and after concluding our careers, enjoy a secure and dignified retirement.

Our members deserve good annual pay increases, stronger safety rights, an end to the unfair and divisive two-tier career pay scales, limits on subcontracting, more full-time career work, better work hour guarantees and rights for PTFs, a quicker and clear path to career status for PSEs and shorter workweeks with no loss of pay. We strive to protect hard won gains and job security provisions secured over generations, and for dignity and respect on the job. We will be putting forth proposals to address these and many other concerns.

We also approach these negotiations as an opportunity to promote our vision for a vibrant public Postal Service and expanded postal services for the people of the country. Our members and our union are passionate about the crucial mission of the public Postal Service, as outlined in the 1970 *Postal Reorganization Act*: "To

provide postal services to bind the nation together," to "provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas," and to "render postal services to all communities."

Today, this mission is in jeopardy, threatened by a congressionally-manufactured financial crisis, by those on Wall Street who would like to get their hands on the Postal Service's \$70 billion plus in annual revenue, and by ideologues who oppose the very concept of the public good.

We will put forth proposals for improving and expanding services from restoring delivery standards, expanding the network and hours of service, proper staffing and providing an array of financial and other services...

The solutions to [the Postal Service's financial] problems should fall to Congress, the Postal Regulatory Commission, and USPS management, not come at the expense of the workers... We vehemently oppose [a] "race to the bottom" for we believe that the Postal Service should [be] an incubator for good, living-wage union jobs for workers from all walks of life, with equal pay for equal work for women and minorities and solid job opportunities for veterans...

Collective bargaining and the Postal Service's Congressional mandate to be a model employer can contribute to resolving the shocking and growing income inequality in our country...

The key to the Postal Service's bright future is the hard work and dedication of hundreds of thousands of postal 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 negotiations are an opportunity for management to reward our dedication and hard work.

The APWU will approach these negotiations with a passion for the workers we represent and the public we serve....

The APWU is ready to get to work! ■

# Contract Negotiations Begin

## APWU Negotiating Team Delivers Remarks on Opening Day

President Dimondstein delivers remarks during Opening Day on June 22

On June 22, contract negotiations began with opening statements from Industrial Relations Director and chief spokesperson Vance Zimmerman, Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy, Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth 'Liz' Powell, and President and lead negotiator Mark Dimondstein. Postmaster General DeJoy also delivered remarks during the opening session. Members across the country tuned into the virtual broadcast over Zoom, and 'Geared Up' wearing stickers, wristbands and union shirts on the work room floor.

In his remarks, Industrial Relations Director Zimmerman emphasized the sacrifices APWU members made on the front lines of a global pandemic. He stressed that the APWU's priority is delivering a good contract that rewards this hard work. "The people we represent were declared 'essential employees' during the COVID-19 pan-

demic," Industrial Relations Director Zimmerman said. "Through it all, employees moved the mail, brought vital goods including medicine, paychecks, Social Security payments, birthday gifts, cards, letters, and even the stimulus payments to the American people.

"We want to see the employees we represent rewarded for their hard work, dedication and sacrifices to their home, health and their families," Industrial Relations Director Zimmerman continued.

Vice President Szeredy then introduced the union's core bargaining committee. In addition to the President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and Industrial Relations Director, the core committee includes Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, Maintenance Craft Director Idowu Balogun, MVS Craft Director Michael Foster and Support Services Director Steve Brooks. Secretary-Treasurer Powell read statements from AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson, and actor and activist Danny Glover.

President Dimondstein then delivered his Opening Day remarks, outlining the APWU's goals in negotiations and emphasizing the negotiating team's commitment to

*APWU – Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future.*

"As postal workers pour our lifeblood into the institution and its mission, we should be justly compensated for our hard work and enjoy an ever-improving standard of living," President Dimondstein said. "We should be provided a safe workplace, free from hostile work environments and sexual harassment, and after concluding our careers, enjoy a secure and dignified retirement.

"The key to the Postal Service's bright future is the hard work and dedication of hundreds of thousands of postal 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," President Dimondstein continued.

President Dimondstein's full remarks are available to read on [apwu.org](https://apwu.org). ■

San Jose  
Area  
Local



Tulsa Area Local





Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI-14)

# Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future

**O**n June 21, APWU members, allies, and postal supporters from around the country tuned in to a Virtual Kickoff Rally ahead of the Opening Day of negotiations for a new USPS/APWU collective bargaining agreement. The rally, emceed by Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell, built momentum and solidarity amongst the thousands of viewers heading into negotiations.

After a rousing opening video on the Great Postal Strike of 1970, Secretary-Treasurer Powell linked the 2021 contract negotiations to the Great Postal Strike of 1970. “The unions [50 years ago] were tired of collective begging and took to the streets. There was a lot of support for postal workers then as there is now, and as evidenced here this evening where we find ourselves issuing a rally cry for a good contract,” she said.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka spoke next, firing up viewers by declaring that the 12 and a half million members of the AFL-CIO would stand together with APWU members for as long as it takes to win a good contract. “Nothing can stop APWU members,” Trumka said. “Not the blistering heat or the freezing cold, and not even a global pandemic or man-made threats like the corporate interests

trying to deliberately slow down the mail and privatize your jobs.”

Following President Trumka’s remarks, Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard introduced Congresswoman Alma Adams (D-NC-12), who praised APWU members for their commitment to serving the people of the country during the pandemic.

“During this pandemic, one of the things that every American could count on was the United States Postal Service. You made sure that 800 million more packages than normal arrived on our doorstep. You made sure that our veterans and seniors received their prescriptions. You delivered 65 million ballots to the voting booth,” Rep. Adams said. “In short, you had our back and so it’s time that we have yours.”

NALC President Fredric Rolando offered the full support of the letter carriers, praising the strong partnership between the APWU and NALC during both unions’ respective negotiations and campaigns. NPMHU President Paul Hogrogian also spoke, urging all postal unions to remain united in the fight against subcontracting and privatization.

Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI-14), former postal worker and one of our strongest allies in Congress, said “I

want everyone who’s on this negotiating team to know you’re not just fighting for today...this is about the future of the Postal Service. This is about the workers and it’s about their families.”

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Liz Shuler linked the APWU’s negotiations to worker movements across the country, including United Mine Workers of America members in Alabama and opera stagehands in New York. “Workers all across the country are standing together and standing up for what we deserve,” Shuler said.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre also delivered a speech praising the APWU’s efforts in preserving our democracy during the 2020 election. “I’m here also to thank you for fighting, not just for yourself, but to save the Postal Service itself,” he said.

Bill Lucy, a founder of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists and APWU Cleveland Area Local member, sent a strong message to the management bargaining team: “The Postal Service is not for sale. Neither are postal workers up for sale. Whoever comes to the table to bargain with you guys, they come with this knowledge... we’re fighting for our future and we are union strong all day long!”

In his remarks, Industrial Relations Director and chief spokesperson Vance Zimmerman reminded APWU members of their critical role in preserving democracy during the 2020 elections. “We’ve been around for 200-plus years in the Constitution, but this is the year that we saved democracy,” he said. “So don’t ever underestimate, even though it gets frustrating on

the workroom floor for some of the things that go on. You saved democracy.”

Vice President Debby Szeredy reminded viewers about the importance of the negotiations in building our future. “It’s our whole future,” she said. “It’s for all of us, it’s for our community, it’s for the country.”

Rank and File Committee Chairperson Peggy Whitney, of the Minneapolis Area Local, urged fellow APWU members to Gear Up and show their union pride on the work room floor on Opening Day.

United Mine Workers of America President Cecil Roberts then inspired the rally with a crucial lesson from legendary labor organizer



Mother Jones: “You must fight and win, you must fight and lose, but above all, brothers and sisters, you must fight.” That’s what the labor movement is all about,” Roberts said. “We fight with you. We march with you. We rally with you.”

Former Communications Workers of America President Larry Cohen and chairperson of “Our Revolution” reminded viewers of the importance of these contract negotiations in improving the lives of not only postal workers, but those in the community who rely on postal services each and every day. AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Emeritus and Community Change Chair Arlene Holt-Baker echoed this message. “Your contract

will impact our relationship with how we deal with the Postal Service, and our community’s future. If your demands are not heard, respected, and met, we are going to have a problem,” Holt-Baker said. “We know clearly that a union contract is the only guarantee that a worker has to power and voice.”

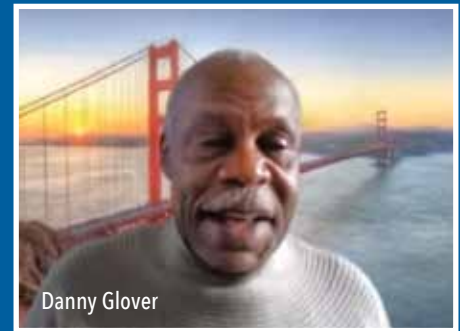
Retail, Warehouse and Department Store Union (RWDSU) President Stuart Appelbaum spoke next, thanking APWU members for standing in solidarity with Amazon workers in Bessemer, AL, and committing the RWDSU’s support to the APWU during negotiations.

Following speeches of support from A. Philip Randolph Institute President Clayola Brown and NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer Powell introduced Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson.

In her remarks, Nelson spoke about the importance of the APWU contract to the larger labor movement. “We don’t just stand with you out of solidarity, we need to stand with you because our own lives depend on your success,” Nelson said. “Our movement for economic and social justice stands with you. And we together are going to succeed!”

“It is good to just see this melting pot of power, of commitment and leadership all across the screen that has stood strong,” said National Coalition on Black Civic Participation President and CEO Melanie Campbell. “You know I’m there for you. We ready to fight.”

New York State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer and CBTU president Terry Melvin and Union Veterans Council President Will Attig spoke next, followed by actor and activist Danny Glover, who urged APWU members to take inspiration from the past in building towards the future. “We’re taking this moment in our time, in our lifetime to follow in the footsteps of those



who compete, who’ve negotiated, who fought, who found themselves in the center of the Civil Rights Movement and found themselves in the center of Workers’ Rights Movement,” Glover said. “That is where we are. This is what this moment represents.”

Coalition of Labor Union Women President Elise Bryant then roused viewers with a song and chant, before President Mark Dimondstein gave the final remarks heading into contract negotiations. He capped off the evening by reminding viewers the importance of unity and solidarity. “Management has to listen to us because we have power and leverage starting with the members of our union,” said President Dimondstein. “Building our solidarity starting with each other on the workroom floor, no matter what craft we’re in, no matter what our category is, whether we’re non-career, whether we’re career, whether we’re PTFs, PSEs, or Full Time Regulars, we have to be unified.

“Solidarity is the way forward for workers, for postal workers...Solidarity is not a one-way street, it’s a two—and three—and four—way street. And I’m proud that the APWU has a history of solidarity,” President Dimondstein continued. “So, brothers and sisters, as we enter collective bargaining, it’s important to realize that we’re not alone.” ■

Clips and video of the full rally are available to watch on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) and [youtube.com/apwucommunications](https://youtube.com/apwucommunications).

# Bipartisan Postal Reform Legislation Introduced

**“THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS LEGISLATION PLACES US ON A STRONG PATH TO PASS MUCH NEEDED POSTAL REFORM. THE U.S. MAIL BELONGS TO EVERY PERSON IN THIS COUNTRY AND IS NOT A PARTISAN ISSUE. THE APWU LOOKS FORWARD TO WORKING WITH CONGRESS TO SEE THIS SIGNED INTO LAW.”**

**– PRESIDENT DIMONDSTEIN**

**O**n May 19, Chairman Gary Peters (D-MI) and Ranking Member Rob Portman (R-OH), of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, led a bipartisan coalition of 20 original cosponsors in introducing the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2021* in the Senate (S. 1720).

This is a companion bill to legislation introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R. 3076) on May 11 by Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12) and Ranking Member James Comer (R-KY-01) of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. On May 13, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee “marked-up” and approved the *Postal Service Reform Act*.

“The introduction of this legislation places us on a strong path to pass much needed postal reform,” said President Dimondstein. “The U.S. Mail belongs to every person in this country and is not a partisan issue. The APWU looks forward to working with Congress to see this signed into law.”

“This legislation presents an opportunity for Congress to provide needed financial and operational changes to the United States Postal Service,” said Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard. “The bill will place USPS on the path toward financial stability by adding transparency to the Postal Service, enacting prospective Medicare integration, ensuring six-day delivery, and repealing the unfair pre-funding mandate.”

The APWU believes this bill provides a workable route to achieve a robust future for America’s public Postal Service. Call your Congressional Representatives by dialing 844-402-1001 and ask them to support postal reform.

Components of the new postal reform legislation include:

## **Repeal of the Pre-Funding Mandate**

H.R. 3076 and S. 1720 include a longtime priority of APWU: the *USPS Fairness Act*. The inclusion

of the *USPS Fairness Act* means that, if passed, this postal reform legislation would repeal the onerous pre-funding mandate from the 2006 *Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act*, which requires USPS to fully prefund the health benefits of postal retirees 75 years in advance. This requirement — that no other public or private entity is burdened with — is responsible for 84 percent of the Postal Service’s net losses since 2007.

## **Medicare Integration**

This legislation increases participation in Medicare by providing prospective Medicare integration. Current retirees will be given the option to remain in their Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) or join the newly created postal-only FEHBP and fully integrate into Medicare Parts A and B when eligible. Current retirees, age 65 or above, who exercise this option, and are subject to a late enrollment penalty, will be provided a one-time waiver of the late enrollment penalty. Active postal employees, as of January 1, 2023, will be automatically enrolled in the postal-only FEHBP and have their health care fully integrated, when eligible, with Medicare Parts A and B.

Postal employees who receive health care through the VA, live abroad, or live in an area that does not offer

Medicare will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B.

Approximately 80 percent of Medicare-eligible retirees voluntarily enroll into Medicare A and B. APWU members have found that having a FEHBP plan and Medicare improves their access to health care and saves them money.

Postal employees and the Postal Service have long subsidized Medicare, paying over \$34 billion in Medicare taxes since 1983. Postal employees, retirees, and the Postal Service can realize the benefit of those contributions through Medicare integration which will save the USPS more than \$40 billion over ten years.

