

THE AMERICAN

APWU

Postal Worker

March/April 2021

Essential Workers Must Be a Priority



See Page 8-9 for COVID-19 Updates



Board of Governors UPDATE

6



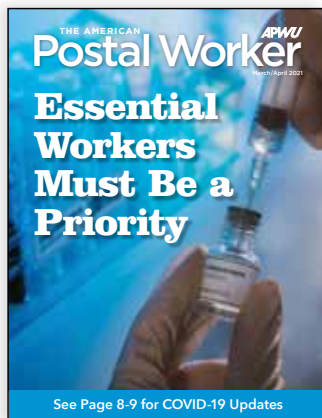
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PRODUCED BY THE APWU COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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



PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

Imperfect Storm

The mail system is in chaos. Postal workers are tired and frustrated. Customers are angry.

Despite the courageous efforts, hard work and dedication of postal workers throughout this dangerous pandemic, service has deteriorated to levels never seen in modern times. On-time first class mail delivery has fallen below 50 percent in many areas. Medicines, greeting cards, holiday gifts and vital correspondence are arriving late, not by days, but by weeks.

Several factors have created such an “imperfect storm.” The Postal Service suffers from chronic understaffing. COVID-19 pressures have exacerbated staffing issues, as has large turnover of the workforce. Packages have reached record volumes. Congress has still not resolved the manufactured postal financial crisis created by the absurd 2006 mandate to pre-fund retiree health benefits.

One can debate how much the arrival of PMG Louis DeJoy has led to this debacle with the mail. Certainly, some problems were inherited, others are results of management policies. We certainly welcomed the recent positive step of increasing career staffing in mail processing.

**THE APWU INITIATED A PETITION
CAMPAIGN URGING PRESIDENT BIDEN
TO QUICKLY NOMINATE STRONG
POSTAL ADVOCATES TO THE FOUR
VACANT BOARD POSITIONS.**

But there is no argument that DeJoy is the captain of the ship that is sinking on his watch. He must be held fully accountable by the Postal Board of Governors, elected officials and the public for the delays, loss of revenue and business, and for breaking the bond of trust between the people and the public Postal Service.

The Postal Board of Governors is responsible for setting the policy and direction of the Postal Service. The Board, not the U.S. President, hires, fires and directs the PMG.

The APWU initiated a petition campaign urging President Biden to quickly nominate strong postal advocates to the four vacant Board positions. More than 400,000

signatures, many from members like you, were recently presented to the White House.

These are critical appointments. We have submitted recommendations for passionate pro-worker, pro-postal nominees to the Biden administration. A strong Board can go a long way to holding the current postal leadership accountable to the needs of the people and the requirement of the law that promises “prompt, reliable and efficient” services.

We can influence the direction of the Postal Service in other ways, as well.

National negotiations for a new union contract (collective bargaining agreement) are around the corner. Our current contract expires September 20, 2021 and official negotiations commence in June. We will be dealing with many issues critical to postal workers – including wages, COLA, job security and safety. It is also a great opportunity to “bargain for the common good.”

We have a role to play in defense of the people and their right to robust public postal services. Issues including staffing, expanded services such as financial services, reducing turnover in the workforce and increasing hours of retail operations can all be discussed and bargained with management. We plan to do so.

Others have helped light the way of progress through unity between unions and the needs of the people. Karen Lewis, the outstanding former leader of the Chicago Teachers Union, recently passed away after a long illness. Her passing is a huge loss for the labor movement. A major part of her wonderful legacy was positioning the union on the side of parents and students – bargaining for smaller class room sizes, more social workers and keeping neighborhood schools open. In turn, parents and students stood with the workers. Unity between the workers and the community has been key to their union’s success in winning better public schools and education, along with better working conditions.