### USPS Transparency

The bill would require USPS to set up a public “dashboard” on their website, which will publish weekly performance data. This data will allow postal observers to monitor any service failures, identify mail slowdowns, and pinpoint zip codes experiencing consistent diminished service performance. This added oversight will provide postal allies with new tools to fight back against consolidations and closures. These tools will also allow us to determine specific areas across the country in need of additional postal investment.

### Six-Day Delivery

In order to remain competitive and provide the kind of service people across this country deserve, this bill includes language that would protect six-day delivery. This provision is crucial. For those who want to privatize the Postal Service, any effort to degrade service often starts with paring back on the number of delivery days. Privatizers know that by degrading service, they can drive business away, undermine our public Postal Service, and justify privatization.

# Union Secures Third Historic Staffing Agreement

On June 21, the American Postal Workers Union and postal management signed a major new agreement to address longstanding understaffing issues in mail processing functions at the Postal Service.

Under the terms of the new agreement the Function 1 mail processing staffing will be increased with 3,741 new career positions. The agreement also establishes the additional conversion of at least 3,641 PSEs to career. In total, the agreement will result in 7,400 PSE conversions. These conversions will take place no later than August 14, 2021 and will be applied to 245 installations throughout the country as determined by management.

As part of this agreement, and in an effort to improve service provided to the public during the holidays, the APWU has agreed to extend by two pay periods (four weeks) the 2021 “Holiday Peak Season” in Function 1.

“This agreement is another milestone in our priorities of securing career positions for postal workers and providing first class service to the public,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “We’ve been relentless in urging management to address staffing issues. This agreement is another big step in the right direction and will undoubtedly better the lives of thousands of PSEs.”

**The new agreement is the third in a series that have increased total clerk craft career staffing by about 10,000 jobs, and created the conversion of 14,000 PSEs to career.**

The union remains committed to addressing similar ongoing staffing issues in Function 4 (retail) and will continue to press management to address the problems of understaffing. ■



Reduced delivery days can lead to fewer people turning to USPS when they need to send packages, job losses, and harm communities that depend on mail delivery. That’s why the APWU has fought to secure the six-day delivery provision in this bill. ■

The APWU believes this bill provides a workable route to achieve a robust future for America’s Postal Service. Call your Congressional Representatives by dialing 844-402-1001 and ask them to support the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2021* (H.R. 3076 and S. 1720).

# MEMBERS

## IOWA APWU MEMBERS AND LOCAL OFFICERS JOIN RALLY AGAINST PROPOSED CHANGES TO POSTAL SERVICE STANDARDS



Iowa APWU members and officers rally against proposed cuts to service standards in Des Moines, IA on May 19

### SEND US YOUR **PHOTOS!**

#### **HAVE YOUR LOCAL FEATURED IN MEMBERS IN ACTION**

*The American Postal Worker* is putting out the call to send photos of members at APWU local, state or retiree chapter sponsored events, community parades, picnics or any other civic event.

We want to highlight the great work that you, the members, do every day!

Anything from membership events, to supporting a picket line or an organizing drive for other union brothers and sisters, to participating in a community donation drive, to handing out flyers at a community event would be welcome.

Please make sure to follow all COVID-19 health and safety guidelines when taking photos, including wearing masks and social distancing. High-resolution photos should be emailed to [communications@apwu.org](mailto:communications@apwu.org)

# IN ACTION

ON STRIKE



(from l to r) Charlotte Richards, Chapter President John Richards, Joe Anthony, Chapter Vice President Joe Radovich rallying in Vandergrift, PA on June 9

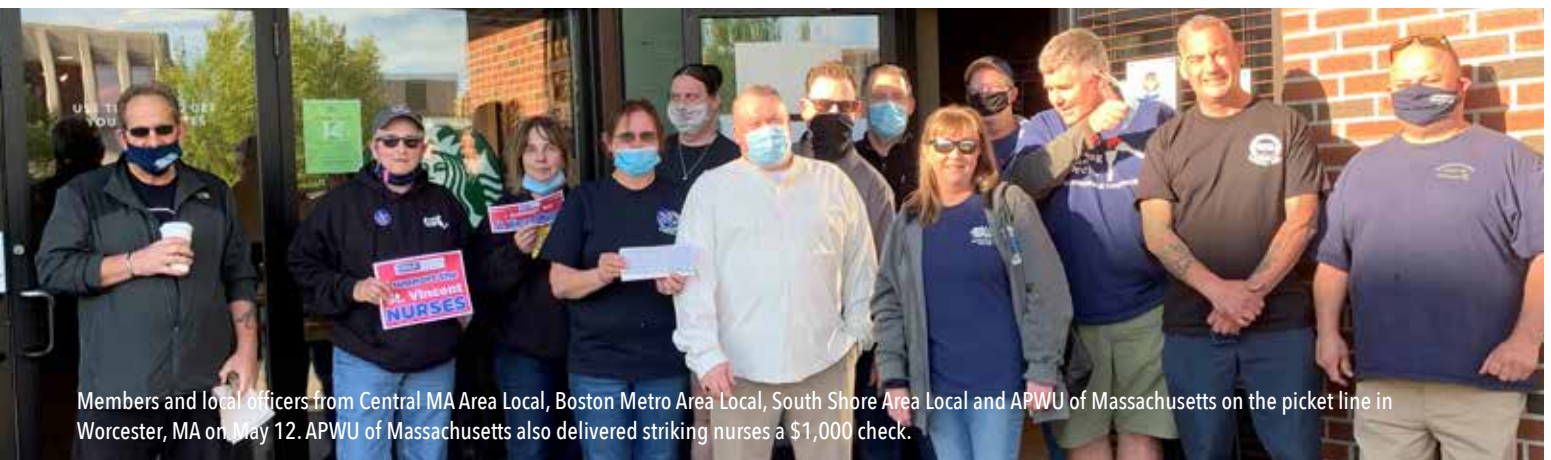
## PITTSBURGH METRO AREA LOCAL RETIREE CHAPTER MEMBERS RALLY WITH STRIKING STEELWORKERS

Pittsburgh Metro Area Local Retiree Chapter members joined United Steelworkers (USW) members striking against Allegheny Technologies, Inc. (ATI) in Vandergrift, PA on June 9. Steelworkers began their unfair labor practices strike on March 30, staying on the picket lines for over three months. On July 2, USW won a new tentative agreement with ATI that includes pay increases and preserves fully paid-for health benefits. The agreement is pending ratification by USW members as this issue goes to press.



## MASSACHUSETTS APWU MEMBERS SUPPORT STRIKING NURSES AT SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL

Central MA Area Local Vice President Norma Rivera (second from right) and President John Flattery (right) delivering diapers, formula and baby wipes to striking nurses. Read more about this strike on page 31.



Members and local officers from Central MA Area Local, Boston Metro Area Local, South Shore Area Local and APWU of Massachusetts on the picket line in Worcester, MA on May 12. APWU of Massachusetts also delivered striking nurses a \$1,000 check.



# APWU Fights Consolidation/Closure Plans

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

**W**e have the power to influence those who are the target leaders who can stop consolidations/closures. Work with me and our National Fightback Consolidation/Closure Committee. Your Regional Coordinators: Omar Gonzalez, Sharyn Stone, Kenneth Beasley, Tiffany Foster and AJ Jones.

**Who are the Target Leaders:** the Postmaster General, the Board of Governors, the House Oversight Committee, the Senate Oversight Committee, the Postal Regulatory Commission, Office of Inspector General, the Attorney General in each state (we have the ability to file lawsuits against consolidations that affect vote by mail elections), and the President of the United States.

Who has the highest authority of our country? **“We the People.”**

We can bring fresh energy to this fight. As a postal worker, you know where the failures began in 2012, when partial and full consolidations took place. Those actions were very costly and undermined service. It is our time to stand up and fight back against any new consolidations/closures.

## What We Can Do:

1. Mobilize members, unions, communities, businesses and mentors to take action together.
2. Make your voice heard in our political institutions. Lobby your representatives, build those relationships, and get them to take an action.
3. Utilize all newspapers and news outlets, television interviews, radio, and social media to spread the word.
4. Hold activities and actions that inspire the rest of the country to stand beside us and participate in pressuring those Target Leaders, who have the power to change the Postal Service’s course by going back to the 2012 Service Standards. That will reverse consolidations, bring back the necessary equipment to provide overnight delivery and build on parcel sorting annexes around the country.

## How We Start:

1. Collect contact emails and cell phone numbers of members and supporters for good communication access and include one-on-one contacts. Set up a local fightback

committee to discuss tactics you want to utilize to persuade the Target Leaders and build your community power.

2. List the Target Leaders and how you want to lobby them to stop consolidations and improve our service performance. Set up an action calendar for lobbying and other activist activities.
3. Collect contact lists of all media outlets and share information with your supporters along with suggested actions you want your supporters to take, such as sharing congressional support letters, educational stories, talking points on the consolidations/closures, join activities, town halls, etc.
4. Engage in actions, take pictures, share letters of support, review successes, and prepare next actions, until we have won protections against consolidations.
5. When called upon by the APWU Legislative & Political Department, engage in the multi-year ongoing union campaign, to restore service standards to those of July 1, 2012, which in turn would restore overnight mail at least within the same city.

If you are ready to step up and fight back, contact your local or state union president, and let them know what you are willing to do and the time you can donate to the cause. It’s all about making time and making your postal work a priority.

Support each other and be a family, because each of us have strengths. We can lift each other up and save our Postal Service for future generations. It is our time to make a difference. We are bigger than ourselves. Help make this change and do the work that needs to be done. ■

THE PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE

**KEEP 'EM OPEN!**

**IT'S A COMMUNITY RIGHT!**

# Closure of Operations at San Mateo Accounting Services Center Stopped

On April 12, the Postal Service notified the APWU that they were discontinuing operations at the San Mateo, CA Accounting Service Center (ASC) no sooner than August 13, 2021.

Support Services Director Steve Brooks and National Business Agent Judy McCann immediately met with the USPS to hear management's presentation on why this change was occurring. When evidence was requested to justify the move and reduction in staff, management could not provide adequate information.

The Support Services Division began mobilizing affected workers and gained community and political support to stop the plan.

On April 27, Director Brooks sent a letter to Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA-14), the House Representative for the San Mateo area, about postal management's intention and how it

would affect the employees, their families and the community. The APWU Legislative & Political Department also reached out to Rep. Speier's office to set up a meeting.

Zoom meetings were held with the affected employees. They were given a draft letter and contact information for their Congressional representatives, the Mayor of San Mateo, and Asian community organizations they could contact (79.3 percent of the affected employees are of Asian heritage). Members sent letters and made phone calls to their representatives. The group also planned a picket for May 22.

On May 6, Rep. Speier sent a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, saying she did not agree with the move. She demanded he provide data in two weeks to show the reasoning or she would request that a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study be done.

On May 14, postal management informed President Dimondstein that they would not be proceeding with the plan. On May 27, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed, stating that the workers will be satellite employees to the St. Louis office, but will process work from the San Mateo area. The APWU is meeting with management on a local MOU to resolve the internal processes on job posting, bidding, and area's union local representation.

"Stopping the closure of the ASC would not have been possible without the unity of employees in San Mateo," said Director Brooks. "Thank you for your dedication and commitment in this fight."

The solidarity inspired other workers and showed the "union difference." After seeing the importance of unity and strength in numbers during this fight, 17 ACS workers joined the APWU. ■

## JUNETEENTH A NEW FEDERAL HOLIDAY!

On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the *Juneteenth National Independence Day Act*. This law establishes June 19 of each year as a federal holiday. President Biden then declared it would be observed the next day, June 18, 2021, as June 19 fell on a Saturday.

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger announced in Galveston, TX the end of slavery in accordance with President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. This day has become known as 'Juneteenth' to commemorate the end of slavery

in the United States. Juneteenth is currently recognized by 48 states as the official commemoration of the End of Slavery and some states already recognized the day as a paid holiday.

There was a strong bipartisan support to make Juneteenth a federal holiday, the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. day was adopted in 1983, as the Senate voted unanimously in favor of the bill, and the House of Representatives voted 415 to 14 in favor of it. The APWU applauds the act of Congress in passing this law.

The APWU immediately demanded that the Postal Service recognize Juneteenth as a holiday. The Postal Service is one of the most diverse employers in the United States, and is also required under the *Postal Reorganization Act of 1970* to be a model employer for the country.

The statement issued by USPS Headquarters on June 17 gave the union an indication that this issue will be positively resolved in the future. As this issue goes to press, the APWU is continuing discussions on how the holiday will be recognized in the future and what "make up" actions the Postal Service will take. ■



# Is Your Union Constitution in Conflict?

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

*(This article first appeared in the May-June 2015 issue of The American Postal Worker magazine. Edits were made for space. The full article is available on apwu.org.)*

**Y**our local union constitution contains the fundamental principles by which the local is governed. Federal law requires local unions to adopt a constitution that has been approved by the members. Section 201(a) of the *Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA) states, “Every labor organization shall adopt a constitution and by-laws, and shall file a copy thereof with the Secretary [of Labor].”

Constitutions should address the following: Objectives and Mission, Membership, Executive Board, Stewards and Committees, Duties of Officers, Salaries and Benefits (if any), Meetings and Quorum, Elections, Dues and Fiscal Year Budget, Membership Protection, and Amendments and By-Laws.

Although most local and state constitutions comply with the law, some contain outdated language or language that conflicts with the Department of Labor’s interpretation of the LMRDA or with the union’s national constitution.

If a local constitution restricts rights found in the national constitution, the language is probably in conflict. If the language gives more rights to local members than the national constitution, it is generally not considered a conflict.

If language conflicts with a federal or state law or with the union’s national constitution, it can be removed or modified without applying the regular constitutional amendment procedures. Because the provisions are in conflict, they cannot be enforced and should be immediately corrected.

The following is language that frequently causes problems:

- The LMRDA requires local unions to elect delegates to state conventions by secret ballot if officers are elected at the conventions. Many locals have meeting requirements for eligibility to run for state delegate. The meeting requirements often disqualify too many members from running for office because members cannot attend the meetings; therefore, the Department of Labor has nullified some state delegate elections. We encourage locals to eliminate all meeting requirements for eligibility to run for state delegate.

- Local and state unions should remove any “recall” language in their constitutions. Article 14 of the national APWU Constitution prohibits recall elections. If an officer has committed an offense, the officer can only be removed from office under the provisions of Article 15 of the national APWU Constitution.
- Many local and state constitutions outline detailed procedures for charging members with violations of their constitutions. All charges must be handled in accordance with the national APWU Constitution. We recommend that local and state unions delete any such language and substitute, “Member charges will be processed in accordance with Article 15 of the National APWU Constitution and By-Laws.”
- Any member of a local or state executive board must be elected to office by secret ballot or be an appointee to a vacant office that is filled by secret ballot election. Local constitutions should not include appointed positions on the executive board. Candidates for elected office who run without opposition are considered to have been elected to office.
- The following requirements apply to local and state officer elections:
  - An election committee must be appointed to run
  - Advance notice of nomination meetings.
  - Notice that members may nominate themselves for office by mail must be given.
  - Notice of nominations must be given, even if offices are uncontested.
  - Notice of election must be given to all members at least 15 days prior to the election or the date ballots are mailed.
  - The election committee may not censor campaign literature.
  - The election committee must distribute campaign literature at the expense of candidates if requested to do so.

The Secretary-Treasurer’s Department is available to assist local and state unions with changes to their constitution and by-laws. If changes are made, a copy should be submitted to the Department of Labor when filing the annual L-M report. ■



# APWU CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY

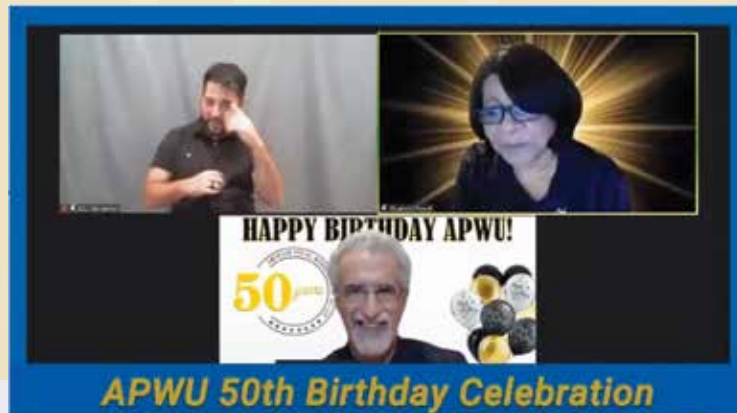
On July 1, the APWU held a 50th Anniversary/Birthday Celebration livestream event, commemorating a half century of struggle, solidarity and victory. Emceed by Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell, the event opened with a joyous “Happy Birthday” song to the APWU, followed by a slide show presentation of the union’s long history, beginning all the way back in 1864, through the Great Postal Strike of 1970 and the merger that created the American Postal Workers Union on July 1, 1971.

The event featured 15 speakers, including APWU national and local officers and retirees, who shared personal stories about their time working at the post office. The event featured a series of videos on the APWU’s history, including on the strike and merger. Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, MVS Director Michael Foster, Maintenance Craft Director Idowu Balogun and Support Services Director Steve Brooks each spoke about the gains won in their craft over the last 50 years.

Multiple speakers shared their experiences with the working conditions before the Great Postal Strike, and how the formation of the APWU and collective bargaining helped improve their lives. Before the strike, “eleven hours a day, seven days a week was the norm,” said Chicago Local Retiree Chapter Vice President Alvin Randolph. During the strike, Randolph said, “To my amazement, we stuck together, we hung in the fight, and we won...I am very grateful for what the APWU has done for me and my family.”

Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez praised the union’s values built over the 50 years of struggle since the formation of the APWU. “Our union is a fighting union. Our union is a progressive union. Our union is a very democratic union,” he said. “It’s in our blood, it’s in our history, it’s in our nature. Happy anniversary and happy birthday APWU!”

Secretary-Treasurer Powell reminded the members watching the event – from national and local officers to rank-and-file members – that they “have played an important part in APWU being the APWU,” and encouraged



Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell and President Mark Dimondstein during the event

members to “remember the struggles that we have been in, the fights that we have had, to get to the place where we are today.

“We hope that you take an opportunity to be active in your union, and we hope that you continue to support your union,” Secretary Treasurer Powell continued.

President Dimondstein reminded members of the reasons why we look back at our history: “...to honor those who came before us, who paved the way and plowed the fields, on whose shoulders we stand; to learn the lessons of our history, of our past as the struggle continues into the future. And to gain inspiration.”

In closing the event, President Dimondstein asked members to join him in a toast to all of those who came before us over the union’s 50 years of struggle. “Let’s toast our courageous forefathers and foremothers who stormed the heavens in a historic 1970 strike. Let’s toast those leaders that fought for the common good and merged into one, more powerful postal union,” President Dimondstein said. “Let’s toast everyone, known and unknown, who engaged in this struggle on the front lines, and built a better life not just for themselves and their families, but for those of us who followed, and those who will follow us.”

The full event is available to view on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) and [youtube.com/apwucommunications](https://youtube.com/apwucommunications). ■



# APWU Members Deserve a Good Contract That Rewards Your Sacrifices

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

**O**n September 20, 2021, the current collective bargaining agreement expires. The APWU contract is one of the largest collective bargaining agreements for workers in America today. In fact, it is the largest collective bargaining agreement that is being negotiated in the United States this year. Over the last 50 years the APWU contract has helped millions of hard-working Americans and their families of all races, colors, and genders become and stay part of the working class. Over the decades APWU members have proudly served the American people and kept the People's Post Office functioning through their tireless service. This is especially true today.

These negotiations come at a time after you proved how vital you are to the American people. You were declared essential employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. You tirelessly served the public moving the mail. But it was not just you; it was your families as well, who knew each day you went to work there was the possibility you would return home after exposed and/or contracting COVID-19. In fact, thousands of you did contract COVID-19 and sadly, we lost nearly 200 postal employees to this disease.

However, even knowing the risk, you showed up to work and moved the mail, ensuring vital goods, medicine, paychecks, Social Security payments, gifts, cards, letters, and even stimulus payments made their way to the American people. All of you brought a sense of normalcy to the country during a time of great upheaval and darkness.

Through an historic, national emergency that has been going on for over a year, clerks accepted or sorted the mail, maintenance employees kept machines operating and buildings clean, MVS employees hauled mail and kept vehicles running, and the employees who worked in customer care centers took phone calls. In the face of an unprecedented national election, you accepted the call and worked long hours, days on end without time off, all while showing commitment to the oath you took as postal employees. With your work in the 2020 election, the country saw one of the highest turnouts in its history. More eligible voters cast their votes than ever before due to the hard work of APWU members. We truly saved democracy.

Entering into these negotiations, your Core Negotiating Committee – consisting of President Mark Dimondstein, Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy, Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth Powell, MVS Craft Director Michael Foster, Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, Maintenance Craft Director Idowu Balogun, Support Services Director Steve Brooks and myself – believe it is time for you to be rewarded for all your hard work, dedication, and sacrifices. That is why in my Opening Day remarks, I looked Postmaster General Louis DeJoy in the eye and told him he needed to negotiate a good contract for the American Heroes who are part of the APWU.

**YOU CAN REST ASSURED ALL YOUR OFFICERS, OUR LEGAL TEAM, AND APWU STAFF MEMBERS INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS ARE DEDICATED TO GETTING YOU A GOOD CONTRACT.**

Your negotiating team has been working hard researching and developing our negotiating plans and proposals for submission. We have met with the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee on more than one occasion. The Core Committee has met multiple times and has ongoing weekly meetings to discuss negotiations as they progress. The first proposals were exchanged with the Postal Service on June 24, 2021. We also agreed to a series of “main table” meetings with the USPS and scheduled them at least weekly through September. Your Craft Officers have also begun to meet with their USPS counterparts on a regular basis.

Beginning September 6, 2021, the APWU and USPS teams will be “locking down” in a hotel for around-the-clock negotiations up to the expiration of the contract. Our goal is to reach an agreement prior to the expiration date. We will continue to update you as the negotiations go on. You can rest assured all your officers, our legal team, and APWU staff members involved in negotiations are dedicated to getting you a good contract.

*Solidarity!* ■



# Staying Cool and Hydrated in Extreme Heat

**T**oo many workers, including postal employees, are exposed to heat on the job, in both indoor and outdoor environments. Operations involving high air temperatures, radiant heat sources (e.g. sunlight and hot air exhaust), high humidity, direct physical contact with hot objects or strenuous physical activities have a high potential for causing heat-related illness. This summer has already seen record high temperatures in many regions of the country, even in places such as the Pacific Northwest where many homes and businesses are not equipped with central air conditioning.

It is important to stay vigilant in maintaining safe workplaces and looking out for one another. If it is too hot at your workplace, the A/C is not working or there is no potable drinking water available, submit a **PS Form 1767, Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice to your supervisor**. Mobilize other actions with your local union leadership and co-workers to ensure a safe workplace.

Heat-related illness can quickly progress from the initial symptoms to a medical emergency. We must all do our best to be aware of symptoms for ourselves and our coworkers.

Below are some of the signs of heat-related illness:

**Heat rash**, also known as prickly heat, is skin irritation caused by sweat that does not evaporate from the skin. Heat rash is the most common problem in hot work environments.

If experiencing heat rash, the rash area should be kept dry. Powder may be applied to increase comfort, but ointments and creams should not be used on a heat rash. Anything that makes the skin warm or moist may make the rash worse.

**Heat cramps** are caused by the loss of body salts and fluid during sweating. Low salt levels in muscles cause painful cramps. Tired muscles – those used for performing the work – are usually most affected by cramps. Cramps may occur during or after working hours.

If you or a co-worker is experiencing heat cramps, they should replace fluid loss by drinking water and having a snack, and/or carbohydrate-electrolyte replacement liquids (e.g., sports drinks such as Gatorade or Powerade) every 15 to 20 minutes. Avoid salt tablets. Get medical help if the affected person has heart problems, is on a low sodium diet or if cramps do not subside within one hour.

**Heat exhaustion** is the body's response to loss of water and salt from heavy sweating. Signs include headache, nausea, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst and heavy sweating.

Postal workers with signs or symptoms of heat exhaustion should be taken to a clinic or emergency room for medical evaluation and treatment. If medical care is not available, call 911 immediately. Make sure that someone stays with the affected person until help arrives.

Those experiencing heat exhaustion should be removed from the hot area and given liquids to drink. Remove unnecessary clothing including shoes and socks, cool the affected person with cold compresses to the head, neck, and face or have the affected person wash his or her head, face and neck with cold water.

**Heat stroke**, *the most serious form of heat-related illness*, happens when the body becomes unable to regulate its core temperature. Sweating stops and the body can no longer rid itself of excess heat. Signs include confusion, loss of consciousness, and seizures. **Heat stroke is a medical emergency that may result in death! Call 911 immediately.**

While calling 911, make sure that someone stays with the affected person until help arrives. Move them to a shaded, cool area and remove outer clothing. Wet the affected person with cool water and circulate the air to speed cooling. Place cold wet cloths or ice all over the body or soak their clothing with cold water. ■

## The Life You Save Could Be Your Own!

# CAT Liaisons - Union Strong, All Day Long!

**T**wenty Collective Action Team (CAT) Liaisons left the American Postal Workers Union's first virtual CAT Liaison training on May 21 "Fired Up and Ready to Go!"



David Yao

The liaisons were appointed to assist local and state unions with developing strong grassroots organizing and activism in support of the APWU's contract negotiation and other campaigns.

The National Campaign Committee (NCC) organized the training. President Mark Dimondstein, Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth 'Liz' Powell, Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard and Organization Director Anna Smith addressed the group and answered questions.

CAT Liaisons cover the Western, Eastern, Southern, Central, and Northeast regions. President Mark Dimondstein appointed the following CAT Liaisons:

**Janalee Banks** – Provo Local (UT)  
**Arrion Brown** – Nation's Capital Southern Maryland Area Local  
**Angela Ellington-Buie** – Dallas Area Local  
**Brendan Buettner** – Bakersfield Area Local (CA)  
**Michael Moriconi** – Tucson Area Local  
**David Yao** – Greater Seattle Area Local  
**Bob Waterhouse** – San Diego Area Local  
**Iesha Booker** – San Diego Area Local  
**Nancy Rolling** – Philadelphia PA Area Local  
**Tim Thompson** – Keystone Area Local (PA)  
**Tom Brown** – Richmond Virginia Area Local  
**Shavonne Mealy** – Western New York Area Local  
**Cynthia McNeilance** – Tulsa Area Local (OK)  
**Portia White** – Memphis Tennessee Area Local  
**Quanda Blackman** – Houston Area Local  
**Ronnie Watkins** – Greater Cincinnati Ohio Area Local Retiree Chapter  
**Bernard Juran** – Minneapolis Area Local  
**Jay Ridenour** – Traverse City Area Local (MI)  
**Charlotte Hiatt** – Indianapolis Area Local  
**Gabriel Medina** – Puerto Rico Area Local



Quanda Blackman

CAT Liaisons are the link between the national union and the field during campaigns. They will be contacting local and state presidents to help establish or re-establish CATs and to assist as needed.

CATs are the principal means of informing and mobilizing members around the union's campaigns. Originally called Contract Action Teams, the role of CATs has expanded to organize member efforts for all union campaigns. Local presidents who have formed CATs report increased union involvement, visibility and solidarity on the workroom floor.



Nancy Rolling

During the training, liaisons were equipped with content delivered through a variety of methods including interactive exercises, case studies, power point presentations, videos, breakouts and group discussions.

Our national leadership is committed to increasing member involvement in campaigns, as mandated in the 2014 convention resolution: *A campaign is a method of fighting for change that is rooted in mobilizing union members.*

Currently the APWU is gearing up for our *APWU - Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future* contract campaign and organizing members to show solidarity and support for the National Negotiation Committee's during contract negotiations. More than traditional methods of collective bargaining are needed to get a good contract. CAT involvement played a key role in obtaining our previous contracts. A show of strength is vital for our success during this round of negotiations.