The only way that postal privatizers can succeed is to break the tremendous bond between the people and their Post Office. The union will continue to defend and build this bond as it is the key to ensuring good jobs and vibrant public Postal Service for generations to come. ■

APWU Preparing for Opening of Contract Negotiations

In June, formal negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement between the American Postal Workers Union and the United States Postal Service will begin. The APWU started preparations last year. We are currently gathering large amounts of data and information, as well as consulting with economists, labor experts and our attorneys.

As an important part of our preparations, APWU National sent a wide-ranging survey to members to gather information on what your priorities are. The surveys were included with 2021 membership cards, as well as reprinted in the January-February 2021 issue of *The American Postal Worker*. The survey was also emailed and texted out to members. Thousands of surveys were returned or filled out digitally, providing the National Negotiations Committee with invaluable information.

“Thank you to all of the members who filled out and returned their surveys. As the negotiations team continues our preparations, we now have a strong picture of what members value the most as we move closer to opening day,” said President Dimondstein. “Members are encouraged to join Collective Action Teams and stay active and involved throughout the contract campaign.” ■

2021 Negotiations Timeline

October 2020 – Preparations Began

May 23, 2021 – 120 Days from Contract Expiration, window to request negotiations opens

June 22, 2021 – 90 Days from Contract Expiration, tentative formal start date of negotiations

September 7, 2021 – Final two weeks of negotiations begin

September 20, 2021, 11:59 pm – Contract Expires

Send us Your Organizing Success Stories

The COVID-19 pandemic affects every person in this country, and every organization. From the local to the national level, union work best done face-to-face was shifted to virtual for everyone's safety. However, postal workers proved this year that we are essential and can meet any challenge, including continuing our successful union campaigns and efforts.

This last year APWU members have:

- Conducted virtual trainings and webinars, local meetings, and state conferences.
- Organized caravans, socially distanced pickets, and virtual press conferences to protest and inform the public.

- Implemented a workroom floor to national headquarters structure to report COVID-19 safety issues.
- Sounded the alarm on how new policies were causing mail delays across the country and then delivered democracy in the fall when those delays put a spotlight on every postal worker during the election.

Now it is time to adapt another crucial part of our union structure: Collective Action Teams (CATs). CATs – formerly Contract Action Teams – were a crucial part of our success in the last two

contract negotiations and have expanded their role to be a key part of any campaign work the union does. CATs educate, agitate, organize and mobilize members and allies to build a culture of collective action and assist members to become a stronger part of all the union's campaigns.

The APWU National Campaign Committee (NCC) is collecting stories from CATs across the country for what actions effectively organized and excited members.

Did you organize:

- Virtual meetings?
- Socially distant rallies?

- A car caravan?
- A 'gear day,' or another workplace action?
- A petition signature push for either Congress or President Biden to Save the Post Office?

Please email ncc@apwu.org and let us know what you all found to be successful. We would also like to hear what resources or training the NCC could provide that would assist in your future efforts.

The union is us, the members. All of our participation is key to make any effort, from contract negotiations, to expanded services, to legislative action successful. We want to highlight your stories, so other CATs can build off your success.



PETITION DELIVERED:

Postal Workers and Customers Urge President Biden and Congress to Fill Four Vacancies on the USPS Board of Governors

“THE USPS IS A NATIONAL TREASURE. THE SEVERE DELAYS AFFECTING THE COUNTRY’S CRITICAL POSTAL SERVICES ARE UNACCEPTABLE... THIS MUST BE FIXED AND WE HAVE A RARE WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY NOW TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES.” – PRESIDENT DIMONDSTEIN

On February 23, the APWU and allies who support a strong, public Postal Service presented a petition with over 400,000 signatures to the Biden Administration. The petition, reported on in the last issue of *The American Postal Worker*, called on the new Biden Administration and Senate leaders to “swiftly fill” the four vacant positions on the nine-member, USPS Board of Governors.

“We need a strong board that reflects the will of the people,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “We need leaders who will support prompt, reliable and efficient service, and public servants who understand that this is the United States Postal ‘Service’ and not the United States Postal ‘Business.’”