Bernard Juran

The APWU will continue building momentum until we secure a good contract. There will be many opportunities – and much need – for members to get involved, and to include our allies and the community. Contact your local or state president about joining a CAT today! Presidents can email

CAT forms to [ncc@apwu.org](mailto:ncc@apwu.org).

**We are: Union Strong, All Day Long!! ■**

# APWU National Negotiations Committee Holds Virtual Town Hall Calls Ahead of Contract Negotiations

On June 15, the APWU National Negotiations Committee (NNC) hosted three separate virtual town halls for members ahead of the contract negotiation Opening Day on June 22. The town halls, held as Zoom meetings that were also livestreamed on Facebook, Youtube, and [apwu.org](http://apwu.org), allowed members to hear important information relating to the upcoming negotiations, including the timelines of events, negotiation goals, and the ways members can get involved on the work room floor during the contract campaign for *APWU – Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future*.

Emceed by Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell, the events kicked off with an introduction of the NNC: President and Lead Negotiator Mark Dimondstein, Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy, Secretary Treasurer Powell, Industrial Relations Director and Chief Spokesperson Vance Zimmerman, Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, Maintenance Craft Director Idowu Balogun, MVS Craft Director Michael Foster and Support Services Director Steve Brooks. Secretary-Treasurer Powell also introduced the regional coordinators: Eastern Region Coordinator AJ Jones, Northeast Region Coordinator Tiffany Foster, Central Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone, Southern Region Coordinator Kenneth Beasley and Western Region Coordinator Omar Gonzalez.

In his opening remarks, President Dimondstein reminded members that the overarching goal of negotiations is to improve working conditions and better the lives of postal workers, while management may come to the table with opposite goals. Negotiations, President

Dimondstein said, come down to “power and leverage” built by members on the work room floor.

“Management is not meeting with [the National Negotiations Committee] because we have fancy titles or put on nice clothes. They’re meeting with us because you as members have sustained and helped this union grow, and that’s where our power is,” President Dimondstein said. “And during contract time, we really have to build that power.”

## “What We Want to Achieve is a Darn Good Contract”

During the Town Hall that took place at 6pm EST, the first question submitted asked what the NNC’s goals were for the new contract going into negotiations.

“What we want to achieve is a darn good contract,” President Dimondstein said, before outlining two broad goals. The first is protecting our hard-won gains over 50 years of struggle, including the no lay-off clause, 50-mile limits on excessing, cost-of-living adjustments, seniority in bidding and grievance procedures. The second goal is enhancing and expanding, through bridging the gap between the two-tier pay scales, annual general wage increases, im-

proved scheduling, pay and benefits for PTFs and PSEs, and stronger service for the people of the country. President Dimondstein also outlined the APWU’s goal of eliminating harassment and hostile workplaces through bargaining.

Industrial Relations Director Zimmerman reminded viewers that APWU members can help accomplish these goals by showing union pride and solidarity on the work room floor. “We need you to be part of our negotiations. We need your participation – wear your union t-shirts and your stickers,” he said.

In each Town Hall, Directors Lamont Brooks, Idowu Balogun, Michael Foster and Steve Brooks outlined the goals for each craft in negotiations, and answered questions from viewers.

A Town Hall is available to view on [youtube.com/apwucommunications](https://youtube.com/apwucommunications), and on the APWU’s Facebook page.

**Registration is now open for the Town Hall events on August 24. Join us and hear updates on negotiations. Questions will be taken directly from the Zoom event, so register today!** [apwu.org/townhall](http://apwu.org/townhall). ■

## Last APWU Live with the President

On June 1, President Dimondstein held his regular “APWU Live with the President” event. During the event, President Dimondstein discussed the new bipartisan postal reform legislation and more on the 10-Year Plan and our fight to stop the delays. He was joined by Secretary-Treasurer Powell to talk about the Contract Campaign Kick Off Rally on June 21 (See page 6 for coverage of that event).

Both officers took questions from members on organizing non-members in the USPS, EFEL leave, proposals for retiree health care under the *Postal Service Reform Act* and the current threats to small post offices.

The full event is available to view on [apwu.org/live](http://apwu.org/live) and on [youtube.com/apwucommunications](https://youtube.com/apwucommunications). You can sign up on the webpage to receive updates and reminders to participate in the next Live.

# Alliance Drives Growing Opposition to Proposed Service Cuts

One key element of postal management's 10-year *Delivering for America* plan is proposals to lengthen the Postal Service's service standards. Service standards refer to the goal delivery time for the USPS to meet for certain classes of mail. Today's service standards for first class mail range from 1 to 3 days, depending on the distance a piece must travel. Management's proposals would lengthen that target to as many as five days and slow down billions of pieces of mail in the process.

A Grand Alliance was born in early 2014, in the aftermath of a similar Postal Service effort begun in 2012, when scores of mail processing facilities were closed and post office hours were reduced as the overnight delivery standard was abolished. Since then, the Alliance has consistently stood for a return to the 2012 service standards and fought to prevent any further erosion.

So when management announced their plans to further slowdown the mail as part of their 10-Year Plan, the Alliance sprang into action once again. Together with postal workers, the Alliance organized the public opposition to management's proposals and gathered more than 130,000 submissions to the Postal Service's public comment process on the proposals.

The comments came from folks from all walks of life. Postal workers, students, parents and grandparents, small business owners and more wrote into the Postal Service and the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) with stories about why they oppose lengthening the mail service standards.

Hundreds of people noted that the recent mail delays already caused them hardship as they pleaded for no further delays in the mail. Many wrote about losing business, or incurring late fees for bills that were not paid on time because of slow mail service. Making those delays permanent, they suggested, would only make it harder for them to conduct their affairs.

Many commenters noted that they have no real alternative to the Postal Service, as UPS, FedEx and other carriers do not serve their communities. With mail arriving more slowly, people expected to lose money, access to important services and many even worried about their

ability to continue to receive prescriptions and other time-sensitive material promptly through the mail.

The 130,000 statements submitted to the Postal Service for public comment far outpaced previous efforts. In the 2012 service standard reduction case, only 4,000 comments were submitted to the USPS. There's no question that the work of A Grand Alliance partners in reaching into communities and organizing around postal issues is central to the overwhelming response to these proposals.

**IT'S CLEAR THAT THE PUBLIC HAS GONE  
ON RECORD IN OPPOSING EFFORTS TO  
SLOW DOWN THE MAIL.**

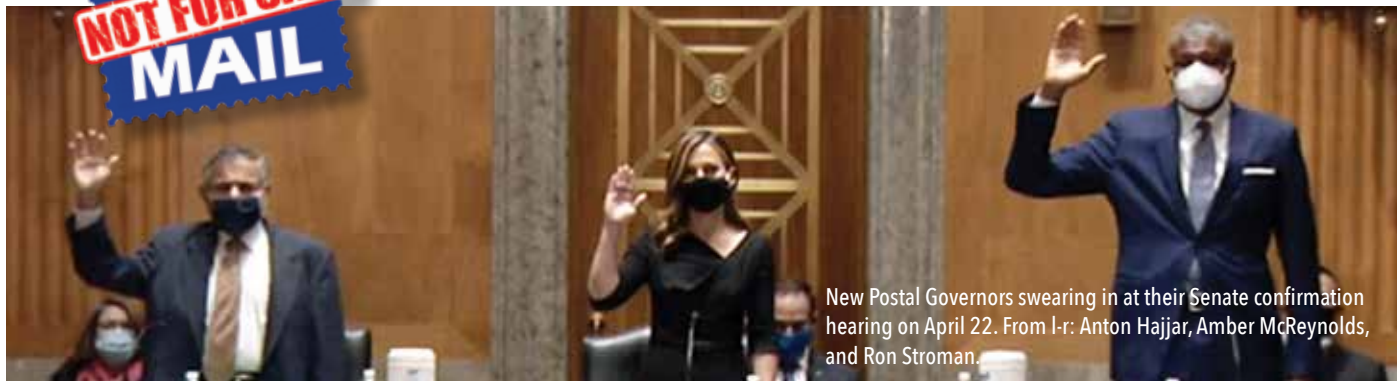
The comments were also referenced by several parties in the PRC's review of the Postal Service's proposals. The APWU submitted testimony that summarized the many comments submitted, in addition to its brief outlining why the union opposed the proposed changes. Public Citizen, the NAACP and the NAACP Legal Defense fund also submitted comments into the PRC proceedings. Attorneys general from 21 states, the District of Columbia and New York City also included reference to the Alliance's effort to generate public opposition in the proposals.

The proceedings in the PRC's review of the service standard changes concluded as this magazine goes to press and their advisory opinion is expected sometime later this summer. No matter the outcome of the PRC's opinion or the path the Postal Service ultimately chooses to pursue, it's clear that the public has gone on record in opposing efforts to slow down the mail. ■

**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](http://www.AGrandAlliance.org)**.



## Three New Members, Including Anton Hajjar, Confirmed to Postal Board of Governors



New Postal Governors swearing in at their Senate confirmation hearing on April 22. From l-r: Anton Hajjar, Amber McReynolds, and Ron Stroman.

**O**n May 28, Anton Hajjar, former APWU general counsel, was confirmed by the Senate to serve on the Postal Board of Governors. He joins two other recent nominees, Amber McReynolds and Ron Stroman, who were confirmed by the Senate on May 12. The Postal Board of Governors now has a full complement of governors for the first time in more than a decade.

“Our campaign to get new members on the Postal Board of Governors was about making sure those at the highest levels of postal leadership will work to secure a vibrant Postal Service for years to come,” said President Dimondstein, “Thanks to our collective efforts, these three people who understand the importance of investing in good jobs, postal infrastructure, and guaranteeing efficient service will now join the Board.”

The APWU is confident that Hajjar, McReynolds, and Stroman are pro-postal individuals who reflect the communities they serve and will fight to rebuild the kind of Postal Service this country deserves.

**“THE CONFIRMATION OF HAJJAR, MCREYNOLDS, AND STROMAN WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN LED BY APWU MEMBERS AND ALLIES. WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD OF OUR EFFORTS TO CONFIRM THESE NEW MEMBERS. OUR SUCCESS IS A REFLECTION OF THE FACT THAT, WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER, WE CAN SECURE A VIBRANT PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE FOR OUR COUNTRY.”**

**—LEGISLATIVE & POLITICAL DIRECTOR JUDY BEARD**

“The confirmation of Hajjar, McReynolds, and Stroman would not have been possible without the sustained campaign led by APWU members and allies” said Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard. “We are immensely proud of our efforts to confirm these new members. Our success is a reflection of the fact that, when we work together, we can secure a vibrant public Postal Service for our country.”

Earlier this year, we successfully petitioned the Biden Administration to swiftly nominate governors to the Board who would work to restore quality mail service and support an agenda of expanding the role of the USPS in serving our communities. Then, we contacted our Senators, making over 2,000 calls, and urged them to vote to confirm Hajjar, McReynolds, and Stroman when their nominations were brought before the Senate for a full vote.

After the November election, President Dimondstein and Legislative & Political Director Judy Beard brought the Postal Board of Governors vacancies to the attention of the Biden administration, urging them to promptly name pro-postal nominees. Many members of Congress echoed this request and we are grateful for their support prior to and throughout the nomination process. We appreciate the Biden administration for nominating three very qualified nominees and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) for their leadership and commitment to confirming these nominees. ■

### 130,000 Comments Against Degrading Service Submitted to the USPS

The U.S. Mail: Not for Sale Campaign worked with A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service and other coalition groups to fight back against the service standard delays component of postal management's 10-year *Delivering for America* plan.

Together, the groups gathered more than 130,000 submissions to the Postal Service's public comment on the proposal. Learn more about this effort on page 20.



# Investing in Retail and the Customer Experience – Clerks Care

Assistant Director Lynn Pallas-Barber, Director Lamont Brooks and Assistant Director Sam Lisenbe

**I**n an effort to offer more postal products and services and increase revenue, the Clerk Division has held several meetings with the Postal Service Retail Operations under the Retail Taskforce MOU. Our mutual goal is to generate revenue opportunities. We are currently unable to share the specific details; however, have created a joint Retail Focus Group involving retail clerks recommended by local officers. They are currently working on retail training opportunities. As our discussions progress, President Mark Dimondstein and Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks will keep the membership informed.

Retail Investments will consist of modernizing our existing retail network so customers have access to “new” postal products and services.

## Refreshing/Redesigning Retail Lobbies

- Lobby of the Future
- Line Queuing
- Drop and Go
- Dedicated Space Self Operating Post Office

## Facility Upgrades

- Repairs
- Expansions
- New facilities
- eCommerce network

## Investing in Employees

- Updated Uniforms
- Enhanced Training
- Expert mailing and shipping consultants
- Expanding Public Trust Services
- USPS as Government Storefront
- Accessorial Activities

## Investing in Technology

- Mobile Point of Sale devices – In March 2021, the Postal Service began the decommissioning of mPOS devices.

The Postal Service is looking into the possibility of purchasing and deploying 506 next generation mPOS devices for Peak 2021.

- Biometric Identity Services (EBIS)
- Language Translator Services
- Self Service Kiosks (SSKs) Intelligent Parcel Acceptance (IPAs)
- Informational Response APP (Tablet)
- SSK Pre-paid Acceptance Scans
- IPA Pre-paid Acceptance Scans – Proof of concept of utilizing Mobile In-Office scanners in conjunction with handheld printers to provide customers with a receipt for all pre-paid acceptance transactions.

## Grow Revenue at Retail Locations: Government Services

- FBI IdHSC – Fingerprinting
- FBI Identity History Summary Check (IdHSC) Program. Allows individuals to request a copy of their FBI background check for personal reasons, including: Adoption, Personal Review, Challenge a Record and Work, Travel and/or Live in a Foreign Country.
- GSA USAccess Pilot – PIV Card Program provides federal government agencies with identity credential solutions. This shared service gives an efficient, economical and secure infrastructure to support agencies’ needs
- GSA Login.gov - In-person proofing (IPP)
- Social Security Administration (SSA) IPP – USPS provides IPP to mySSA customers as an exception process for remote proofing or to customers who prefer in-person transactions
- CA MV Pilot - Department of Motor Vehicle kiosk in USPS retail lobby
- Passport Services

## Grow Revenue at Retail Locations: Accessorial Activities

- Package Wrapping Service
- Stamps To Go / Mobile Pickup
- Printing Services at Retail
- Special Postmarking Services

## Reinforce the USPS Brand to Provide a World-Class Customer Experience

Leverage training and development, build confidence in our employees to engage and retain customers.

### Lobby Redesign

- Open Concept Lobby
- Self-Service Kiosks (SSK)
- Line Queuing
- Drop and Go

### Retail Refresh

### Enhanced LSSA training

### Key Next Steps

- LSSA training launch
- Major and minor renovations in 49 postal retail locations
- Multi-functional tablet test to replace the mPOS device in 10 sites ends July 31, 2021
- SSA uniform refresh

## Technology Upgrades/Language Translator

Empower clerks to assist non-English speaking customers and pilot new Point of Sale technology that allows for full-service, self-service, employee assisted transactions. Over \$4 billion committed to invest in our facilities, technology and employees to improve the customer experience.

### Language Translator

- 41 locations
- Translates over 100 languages
- Operates through mobile data
- Provides audio and text for both the clerk and customer
- Works from 10 feet away to maintain social distancing ■

# Mail Processing Equipment Arbitration



Assistant Director Terry Martinez, Director Idowu Balogun and Assistant Director Jimmie Waldon

**T**he Maintenance National Officers arbitrated a section of Electronic Work Hours Estimated Program (eWHEP) on May 18-19, before a newly selected National Arbitrator, Margo Newman. The union framed our primary issue as:

*Did the Postal Service at the HQ Level violate the CBA when they unilaterally changed the process in which the number of operational tours for mail processing equipment is entered into eMARS (Electronic Maintenance Activity Reporting System) by local management for staffing purposes?*

**Background:** The total overall amount of annual staffing hours allotted for operational maintenance in eWHEP staffing packages are controlled by (1) the quantity and type/model of all mail processing equipment within the installation, and (2) the staffing/preventive maintenance MMOs (Maintenance Management Order) for that particular type/model of mail processing equipment and (3) the number of tours of operation (and days of operation) that mail processing equipment is entered as being in use.

Before 2018, as required by the CBA and several accompanying MMOs, the responsibility of entering the number of tours of operation for mail processing equipment properly fell under the purview of local maintenance management. This was based on local fact circumstance and firsthand knowledge of operations and maintenance needs within their installation. Local maintenance managers were required to manually enter the number of Tours (1, 2, or 3) in a field next to each piece of mail processing equipment contained in the eMARS inventory within the installation. Since each installation is open for 24 hours a day, local maintenance managers would always choose three tours. The issue affects every plant and distribution center in the country. It first became known to the APWU in January 2018 when the Central New York Area Local was provided a copy of the then-current, approved eWHEP staffing package and immediately observed that it identified an inexplicable reduction of maintenance craft duty assignments.

**APWU Position:** It is the union's position that the Postal Service violated the CBA, including but not limited to Articles 5, 15, and 19 when it unilaterally implemented this formula/software change and automated process, and that this unilateral change has adversely affected wages, hours and working conditions. Specifically, it has reduced the number of maintenance craft duty assignments authorized in eWHEP staffing packages. This in turn resulted in the reversion of maintenance craft duty assignments and the involuntary reassignment of maintenance craft employees across the country.

At no point in time was the National notified or furnished any information regarding the unilateral implementation of this change. Indeed, when the APWU questioned USPS HQ, Director Balogun was told no changes were made. This is a fatal flaw.

Additionally, it is the position of the union that the Postal Service's unilateral creation and implementation of a formula/software change that auto-populates the number of tours mail processing equipment is in operation, by design, violates Article 19 inasmuch as it bypasses local maintenance management from the process of exercising their authority to determine staffing needs based on local fact circumstance and firsthand knowledge of operations.

It is also the position of the union that each eWHEP MMO contains controlling language that states:

*"Local Management, with Area Maintenance concurrence, can adjust work hour allowances provided in the eWHEP program in response to local conditions. For mail processing equipment, adjustments can be based on factors such as: number, age, general condition of the machines; the usage by mail processing operations; the maintenance window's length and, the variety of non-standard processing equipment."*

As a remedy, the union requests that the Postal Service return to the practice of allowing the manual entry of the number total number of tours in eWHEP in accordance with the CBA and accompanying MMOs, as was the case before 2018, and to make the bargaining unit whole for any staffing hours affected by the automatic population of tours. ■

# Das 110 HCRs Noncompliance Award Issued



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Kenneth Prinz

**I**n our continuing commitment to require postal management's compliance with the August 2016 arbitration decision rendered by national arbitrator Shyam Das in case Q06-4Q-C 11182451, the parties recently received a decision from Arbitrator Das dated June 4, 2021 where he ruled that the USPS had not complied with his August 2016 decision.

The APWU invoked the arbitrator's retained jurisdiction in November, complaining that the USPS had not insourced the 110 HCRs into PVS assignments within 6 months (February 2017) of the Award as ordered. Although the parties had entered into two MOUs to effectuate the award, and despite the APWU's cooperation in attempting to insource this work, the Postal Service still failed to comply.

Based on the evidence presented at the November noncompliance hearing, Arbitrator Das found that:

- 74 of the 110 HCR routes had been converted to PVS by the end of 2018.
- Only six additional routes were converted in 2019.
- By November 20, 2020, 90 of the 110 routes had been converted.

During the November hearing, the APWU asked for a monetary remedy and an order requiring the Postal Service to keep all 110 PVS routes as PVS until four years after all 110 routes had been converted from HCR to PVS.

In response to the union's request for an award to effectuate his 2016 ruling, Arbitrator Das agreed with the APWU that we are entitled to an appropriate additional remedy. He rejected the Postal Service's contention that the union acted unreasonably when it rejected some Postal Service initiative attempts that could have adversely affected our members of the bargaining unit.

Das ruled that "...the PVS bargaining unit as a whole has been harmed by the Postal Service's failure to convert the work at issue as provided for in the 2016 HCR Award and subsequent May 2017 MOU. The evidence may not establish that the Postal Service has acted in bad faith, but it also has not maximized its efforts to comply over a lengthy period of years."

As a remedy for the Postal Service's failing to comply with the award, Arbitrator Das ordered the Postal Service to provide the bargaining unit a monetary remedy "based on the number of additional hours that would have been worked on unconverted routes if they had been timely converted during the periods from January 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020, and prospectively, from July 1, 2021 until the conversions are completed."

He ordered that "[t]he Union will be responsible for ensuring that the amount so paid is expended for the benefit of PVS employees in the bargaining unit."

He also ordered the Postal Service to:

- Complete conversion of the 110 routes (as soon as reasonably practical);
- Provide the union, within 45 days, a timetable for the complete conversion of the 110 routes; and
- Comply with the commitments made in the parties' May 2017 and May 2018 MOUs regarding compliance with the 2016 Award. ■

## Hyundai Trailer Safety Update

In the last issue of *The American Postal Worker*, we reported that authorized MVS representatives participated in the Virtual First Article Testing of the Hyundai trailers to be added into the USPS fleet.

During the testing of these trailers, the APWU raised the issue of the holes in the floor used for locking equipment such as the Over the Road (OTR's) and Wire Cages while transporting had not been included.

The USPS response to this issue was that they did not feel that this feature was necessary and the leased trailers in the past had not been equipped with this safety feature.

Knowing the importance of this safety feature, the MVS Division remained steadfast and continued to impress that this safety feature was needed and only enhanced the drivers' ability to properly secure the load, and to effectively and efficiently move the mail safely.

Postal management recently reversed their decision and agreed to install the floor stack pockets into the bed to the trailers.

*"It pays to belong."*

# Negotiations with USPS and Private Sector



Director Steve Brooks

**N**egotiating new and successor collective bargaining agreements during this COVID-19 period has proved to be very challenging. The Support Services Division has had multiple contract negotiations going on simultaneously over the past several months.

At the time of the writing of this article, we have completed the non-economic articles of an initial collective bargaining agreement for our newest group of APWU represented bargaining unit employees at the Human Resource Shared Service Center (HRSSC) in Greensboro, NC.

Negotiations for the economics are just beginning. This will prove to be a challenging process. I believe it may be the first time for the APWU to have to restructure a pay schedule from an EAS scale and create a bargaining pay schedule to put the employees into.

We have been in negotiations with the Postal Service for a successor agreement for the Information Technology/Accounting Services units since June of 2020. We believe that an agreement on the non-economic issues is close and will be entering into the economic talks for this agreement soon.

We have an unusual situation regarding one of our private sector collective bargaining agreements. We represent workers employed by a company called Hollingsworth LLC. The company is contracted by the Postal Service to perform Mail Transport Equipment Service Center (MTESC) work.

The collective bargaining process for these agreements is different in a sense when compared to the process we have in place for our APWU postal contracts. The negotiation process itself is similar in that the parties get together and propose and counter-propose changes to the successor agreement. This process was done, and the negotiating teams came to an agreement on the terms of the successor agreement.

The next step illustrates the difficulty in negotiating in the times of COVID-19 and social distancing. We made the decision to conduct a Zoom conference to go over the terms of the agreement with the members in that unit. Unfortunately, not many members were on the call.

Also shortly after negotiations finished, a worker misread a notation on their paystub, leading to a misunderstanding about the new terms of the tentative agreement.

Since we did not have the opportunity to address this with the members prior to their vote due to their non-participation in the Zoom process, the error was spread by the employees as truth throughout the worksite and everyone believed it, so they did not ratify the terms. We then conducted an in-person question and answer session and new ratification vote on June 11, 2021. When it was clarified what the notation was on their paychecks, they overwhelmingly ratified the terms of the agreement.

There are differences between the negotiation process for postal agreements and private sector agreements. For postal contracts, if an agreement is not made either through negotiation or a ratification process, there is an interest arbitration process for the parties. For private-sector agreements that we negotiate there is no interest arbitration process.

The parties attempt to renegotiate but if the company declares that the terms that have been agreed to during the negotiation process are the company's final best offer, decisions need to be made. The company then has the right to declare an impasse and invoke all, some, or none of the tentatively agreed upon terms and declare that the collective bargaining agreement.

The union members have a couple of options. They could sanction a strike, or they can conduct another ratification vote in attempt to approve all of the terms tentatively agreed upon rather than risk losing them if the company invokes a contract on them.

As we enter the negotiation process for a successor USPS/APWU Collective Bargaining Agreement we can be thankful that we have an option to go to binding interest arbitration if the parties are too far apart on the terms through the negotiation process. We do not always like the risk of having a neutral arbitrator determining the terms of our agreement, but the process for the private sector is much less appealing. ■

## SOUTHERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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



Kenneth Beasley, Southern Regional Coordinator

# Postal Workers Weathered the Storm

**T**he past 15 months has been challenging and stressful for postal workers. The COVID-19 pandemic spared no one, touching almost everyone in some way, and it still is not totally eradicated.

I would be remiss if I did not thank our local and state union representatives, and our dedicated National Business Agents, who were determined and relentless in their plight to get management to cooperate in unison with the union in getting the COVID-19 health and safety information out to all postal employees.

Our national, state and local union leaders' efforts and dedication to heighten awareness so postal workers could properly protect themselves from the deadly virus prevented many more employees from getting sick.

We are still in the storm, but there is hope now that we have proven vaccines to protect us all, along with masks, hand-washing and social distancing. We all hope the worst is behind us.

### Déjà Vu All Over Again

It is amazing and unbelievable that the Postmaster General is planning to implement a version of the same "answer" to the Postal Service's financial problems that we know does not work: closing and consolidating plants.

EVERY UNION MEMBER CAN GET INVOLVED IN BUILDING THE STRENGTH OF OUR UNION IN MANY WAYS. ONE WAY IS BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS IN A SUPPORTIVE MANNER.

It also is amazing that his 10-Year Plan is supposed to improve the efficiency of the Post Office, but some of management's ideas are contradictory to what any progressive agency or company would do to improve service. It is hard to understand why the USPS, while be-

ing such a gigantic and viable agency and after all these years, has not figured out ways to become innovative and creative in coming up with an operational process to speed up delivery, preserve efficiency and the integrity of the public Postal Service altogether.

Too many "ideas" are on the backs of postal workers and the public, and do not secure thriving public postal services. You cannot say slowing down mail delivery in a world of advanced technology and expected instant gratification is being efficient. The plan will drive more customers away, not preserve the U.S. mail.

### Confidence in Your Leaders and Each Other

Confidence in our leaders during contract negotiation time is paramount. The members on the work room floor elected the APWU leaders, at the local and national level because of their confidence in them. The best thing that you can do is to let them know that you support them, and not waver. You will be surprised how much strength it gives our negotiating team when we are clearly united on the workforce.

Every union member can get involved in building the strength of our union in many ways. One way is building a relationship with your co-workers in a supportive manner. I always said that a true trade unionist wakes up every morning and goes to work fully energized and enthusiastic, making the workplace a union hall, and looking to build solidarity in order to strengthen our union. So let us all try to focus on coming together and showing good will toward each other, so we can altogether work to attain our goals together. An African proverb says, "if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

All of our APWU leaders including myself and my fellow coordinators, Central Region Coordinator Sharyn Stone, Eastern Region Coordinator AJ Jones, Northeast Coordinator Tiffany Foster and Western Region Coordinator Omar Gonzalez, are committed and determined to continue to fight for the success of the APWU, and for your job security at the Postal Service.

Yours in 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 (PPA). For more information on the PPA, visit [apwupostalpress.org](http://apwupostalpress.org) or email [ppa@apwupostalpress.org](mailto:ppa@apwupostalpress.org).

"I always stress that it is so crucial that everyone is a member of the APWU, so please make a point this week to let a non-member know just how much they are needed to help keep our organization strong and vibrant. We are facing battles at every corner and need the involvement of everyone. Organizing our workplace is one of the most vital goals of the APWU. We are under relentless attacks at every juncture and we need everyone to help in the battle for our futures!"