All of the current board members are Trump appointees; all are men. Most have deep ties to Wall Street and corporate interests, and not one has had direct experience with the USPS prior to joining the board.

“On behalf of our members, I thank the many allied organizations such as Progress America, Take on Wall Street, Alliance for Retired Americans, Daily Kos, People for the American Way, and other organizations of A Grand Alliance to Save Our Postal Service that, along with us, did a terrific job in collecting these signatures,” Dimondstein said.

In addition to the demand for Governors who will preserve and protect the People’s Post Office, the petition urges President Biden to select candidates who “will support an agenda

of expanding the role of the USPS in serving our communities.” One example of this is adding new products that can help the public and generate revenue, such as paycheck cashing, offering wire transfers and other financial services.

“A Board of Governors unafraid of innovation can make these changes happen,” Dimondstein said. “Our union is united with the public in rejecting calls for shrinking our way to success by slowing mail, lowering standards of mail delivery, closing post offices and consolidating plants. We’ve been down that road before. It didn’t work.”

In sharp contrast to President Trump, who called the USPS ‘a joke’ and whose administration proposed ending the universal service requirement and selling off the USPS, the Biden administration expressed a commitment to a public Postal Service.

“The USPS is a national treasure. The severe delays affecting the country’s critical postal services are unacceptable,” President Dimondstein said. “This must be fixed and we have a rare window of opportunity now to make the necessary changes.”

Update: As this issue went to press, President Biden nominated three new members to the Postal Board of Governors. The nominees are former APWU general counsel Anton Hajjar, retired Deputy Postmaster General Ron Stroman, and Chief Executive of the National Vote at Home Institute Amber McReynolds. The APWU urges the Senate to quickly confirm these nominees. ■



President Dimondstein To Testify Before House of Representatives

As this issue goes to press, President Dimondstein is scheduled to testify on February 24 before the House Oversight and Reform Committee in a hearing that will examine possible legislative fixes to the Postal Service’s financial problems and delivery issues.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY-12) chairs the committee and Rep. James Comer (R-KY-01) is the ranking member. Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and Ron Bloom, the chairman of the U.S. Postal Board of Governors, also are scheduled to testify. USPS Inspector General Tammy Whitcomb, Joel Quadracci of QuadGraphics, and American Enterprise Institute’s (AEI) Kevin Kosar will testify as well.

The discussion during the hearing is expected to focus on the growing impatience from mail delays, future plans for postal reform, and DeJoy’s management of the USPS since becoming Postmaster General in July.

Go to apwu.org for more information and clips from the hearing.



Q&A with Take on Wall Street

Since the launch of the Postal Banking campaign, one of our biggest allies has been Take on Wall Street. The organization is a major supporter of postal banking and the APWU's fight to Save the Post Office. We asked Porter McConnell, Take on Wall Street's Campaign Director, to discuss the campaign and its goals. Her answers have been lightly edited for space and clarity.

Q. What is Take on Wall Street?

The Take on Wall Street coalition was launched in 2016 by over 60 community organizations, labor unions, consumer activists and faith groups who wanted to build a financial system for white, Black and Brown working families, not the big Wall Street banks. Together we envision a better financial system, we train activists, we cultivate political champions, and if we do our job right, we deliver policy change to restore the financial sector to its rightful place in service of the real economy.

Q. What is “financialization,” and how does it affect the lives of working people?

Finance is the management of money, and “financialization” refers to the increasing power of finance over the economy. The financial sector – Wall Street – finds a way to extract profit from every facet of our lives, our housing, health, education, and even our water.

Letting finance write the rules and dominate the economy has harmed the rest of us, most of all working people. Rather than channeling investments to projects that support jobs, families, and communities, Wall Street company owners, executives and money managers are buying our elected leaders and rigging the rules in their favor in order to extract wealth from people. Wall Street executives extract wealth from all of us, but they especially target Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. Financial executives are trained to take a short-term “take the money and run” approach, which leads to booms and busts and makes our whole economy more unstable.