– Joe Paul  
APWU of Florida President  
*Florida Postal Worker*

"Why wouldn't you be a member? The pay each of us earns is reason enough to be a member! Do you really think that during these times of COVID-19 that other businesses have not cut back, laid off, reduced wages, reduced hours for fulltime hourly employees? We have guarantees and get overtime pay as well as penalty pay and night and Sunday premium. You have the grievance process to utilize. You get a pension! You get very reduced health premiums. There is the no layoff clause and much more. So, it is the right thing to do being a member. You reap many benefits for being a member and it is truly a small price to pay for all you get."

– Jim Henry,  
Minneapolis Area Local BMC/NDC Coordinator  
*The Northern Light*

"Never in my 33 years working for the Postal Service have I seen a holiday season so bad that mail delays extended into March. Since October 2020, nearly every inch of the workroom floor is covered with mail, with cardboard and sacks. Aisles so crowded you can barely walk through them. Tractor trailers lined up on Highland Avenue for hours because there are no open dock bays and trailers full of mail that can't be unloaded because there is no room to put the mail. Yes, we are facing unprecedented times. Not only is the virus impacting staffing levels but it is also keeping people home which means more online shopping. The 2020 election brought record levels of mail-in ballots and Postmaster General DeJoy's initiatives have caused more chaos than stability. Of course, the removal of DBCS and AFCS machines from the plant did not help matters."

– Andy Kubat  
Lehigh Valley (PA) Area Local President  
*Lehigh Valley Visions.*

"Are you looking to get involved with your local? This is a great time to become a shop steward. We need members that are willing and ready to hold management to the Collective Bargaining Agreement. We can't do this alone. We need members like you to protect the rights of the membership and stop the violations that go on day-to-day. City stations and AOs, you need to have a stop steward at your location. If you do not have a shop steward at your location, then this might be the time for you to step up and represent. If you know you can make a difference and you are tired of management thinking they can do whatever they want, then this is the job for you."

– Kerri Jackson  
Raleigh Cosmopolitan Area Local  
*The Rank and Filer*

## Workers Defeat New Hampshire Attempt to Pass Anti-Union “Right-to-Work” Law

On June 3, workers defeated an attempt in the New Hampshire House of Representatives by anti-union forces in the state to pass so-called “right-to-work” legislation. If passed, unions would have been barred from collecting dues from all the workers they represent, even as “free-riders” receive the benefits of collective bargaining agreements.

The bill (*Senate Bill 61*) passed 13-11 in the state Senate in February. Had the House passed the bill, Governor Chris Sununu (R) was prepared to sign it into law. However, the House voted 199-175 against its passage. 20 Republicans joined every House Democrat in voting against the bill. Following the first vote, the House then voted 196-178 to indefinitely postpone the legislation, meaning that “right-to-work” cannot be brought up for another vote in the chamber until 2023 at the earliest.

Anti-union forces have long attempted to pass “right-to-work” legislation in the state, failing in 2011, when then-Governor John Lynch (D) vetoed a bill, and again in 2017 when the House voted against it. “*Senate Bill 61* would allow an individual to be represented without bearing any of the costs,” said State Rep. Chris Soucy (D-Concord). “This is just not fair. Union association would be the only business association forced to provide representation without compensation.”

## Brazilian Public Cleaning Workers Win Vaccine Prioritization Following Strike



CONASCON

Street cleaning workers after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine

On June 8, cleaning workers in Brazil’s largest city of São Paulo held a 24-hour strike, protesting the failure of the city government to prioritize them in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The cleaning workers, called *garis*, are those who collect garbage and clean the city streets in Brazil. Throughout the pandemic, these workers have been on the front lines, sanitizing their communities while risking exposure to the virus.

Vaccine distribution has been slow in Brazil under the right-wing government of President Jair Bolsonaro. As of June, the country has one of the highest infection and death rates from COVID-19. In São Paulo, only 27 percent of residents have received one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine, with only 11 percent of the city fully vaccinated. Over 2,000

*garis* contracted COVID-19 during the pandemic, with more than 50 deaths.

Brazilian labor confederation Conascon sent requests to multiple government officials asking for the cleaning workers to be placed in the vaccine priority list. After receiving no answer, workers went on strike, marching to the City Hall of São Paulo. Following the strike, the government moved to add the *garis* to the priority list, providing 300 doses per day to the workers. *Garis* across São Paulo began receiving shots the week of June 14.

“It’s exciting to see the category being vaccinated,” said Roberto Alves, president of the SIEMACO union. “Vaccine doses represent not only immunization, but also hope for better days.” ■

## Educators at Chicago Charter Schools Win Tentative Agreement Following Two-Day Strike

On June 10, teachers and staff represented by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) reached a tentative agreement with charter school operator Urban Prep, following a two-day strike by workers. The educators, who voted unanimously to strike in a May vote, began their work stoppage on June 7 at all three of Urban Prep's campuses in the city.

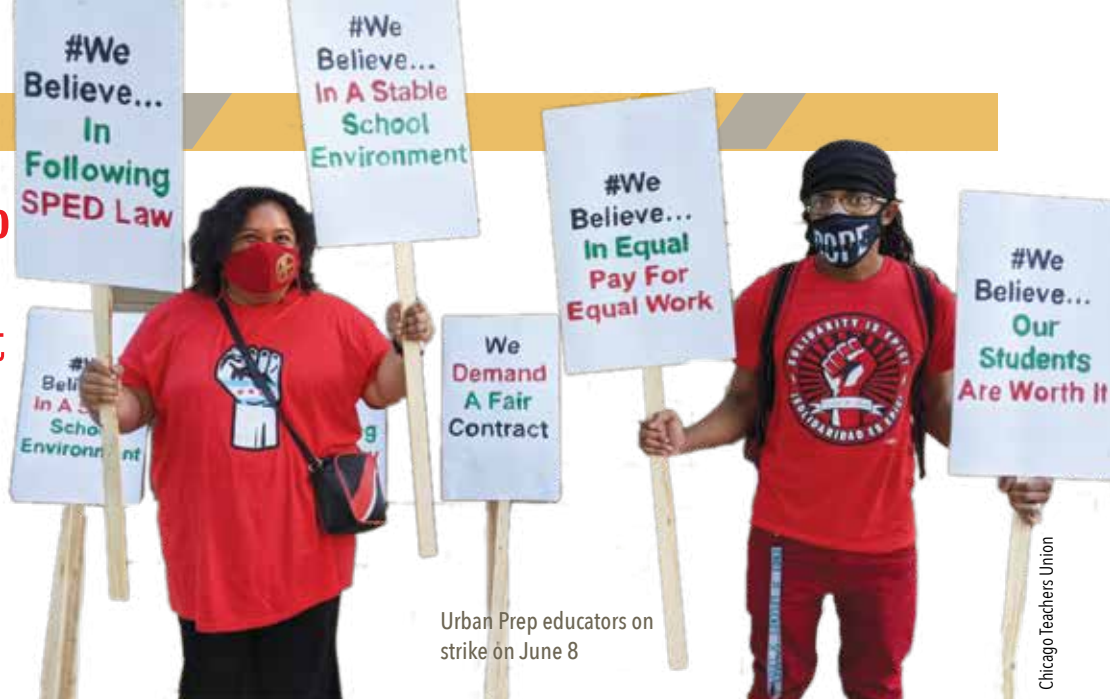
Going into the strike, workers' central demand was an improvement to the charter network's special education resources. According to the CTU, management refused to adequately fund these

services for the nearly 3 in 10 students in the network who qualified for them.

"We have been trying to land an agreement that respects our students, our families and the educators who serve them for three years," said Urban Prep math teacher Dana Wilson before the strike. "Roughly 30 percent of our students need special education services that

are chronically shortchanged. Classrooms desperately need resources and our schools need stable staffing, instead of bloated bureaucracies and foot-dragging on vital student needs."

In the agreement, Urban Prep committed to follow all special education laws, and teachers won additional paid leave, back pay for three years they were denied raises, and salary increases. ■



Urban Prep educators on strike on June 8

Chicago Teachers Union

## Over 2,000 Meat Packing Workers in Sioux Falls, SD Win Tentative Agreement Following Strike Authorization

On June 10, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 304a reached a tentative agreement with Smithfield Foods on a new contract for over 2,000 workers at its meatpacking facility in Sioux Falls, SD. The agreement followed the workers voting 98 percent in favor of striking on June 7, after the company refused to offer a good contract during three months of negotiations.

The Sioux Falls facility is responsible for over 5 percent of the pork supply in the United States. In April 2020, the plant closed in the midst of a COVID-19 outbreak. However, under pressure from Smithfield and other meat companies, the Trump administration forced meat packing facilities to stay open. While workers were forced back to work, companies neglected to protect them during the pandemic. At the Sioux Falls Smithfield plant, nearly 1,300 workers contracted the virus.

Even after the workers continued to do their dangerous work during the pandemic, Smithfield still refused to offer wages in line with other pork plants in the region. Following the strike authorization, Smithfield finally agreed to raise the starting wage, as well as provide bereavement leave and a one-time bonus.

"I don't think that [Smithfield] realized how tired our workers are right now," UFCW Local 304a Business Agent Tina Gonzalez told *SDPB Radio*. "I don't think that they realized and really understood that [workers] would much rather struggle for a couple of weeks or even a month of going out on strike than continue to work under the conditions that they were."

## The Struggle Continues in Alabama as 1,100 Coal Miners Remain on Strike



UMWA President Cecil Roberts speaks to striking miners at a rally in Alabama

In the May-June 2021 issue of *The American Postal Worker*, we reported on the Warrior Met Coal Miners' strike in Alabama, which began on April 1. During negotiations both before and during the strike, Warrior Met refused to offer good wages and benefits, instead demanding drastic concessions from the workers. The miners vowed to stay on the picket line as long as it takes to win a good contract.

Warrior Met's refusal to bargain in good faith insults the workers who sacrificed for the company when it faced bankruptcy in 2015. That year, the miners accepted a bankruptcy contract with \$6/hour pay cuts, longer work weeks, and the loss of overtime compensation, all while upper management received bonuses. Now, with Warrior

Met in stronger financial health (the company had a net income of \$300 million in 2019) and executives receiving millions of dollars in compensation, the company still refuses to offer its workers a fair contract.

"The APWU firmly stands with these courageous strikers. This battle is yet another example of Wall Street financiers getting rich on the backs of workers," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. "The members of the UMWA stood by us during our *Stop Staples* fight and recently during our *U.S. Mail: Not for Sale* and *Save the Post Office* campaigns. Let's stand up and support them during their struggle against corporate greed."

As miners remain on the picket lines, they have received an outpouring of support from fellow union members and the community. The UMWA holds solidarity rallies each week for workers. Community groups across Alabama and the country are holding events to raise money for the miners' strike fund. On May 22, local radio show The Valley Labor Report held the Alabama Strike Fest, a music festival fundraiser at a local union hall in Brookwood, AL. On June 22, miners and allies passed out flyers and protested on Wall Street in New York City, in front of the owner's offices.

APWU members are encouraged to contribute to the UMWA strike fund. Donations can be accepted online ([bit.ly/3yiNjoH](https://bit.ly/3yiNjoH)) or via mail. All donation checks are to be made out to the UMWA 2021 Strike Aid Fund, and mailed to:

UMWA 2021 Strike Aid Fund  
P.O. Box 513  
Dumfries, VA 22026 ■

## ExxonMobil Refinery Workers Locked Out in Beaumont, TX

On May 1, 650 workers, represented by the United Steelworkers (USW) Local 13-243, were locked out of the ExxonMobil oil refinery in Beaumont, TX following the expiration of their collective bargaining agreement. While the workers preferred to stay on the job during negotiations for a new contract, the company escorted union members from the facility, and replaced them with scab contractors to operate the refinery at 60 percent capacity.

USW has presented ExxonMobil with multiple offers since the lockout began, but the company has refused to move, instead demanding workers accept language that removes basic seniority, safety and layoff protections from the contract.

USW filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board in May against ExxonMobil for coercion, refusal to bargain and modifying their union agreement. However, workers remain locked out as this issue goes to press, while scab labor continues operations at the refinery.

"We want to be back to work, but we want to do it with a fair agreement that is not solely beneficial to one side," Local 13-243 member J.T. Coleman told *In These Times*. "We are willing to work. We all want to return to work. But we want to do it with something that ensures our security, our seniority and our safety."

## Mission Hospital Nurses Ratify First Union Contract

In the November-December 2020 issue of *The American Postal Worker*, we reported on the landmark union victory by registered nurses (RNs) at Mission Hospital in Asheville, NC. On July 1 and 2, the new union members, represented by National Nurses United (NNU), overwhelmingly voted to ratify their first ever union contract, winning strong pay increases, workplace safety measures, and improved patient care protections, among other substantial gains.

The new three-year contract and preceding union election followed a long struggle by nurses at the for-profit hospital. RNs faced intense union-busting tactics, including management delaying the election for over six months in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Congratulations to the dedicated Mission RNs who have worked for many months, including through the worst pandemic in a century, to achieve these legally binding protections,” said NNU Executive Director Bonnie Castillo, RN. “This agreement will also inspire RNs in nonunion workplaces across the country about what they, too, can achieve by winning a collective voice for their patients and themselves.” ■

## 800 Nurses Remain on Picket Line in Massachusetts as Strike Passes 100 Days

On March 8, around 800 registered nurses, represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), walked out at Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester, MA, beginning a strike against the for-profit hospital. The strike began after over two years of requests by the MNA to increase staffing at the hospital, and over 17 months of work without a new contract, including through the COVID-19 pandemic. As this issue goes to press, nurses remain on strike, with hospital management refusing to offer adequate staffing proposals in negotiations.

While nurses were forced to pick up the slack of unfilled positions, Tenet, the hospital's operator, made a profit of \$414 million dollars in the fourth quarter of 2020 and received more than \$2.8 billion from the CARES Act. Yet the funds were not used to hire more staff or improve the hospital's infrastructure.