Q. What does Take on Wall Street hope to accomplish, and how is the organization going about doing so?

We are trying to re-write the rules to make an economy for working people, not billionaires and big banks. We

fight for policy changes to unrig the tax code – stripping out all the loopholes for the rich and corporations that allow them to pay a lower tax rate than postal workers, firefighters, and teachers – and taxing unearned wealth to narrow the wealth gap. Because one in four American households is unbanked or underbanked, we work to expand access to fair banking services through “public options” like postal banking. We push to curb Wall Street’s influence in Washington through campaign finance, voting rights and ethics reforms. We are also fighting to stop in its tracks the privatization of national treasures like the Postal Service.

Q. Why is preserving the public Postal Service important to Take on Wall Street?

We deserve a public Postal Service: it is a right, not a privilege. The Postal Service’s universal service obligation is unique, and it serves as a beacon to other public services. We have seen what happens when places like Colorado Springs, or the state of Kansas, attempt to starve government and make public services like streetlights optional and privately delivered: it means we throw our most vulnerable neighbors under the bus. It means when a brutal winter storm hits Texas, the power company fails to keep people warm, and charges them five figure bills for cold houses. We have to demand better from our elected leaders.

Q. How can APWU members get involved?

We invite APWU members to sign up to our email list to take action on everything from saving the post office, to taxing Wall Street, to getting money out of politics. Just visit takeonwallstreet.org, or hover your smart phone over the QR code and it’ll take you to our sign-up page. ■



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.



APWU ADVOCATES FOR PRIORITIZATION OF POSTAL WORKERS IN NATIONAL COVID-19 VACCINATION PLAN

On January 20, following the inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States, the APWU got to work pushing for the new administration to prioritize postal workers in its national COVID-19 vaccination policy. In a letter to the administration, President Dimondstein advocated for postal workers to be recognized as frontline workers in the national vaccine rollout.

With virtually no national plan in place, the COVID-19 vaccine rollout has proceeded very slowly and unevenly across the country with states/territories implementing their own plans. Many essential workers are still waiting for their vaccines even as they report to work every day, including postal workers, who have continued to interact with the public and connect the people of the country during the pandemic.

In many states, including New York, postal workers have not been included in initial vaccine rollouts, even though the CDC recommended postal workers be considered in the “1-B” status along with other essential workers.

In his letter, President Dimondstein asked the administration to develop a national plan in line with the CDC’s recommendations.

“We are optimistic that your new administration will work to bring order to the COVID chaos, including bringing a national plan to the vaccine roll-out. We strongly urge that as part of this plan the CDC recommendations in relation to postal workers are consistently and fully implemented throughout the coun-

try,” President Dimondstein wrote. “The well-being of postal workers and postal customers depend on it.”

In addition to the letter to the Biden administration, President Dimondstein also wrote to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and other

governors, urging them to move postal workers higher up in the vaccine rollout order.

The APWU is committed to working with the new administration on a comprehensive, national vaccination plan. ■

OWCP AND COVID-19

Postal Service employees who contract COVID-19 while at work have the option to apply for federal workers’ compensation through the Department of Labor’s Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP).

Choosing to apply for workers’ compensation is a personal decision. Each employee’s case is different and the decision should be based on the facts of the case. While you are making your decision, issues to consider include:

- No one knows the long-term effects of COVID-19;
- COVID-19 “long haulers” – those who experience symptoms for weeks to months after their initial infection – could miss work for extended periods of time, especially if hospitalized;
- Complications/other future conditions can be COVID-19 related;
- In case of a COVID-19 related death, survivor benefits could be granted.

No matter the decision, employees who choose to submit claims must be able to provide evidence that they:

- Filed a claim on form CA-1 within 3 years of contracting COVID-19.

- Contracted COVID-19 – this can be done with a confirmed laboratory test result; antibody tests are not the best evidence.
- Contracted COVID-19 while in conjunction with their USPS job.
- Have a physician signed statement confirming the diagnosis and stating with a reasonable degree of medical certainty that the contraction of the disease is causally related to the job.