“The challenges and barriers we have encountered while trying to safely care for our patients have been monumental,” wrote Maureen Mulcahy, a nurse case manager at the hospital, in an op-ed in the *Telegram-Gazette*. “Our Herculean effort is no longer enough. Why are we on the picket line? We have already done the talking, our words have fallen on deaf ears. Now we are doing the walking.”

## APWU Joins Global Postal Union Conference

In late May, an APWU delegation joined unions from more than 100 countries for the UNI Post & Logistics World Conference. UNI is the global union federation that brings together service sector unions around the world. They campaign for workers' rights and to ensure decent jobs and collective bargaining in sectors like Post & Logistics, Commerce, IT & Communication, and Sport, among others.

The Conference happens every four years. Unions discussed and debated UNI's strategies, and gave updates on campaigns, priorities and challenges for postal workers.

A key theme of the conference was that postal operators worldwide are

undergoing rapid transformations as technology changes the way people use the mail. Just like our experience in the United States, postal unions globally must confront massive reductions in mail volume, new technologies that change operations and the nature of work, and hostile governments and employers reluctant to invest in the future of the services our countries need.

Another important debate was on the future of the sector more broadly. The APWU, together with the NALC, presented a resolution to the Conference calling on UNI to coordinate a global organizing response to the rise of Amazon. It recognized the courageous organizing of the RWDSU in the Bessemer, Alabama union drive,

but noted that a global behemoth like Amazon will only recognize the rights of its workers with a coordinated global response.

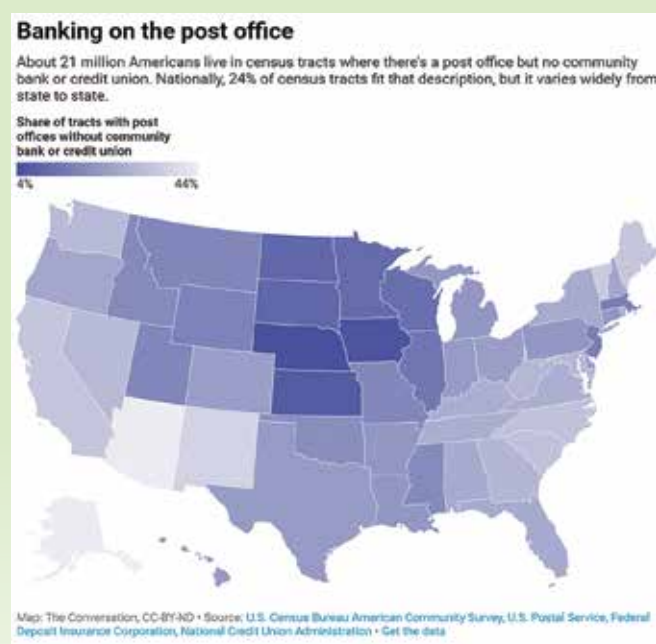
President Dimondstein briefed the Conference on the recent successful APWU campaigns in defense of the public Postal Service, vote by mail and the ongoing challenges ahead. He noted two critical lessons from our struggles: “We must unite our demands as trade unionists with the people's recognition of the critical role of public Postal Services. And we are stronger when we lead people in action. Our campaigns were won by moving thousands of members and allies onto phones, into the streets and in the media.” ■



# New Research Shows Potential of Postal Banking

In the last edition of *The American Postal Worker*, we noted that the growing momentum for expanded postal banking was meeting increased opposition. Most of this comes from the financial establishment and their allies in Congress that see expanded postal financial services as a threat. Among those who have attempted to pan postal banking are the groups representing credit unions and community banks.

New research from the University of Michigan shows what this campaign has long argued – that post offices may, in fact, “be better positioned than community banks or credit unions to expand access to financial services.”



The report, entitled “Postal Banking: How the United States Postal Service Can Partner on Public Options” seeks to answer whether the locations of credit unions and community banks is sufficient to reach the unbanked and underbanked populations, and how the postal network stacks up compared to the private sector.

The post office network of more than 30,000 post offices is spread across the country, with post offices located in approximately 30 percent of all census tracts. The research found “that 69 percent of census tracts that have a post office lack a community bank – defined as having less than \$10 billion in assets – while 75 percent don’t have a credit union branch. And 24 percent have neither, affecting nearly 21 million people.”

This data shows that the postal network is uniquely positioned to provide services to the unbanked and underbanked. Sixty million people live in an area with no community bank, but have a nearby post office. Nearly 65 million people do not have a credit union nearby, but have a post office in their community. The data also suggest that post office locations are disproportionately located in areas where the underbanked and unbanked are likely to live – like poorer urban areas and more remote rural areas.

The report notes growing support in Congress for expanded postal financial services. It particularly highlights one piece of legislation, the *Banking for All Act*, introduced in the last Congress by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), which would create a public option in banking through personal Federal Reserve Accounts (FedAccounts) that could be accessed either at post offices, community banks or credit unions. The research seems to suggest that many people interested in opening a FedAccount would be well served by a visit to their local post office.

For more information on this new research or to access the full report, visit <https://bit.ly/PBankmap> ■

## Postal Financial Service Effort Survives House Markup

On June 29, the House Appropriations Committee held a markup meeting to amend the upcoming Appropriations Bill. As we reported before, several members of Congress have proposed a \$6 million appropriation to the Postal Service, which would call on USPS to pilot expanded financial services in ten areas across the country.

During the markup, the committee voted on an amendment brought forth from Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR-03) that would have removed the postal banking language from the appropriations bill. After remarks from a number of members of Congress who support the expansion of postal financial services, the amendment was defeated by a voice vote.

**The Campaign for Postal Banking** is a coalition of consumer, worker, financial reform, economic justice, community, civic, and faith-based organizations calling for low-cost, consumer-driven financial services via the Postal Service. Products and services could include check cashing, bill payment, savings accounts and small-dollar loans. Postal Banking will benefit consumers without access to traditional banks as well as those who want a public option. The expansion of services would also strengthen our public Postal Service. To learn more, visit [www.CampaignforPostalBanking.org](http://www.CampaignforPostalBanking.org).

# Former National Officer **Thomas Neill** Passes Away

**T**homas Neill passed away on April 23 at the age of 87. Brother Neill first joined the Post Office in 1961 in Houston, TX, following four years of military service in the United States Air Force.

Brother Neill's service to the union began shortly after he became a postal worker, serving on the local safety and health committee. He was then elected local president for the Houston, Texas National Postal Union (NPU), a position he held for six years before his election as Texas State NPU President.

Beginning in 1973, Brother Neill served as a National Vice President of the Clerk Craft in the Dallas Region, and in 1983, was elected APWU Industrial Relations Director, holding the position until his retirement in 1995. Following retirement, Brother Neill stayed an active member of the Fort Worth Area Local Retiree Chapter.

As Industrial Relations Director, Brother Neill played an instrumental role in national negotiations and advancing the rights, benefits and wellbeing of APWU members and all postal workers. "Words cannot express the privilege, pleasure and honor it has been to serve the APWU," Brother Neill wrote in his farewell column before his retirement. "As in all jobs there have been bad days; but I can honestly say the times have mostly been good. There have been glorious victories and a few painful defeats. There have, however, been no regrets."

Brother Neill is survived by Sheri, his wife of 43 years, and his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. ■



## Become a COPA Contributor Today!

**W**ith the continuing challenges facing the Postal Service – the opportunities for positive postal reform, the need to defeat any further degrading of service rather than expanding services – contributing to Committee on Political Action (COPA) is more important than ever.

COPA is the APWU's non-partisan Committee on Political Action created to raise voluntary, political contributions. COPA strengthens our voice on Capitol Hill by allowing us to advance our legislative priorities through supporting elected officials and candidates who are committed to maintaining a strong, public Postal Service and who will promote policies that benefit working people.

It is essential for us to have a strong voice on Capitol Hill to fight for issues such as:

- ▶ **A Vibrant, Public Postal Service**
- ▶ **A Safe Workplace**
- ▶ **Collective Bargaining and Workers' Rights**
- ▶ **Retirement Security for Active and Retired Members**
- ▶ **Protecting Democracy through Automatic Voter Registration and Vote by Mail**

There are several convenient ways to contribute to COPA that can be found by visiting the COPA page on the APWU website, [apwu.org/copa](http://apwu.org/copa). Any amount you can contribute is welcome!

**No amount is too big or too small. Contribute Today!**

#### Disclaimer:

*This COPA solicitation is paid for by the American Postal Workers Union, 1300 L Street, NW NW, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 842-4200; it is not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee. Contributions or gifts to COPA are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. COPA will use the contributions it receives for political purposes, including making contributions to candidates for federal, state and local offices, and addressing political issues of public importance. Contributions to COPA are voluntary. The amount given or the refusal to give will not benefit or disadvantage the person being solicited. Federal law requires political action committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation, and employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.*





Judy Beard, Director

# Postal Legislation and the Need for Filibuster Reform

Since the last issue of *The American Postal Worker*, the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2021* (H.R. 3076 & S. 1720) was introduced in the 117th Congress. This legislation presents an opportunity for Congress to provide pragmatic financial and operational changes to the United States Postal Service. The bill, if passed into law, will place USPS on the path toward financial stability by adding much-needed transparency to the Postal Service, enacting prospective Medicare integration, ensuring six-day delivery, and repealing the unfair pre-funding mandate.

The bill in the House of Representatives was marked up and passed out of the Oversight and Reform Committee. At the time this magazine went to press, the bill still needed to advance through the remaining committees of jurisdiction, Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce, before it can be voted on by the full House. The Senate companion bill was introduced with 20 original cosponsors (10 Democrats and 10 Republicans). It will need to pass through committees of jurisdiction before a full Senate vote. *For more information on postal reform, visit page 8.*

### Postal Improvement Act

On May 11, 2021, Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY-12), the Chairwoman of the Committee on Oversight and Reform, along with the Subcommittee on National Security Chairman Rep. Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA-08), and Committee Member Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI-14), introduced the *Postal Service Improvement Act* (H.R. 3077). If signed into law, this legislation would:

- Require USPS to place a trackable barcode on all election ballots.
- Ensure the inclusion of the Official Election Mail Logo on all election mail.
- Support board of elections nationwide and voters to track mail-in ballots.
- Provide 12 weeks of paid parental leave for Postal Service employees.
- Provide USPS with \$8 billion in funding to replace its old delivery fleet with electric vehicles and charging stations for both postal and consumer use.

### Abolish the Filibuster Now

Due to the archaic filibuster – which allows for a minority in the Senate to block the will of the people – crucial

pro-worker, pro-Postal Service legislation may never come before the full Senate for a vote. The filibuster has stood in the way of racial justice, workers' rights, voting rights, and more for far too long. The APWU firmly supports abolishing the filibuster so our government can finally advance the agenda of America's working class.

We have lobbied for bipartisan support on our postal issues and will continue to do so. However, in looking at the broader picture and issues that affect our families, communities, and working people everywhere, when progress is threatened by our elected officials we must press for change. By abolishing the undemocratic, often racist, filibuster we can work to secure concrete victories for workers across the country and the protect the people's public Postal Service. ■

### You're Invited to Attend the APWU Legislative and Political Conference - September 26 "Keeping Up the Pressure, Fighting for Justice"

Join us for the APWU Legislative and Political Virtual Conference on September 26. Conference participants will have the opportunity to learn about APWU's legislative priorities, hear from a panel on what worker solidarity looks like today, and hear from an exciting slate of keynote speakers! Participants will also have the option to select from the following workshops:

- Legislative Advocacy & Lobbying: Holding Your Representatives Accountable
- Fighting for Justice: Preparing for the 2021/2022 Elections
- Knowledge is Power: Understanding the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC), Board of Governors, Postal Service Operations, and our Universal Service Obligation
- Organizing to Win: New Strategies for Our Fight

Registration for this conference is separate from the All-Craft Conference. To register, visit [apwu.org/events](https://apwu.org/events). We hope you will join us!



Anna Smith, Director

# Joining the APWU Online is Now Easier Than Ever

**A**s the APWU moves into contract negotiations, the APWU Organization Department launched an updated Join Online tool, available on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org). The changes to the tool make it even easier for prospective members sign up at orientation or after a craft change.

When a new member goes to [apwu.org/join](http://apwu.org/join), they will be redirected to a “pre-application find me,” to determine what their current status in our records is. This way, they can fill out the online form whether or not we already have their information in our records, speeding up their processing time.

A guide to assist in using the “Join Online” tool was sent to national, state and local officers. Email [organization@apwu.org](mailto:organization@apwu.org) if you would like a copy.

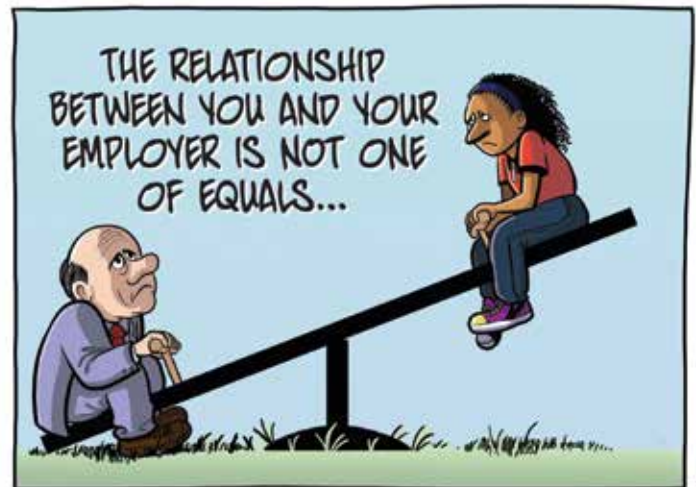
## Organizing New Members is Key to the Upcoming Contract Negotiations

When we are negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement, bringing non-members into the union is more important than ever.

During negotiations, our wages, vacation and sick leave, seniority rights, overtime provisions, work hours, paid holidays and health insurance benefits are all on the table. Standing together in solidarity on the workroom floor is key to preserving and improving our rights and benefits. We must show management that we are united as one. Our slogan for this contract negotiation is *APWU – Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future*; in order to win the fight for a good contract and a positive future, we must show our strength as a union on the workroom floor as well as at the bargaining table.