This is not the only evidence or supporting documentation needed, but it is a start.

The APWU is providing this for informational purposes only. This is not medical or legal advice nor is this a solicitation for claims to be filed.

Each employee who files an OWCP claim related to COVID-19 is responsible for developing the claim, completing the forms, and producing the needed evidence.

On February 17, 2021, the APWU conducted an informational session for union leaders on recent instructions OWCP claims examiners have been given on COVID-19 claims. Union members who have basic questions on COVID-19 related OWCP claims may contact their local union officials.

UPDATE ON PAID COVID-RELATED LEAVE AND NEXT STEPS

On March 18, 2020, former President Trump signed the *Family First Coronavirus Response Act* (FFCRA) into law. One of the provisions of that law mandated that employers provide up to 14 days of paid COVID-related leave, separate from any accrued sick or personal leave, to any employee experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or quarantining pursuant to a federal, state, or local government order or advice of a health care provider.

The law also mandated employers provide up to two weeks leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay should the employee be caring for another individual in quarantine or a child whose school is closed or child care provider is unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

However, the FFCRA expired on December 31, 2020 as Congress failed to renew the law.

Regardless, while it is no longer required by law, the APWU believes it is management's responsibility to continue to abide by the "Family First" principles and provide paid administrative leave to any employee off work due to a COVID-19 exposure or diagnosis, no matter where such exposure occurred.

Instead of following these principles, management has instead taken the position to issue a "decision tree" that administrative leave will only be automatically paid if the employee contracted the disease in the workplace, and in all other situations the employee must use their own personal leave. While we have reached agreement with management on a number of other health and safety issues, we remain in conflict on this issue.

"It is a disturbing signal that the safety and health of the employees and our families is taking a back seat to 'business,'" said President Dimondstein. "It is even more egregious considering that postal workers were instrumental in securing \$10 billion in Congressional emergency relief to the USPS, in part to cover the increased expenses of protecting our health and safety."

"Postal management has the responsibility under the union Collective Bargaining Agreement to protect the safety of all employees," Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman said. "Article 14 states, 'It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations.'"

As this important battle continues, we recommend the following for any postal worker that has been exposed to COVID-19, is experiencing symptoms, or has been diagnosed as COVID-19 positive/presumptive positive:

- When reported, workers should ask management what next steps to take.
 - When management initiates the action that the employee cannot report to work, workers should ask whether they will be placed on administrative leave.
 - If management instructs and compels workers to use their own leave (sick or annual) a grievance should be filed documenting the fact circumstances of each case, including the date when management was notified, management's response, name(s) of management officials involved and when and how exposure happened. Grievances should be filed under Article 14, adding any safety and leave provisions of Article 19.
- Follow the USPS policy as outlined in a multitude of stand-up talks, policy documents, and statements to stay home from work.
 - Follow the USPS policy and report the diagnosis, exposure, or symptoms to the USPS.

The Industrial Relations Department provided a "template" that can be used as a guide for local grievances. As discussions continue with management, we continue to advocate that Congress restore the provisions of the FFCRA.

We also continue to promote mandatory mask-wearing as a basic health and safety measure, and are pressing management to implement pilot programs on "thermal" testing in the workplace.

Further updates on paid leave and other safety and health measures will be provided on apwu.org and in News Service Bulletins. ■





During his campaign, President Biden assured the labor movement he would stand with workers. In his first days in office, he followed through on important steps towards fulfilling his promise to keep workers safe, both through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and right some of the damage caused by the anti-worker Trump administration.

Executive Order on Health and Safety

On January 21, one day after taking office, President Biden signed the Executive Order on Health and Safety, signaling that the administration's priority is protecting workers.