During the *APWU Live with the President* event on June 1, President Dimondstein stressed that the conversations APWU members have with non-member co-workers are the best way to get them to join the union. “At the end of the day it’s the co-workers that have the most influence, who can break down those walls and make sure that everybody is in the union,” he said.

I urge every APWU member to be an organizer. If every member commits to having that conversation with a co-



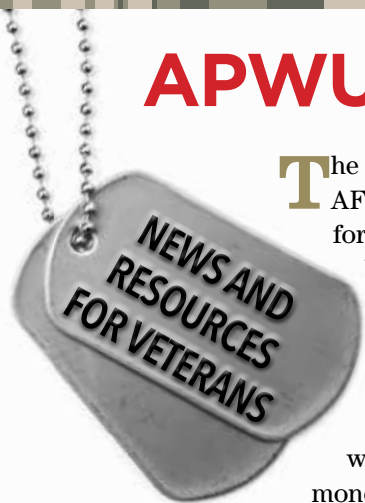
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worker about joining together in a union, we will all be stronger.

The union cannot be a spectator sport, where you’re letting everyone take the field and just sitting in the stands, either cheering it on or doing nothing. We need everybody to be a part of our team.

Members are encouraged to use all of the available resources in conversations with non-members about joining the union. The Organization Department page on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org) has the “Welcome to the APWU” book, containing a wealth of information on the benefits of signing up. ■

## APWU Veterans Network Established



**T**he American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO is proud to announce the formal establishment of the APWU Veterans Network. This group is comprised of APWU members who have, or are still serving in the United States Armed Forces.

The APWU Veterans Network was established by President Dimondstein and the Industrial Relations Department:

1. To provide opportunities to connect with other APWU veterans, provide support for each other and stay informed on important issues; and
2. To help advance the overall goals of the APWU and the labor movement.

As part of the kick-off for this program, more than 25,200 APWU members with known military service were mailed a copy of the *APWU Guide to Veterans Rights and Benefits*. This reference will serve as a quick guide on the impor-

tant rights and benefits of veterans employed by the United States Postal Service. The APWU relied on data from the USPS to identify our members who served in the armed forces, and we are aware that it is not complete. If you did not receive a copy, please contact [veterans@apwu.org](mailto:veterans@apwu.org). The guide is also available online at [apwu.org/veterans](http://apwu.org/veterans).

As part of the APWU Veterans Network program, APWU local presidents were asked to provide a local veterans affairs representative to serve as a point of contact for veteran-related issues. These local VA representatives will work jointly with nationally appointed National Veterans, Guard, and Reservist Information Specialist (VGRIS) Regan Kresge, to help other APWU veterans stay informed on important rights and issues that pertain to them.

"I thank Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, Assistant Manager for Negotiations Support & Special Projects Michael Macho and Regan Kresge for their contributions in advancing this important veterans work," said President Dimondstein. "We appreciate the NALC sharing with us their contributions on veteran rights and benefits." ■

### New Veterans Network to be Managed by APWU VGRIS

The APWU Veterans Network will be managed by National Veterans, Guard, and Reservist Information Specialist (VGRIS) Regan Kresge. She was appointed to the position of VGRIS in December of 2017. The APWU thanks Sister Regan Kresge for her willingness to continue to serve in this role.

Sister Kresge began her postal career in 2007 as a PTF Clerk and then transferred over to the Maintenance Craft in 2008. She has been a proud member of the APWU since she started her career with the U.S. Postal Service.

Sister Kresge began her military service when she joined the Marine Corps as a senior in high school, following in the footsteps of her father and brother.

She served in a Reserve Unit from 1992-2005, attached to Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)-49 at Naval Air Station Willow Grove, located in Montgomery County, PA. She routinely volunteered for active duty assignments while supporting MAG-49, as well as the Reserve Support Unit at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, NC.

"The many years in the Marine Corps certainly set the foundation of a Esprit De Corps mindset. I believe in a Brother/Sisterhood mentality. Taking care, looking out for each other and being there to support each other professionally and emotionally," said Kresge. "I am honored to support our postal veterans. That is why I accepted the position of VGRIS, and Local Veteran Affairs Representative for the APWU Local 95, Lancaster, Pa.

"It is my commitment to you, to give my attention to receiving and relaying any information with relation to our Veterans," Kresge continued. "I welcome and encourage anyone with thoughts, questions, concerns and suggestions, to come speak with me, to make the support of our veterans a successful mission."

One of the primary responsibilities of the VGRIS is to help keep APWU Veterans, Guard, Reservists, family members, and representatives informed about protections, benefits and program services or pending changes that may affect them.

In recent months, Sister Kresge has taken on a more active role and looks forward to continuing this trend moving forward.



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

# Funeral Assistance for COVID-19 Related Deaths

*Editor's Note: The text in this article is taken from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Website. For additional information on funeral assistance, visit FEMA's Q&A page at [fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance/faq](https://fema.gov/disasters/coronavirus/economic/funeral-assistance/faq).*

To help ease the financial stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021* and the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide financial assistance for COVID-19-related expenses for funeral services and interment or cremation. In accordance with FEMA Policy, the applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified alien who incurred funeral expenses after Jan. 20, 2020 for a death attributed to COVID-19 in the United States, including the U.S. territories. Assistance is not available for U.S. citizens who died outside the United States.

## Funeral Expenses Covered

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance will assist with expenses for funeral services and interment or cremation. Applicants may receive assistance for the funeral expenses of multiple deceased individuals. Assistance is limited to a maximum amount of \$9,000 per funeral and a maximum of \$35,500 per application. Expenses include: Transportation for two individuals to identify the deceased individual;

- Transfer of remains;
- Casket or urn;
- Burial plot or cremation niche;
- Marker or headstone;
- Clergy or officiant services;
- Arrangement of the funeral ceremony;
- Use of funeral home equipment or staff;
- Cremation or interment costs;
- Costs associated with producing and certifying death certificates, and
- Additional expenses mandated by local or state government laws or ordinances.

## Information Required

Applicants must provide the following information when contacting FEMA to register for assistance:

- Social Security number for the applicant and the deceased individual;
- Date of birth for the applicant and the deceased individual;

- Current mailing address and telephone number for the applicant;
- Location/address where the deceased individual passed away;
- Burial or funeral insurance policies, and
- Routing and account number of the applicant's checking or savings account (for direct deposit, if requested).

## Documentation Needed

Also, FEMA will need the documentation listed below to register for assistance:

- A copy of the death certificate and proof of funeral expenses incurred. The death certificate must indicate the death was caused by, "may have been caused by" or "was likely a result of" COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms.
- Documentation for expenses (receipts, funeral home contract, etc.) must include the applicant's name as the person responsible for the expense, the deceased individual's name, the amount of funeral expenses, and that funeral expenses were incurred after January 20, 2020.
- Proof of funds received from other sources used for funeral costs. COVID-19 Funeral Assistance may not duplicate benefits received from burial or funeral insurance or financial assistance received from voluntary agencies, government programs or agencies, or other sources. Assistance will be reduced by the amount of other assistance the applicant received for the same expenses.
- Life insurance proceeds are not considered a duplication of funeral assistance benefits.

## How to Apply?

No online applications will be accepted. **For assistance contact the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Helpline at 1 (844) 684-6333 or TTY at 1 (800) 462-7585.** FEMA representatives assist in completing applications, Monday – Friday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time. If you receive a telephone call or email, and doubt that it is from a legitimate FEMA representative, report it to the FEMA Helpline. Do not disclose information such as the name, birth date or Social Security numbers to unknown sources. ■

## RETIREES



Nancy Olumekor, Director

# APWU Retirees Still Fighting for Justice

### Eliminate the WEP and GPO

**T**his year, as we have done in the past, retirees recognize the anniversary of Social Security, created in August 1935, and Medicare, which was signed into law in July 1965.

Current retirees who worked in the post office when the Post Office Department became the USPS in 1971, as well as most of those hired before 1984, are not reaping the full retirement benefits that they paid for during their working life. Many of these retirees also paid into Social Security. They are not celebrating the anniversary of Social Security; these retirees are still waiting for Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) enacted in 1983 and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) enacted in 1977.

The WEP and GPO adversely effected millions of retired federal, state and local public servants. This group of former workers paid the same rate into Social Security as non-WEP or GPO workers paid, yet their Social Security benefits are greatly reduced.

According to the Social Security Administration, as of December 2020, 1.9 million Social Security beneficiaries are affected by WEP and 716,662 Social Security beneficiaries are affected by GPO – over 2.6 million people. Congress needs to act now to pass the *Social Security Fairness Act*, which will repeal the WEP and GPO. Call your congressional representatives and your senators, ask them to cosponsor and vote for H.R. 82 and S. 1032.

### The Caregiving Crisis

There is a crisis facing America. It is projected that by 2030, all baby boomers will be older than 65 and older Americans will make up 21 percent of the population. By 2060 nearly 25 percent of Americans will be 65 years and older, the number of 85-plus will triple, and the country will add a half-million centenarians. Older Americans are projected to outnumber children under age 18 for the first time in U.S. history by 2034, according to Census Bureau projections.

“The mismatch between old and young will have implications across the coming years,” said Dr. Grace Whiting,

president and CEO of the *National Alliance of Caregivers*, in an article on *census.gov*. “We aren’t having enough children to take care of us in our old age,” she said. Her concern points to the increasing need for caregiver and health services for people over age 65. Older Americans want to age in place, receive in-home care, personal and assisted-living from caregivers.

To ensure we live independently, the cost of the many resources available to seniors aging at home needs to drive the public policies that will establish quality and comprehensive caregivers, and long-term care insurance legislation. ■

### Plan to Attend the APWU Retirees Conference on Zoom – Sept. 27-29, 2021

The following classes will be held for retirees: *Aging Resources, Alzheimer Disease, Communicating with Your Legislative Representatives, Fighting Fraud, Heart Health & Fitness* and *How to Write a Chapter Newsletter*. In addition, we will have presentations on Social Security, Medicare, OPM and legislative issues during the Retiree Department general sessions.

For those members who want information on retirement, we will have classes on Retirement Planning for CSRS and FERS Employees and *TSP from A to Z* on Monday, Sept. 27.

Information on how to register for any classes offered as well as the general sessions is available on [apwu.org](http://apwu.org).

### Join the APWU Retirees Department online on the “Members Only” page. Dues are \$3.00 monthly.

If you are planning to retire and have questions contact us by email at [RetireeQandA@apwu.org](mailto:RetireeQandA@apwu.org). Send all other inquiries for the Retirees Department to [retiree2@apwu.org](mailto:retiree2@apwu.org).



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

# Cause of Asthma

**N**o one really knows what causes asthma. What we do know is that asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease of the airways. When airways come into contact with a trigger, they become inflamed, narrow and filled with mucus.

When people with asthma have an attack, their airways narrow and it gets hard to breathe. This can result in spasms of the muscles around the airways, inflammation and swelling of the mucosal membrane that lines them, or high amounts of mucus inside them. You might have shortness of breath, wheeze or cough as your body tries to get rid of the mucus. While we do not know all the things that can cause asthma, we do know that genetic, environmental and occupational factors have been linked to developing asthma.

## Asthma Triggers

If you have asthma, your triggers can be quite different from someone else with asthma. Know your triggers and learn how to avoid them. Some of the most common triggers are:

- **Tobacco Smoke** - Tobacco smoke is unhealthy for everyone, especially people with asthma. "Secondhand smoke" is smoke created by a smoker and breathed in by a second person. Secondhand smoke can trigger an asthma attack.
- **Dust Mites** - Dust mites are microscopic bugs that are in many homes. If you have asthma and are allergic to dust mites, they can trigger an asthma attack.
- **Outdoor Air Pollution** - Outdoor air pollution can trigger an asthma attack. This pollution can come from many sources, including factories, cars or wildfire smoke. Wildfire smoke from burning wood or other plants is made up of a mix of harmful gases and small particles. Breathing in too much of this smoke can cause an attack.
- **Pests (e.g., cockroaches, mice)** - Cockroaches and other pests are often found where food is eaten and crumbs are left behind.
- **Pets** - Furry pets can trigger an asthma attack if you are allergic to them, even if you trim their fur.
- **Mold** - Breathing in mold can trigger an asthma attack even if you are not close to it. Indoor mold growth is often found in damp areas such as kitchens, bathrooms, and basements, or in areas where water damage has occurred. There are many types of molds that can be found in any climate.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection** - Disinfectants can trigger an asthma attack. Triggers can happen during and right after use.
- **Other Triggers** - Infections linked to influenza (flu), colds, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can trigger an asthma attack. Sinus infections, allergies, pollen, breathing in some chemicals and acid reflux can also trigger attacks. Physical exercise; some medicines; bad weather, such as thunderstorms or high humidity; breathing in cold, dry air; and some foods, food additives and fragrances can also trigger an asthma attack. Strong emotions can lead to extremely fast breathing, called hyperventilation, which can also cause an asthma attack.

The APWU Health Plan is dedicated to the education of its members by providing the latest information on all aspects of a healthy lifestyle, including asthma management. Please visit [www.apwuhp.com/healthy-living](http://www.apwuhp.com/healthy-living) to read blogs and articles on all aspects of living your healthiest life with asthma. Consult with your physician to develop an asthma action plan.

For further information, please go to:  
[apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com), [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), [asthma.com](http://asthma.com) ■

(800) 222-2798

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HEALTH PLAN
[www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com)
**TOGETHER.**  
**BETTER HEALTH.**

A benefit plan focused on you and your family.



Union pride on display at Bakersfield P&DC

# Solidarity Works!

## How You Can Join Our Fight for a Good Contract

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 YOUR LOCAL CONTRACT ACTION TEAM:** Sticker up on Gear Day, join APWU live streams and Zoom town halls, and join APWU rallies and other events, either in person or online.

**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.

**BE AN ORGANIZER AND SIGN UP THE NON-MEMBERS:** If we are going to win the best possible contract, we need the united strength of all. Joining online is easier than ever, see page 35 for more information.

For the latest updates on contract negotiations, text **CONTRACT** to 91990 or visit [apwu.org](https://apwu.org).

**APWU – Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future**