"Ensuring the health and safety of workers is a national priority and a moral imperative. Healthcare workers and other essential workers, many of whom are people of color and immigrants, have put their lives on the line during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic," the order reads. "It is the policy of my Administration to protect the health and safety of workers from COVID-19."

Specifically, the order mandates that "the Federal Government must take swift action to reduce the risk that workers may contract COVID-19 in the workplace. That will require issuing science-based guidance to help keep workers safe from COVID-19 exposure, including with respect to mask-wearing; partnering

Beginning of President Biden's Term Shows Positive First Steps for Workers

with state and local governments to better protect public employees; enforcing worker health and safety requirements; and pushing for additional resources to help employers protect employees."

In order to meet these requirements, the order provides the Secretary of Labor, through the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health, with wide authority to reshape OSHA's enforcement efforts to better protect workers.

This Executive Order will apply to the Postal Service.

"This is a complete change from the Trump administration that had directed OSHA to take a relative 'hands off' approach to worker safety – especially concerning COVID-19," said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. "We expect guidance to be issued that can significantly improve worker safety and management accountability. Once any standards or instructions are issued by OSHA we will reach back out to the field."

New Pro-Worker Appointments and Firings of Anti-Worker Appointees at the Department of Labor

The recently announced appointments to various positions in the Department of Labor, as well as the removal of personnel appointed by the Trump administration, signaled a commitment from the Biden administration to a pro-worker policy.

Jim Frederick was appointed as Deputy Assistant Secretary at OSHA. Mr. Frederick is a dedicated unionist and former safety specialist for the United Steel Workers, who advised the APWU's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

President Biden also appointed former BCTGM General Counsel Jeff Freund as Director of the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS).

In a significant show of support to workers on his first day in office, President Biden fired National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) General Counsel Peter Robb. Robb, a key member of the Reagan administration's efforts to break the 1981 PATCO strike, moved the NLRB in a sharply pro-management direction during his tenure. On February 17, President Biden announced his nomination of Jennifer Abruzzo, currently the Communications Workers of America General Counsel, to the position.

"The new administration has made important first steps towards protecting essential workers and protecting collective bargaining rights. However, their work is far from complete," said President Dimondstein. "The APWU will continue to push President Biden not only to reverse the catastrophic policies of the previous administration, but significantly improve the lives of workers beyond his time in office." ■

Postal Relief Not Included in President Biden's Stimulus Plan

As this issue goes to press, President Biden did not include additional COVID-19 relief for the USPS in his \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan. It is up to postal workers and our allies to pressure Congress to include this crucial funding to keep the USPS a public service for all the people of this country. Learn more about our fight for USPS COVID-19 relief and other postal issues on apwu.org.

Organizing to Protect and Enhance the Public Postal Service

In the March-April 2020 *American Postal Worker*, this column focused on a few states that had expanded vote-by-mail options since the last general election. At that time, the coronavirus pandemic was just beginning to affect the United States. Little did we know just how important vote-by-mail would become, nor could we anticipate the many crises where our public Postal Service would play such a critical role in the year ahead.

Indeed, the last year has been defined by a nonstop wave of momentous events, challenges and dilemmas facing postal workers and supporters of our national treasure. It seemed decades of historic developments were crammed into only weeks. While there were setbacks and triumphs in the past year, what's become increasingly clear is that the very future of the public United States Postal Service continues to hang in the balance in the months ahead.

Service has eroded to levels not seen in decades. The Postal Service's finances continue to deteriorate quickly, despite the record package volumes of the last year. And while the harshest critics of the public Postal Service from the last administration no longer hold the reins of power in Washington, the threat of lasting damage to the Postal Service remains quite real.

Before looking ahead, though, let's examine what lessons we can learn from the last year. The triumph of election mail, despite our enthusiasm in last year's column, was far from a foregone conclusion. Recall that when Postmaster General Louis DeJoy took the helm at the Post Office last year, he quickly instituted a number of policies that delayed the mail.

As undelivered mail piled up across the country during the summer, public outcry was swift, particularly with those alarmed about the implications of ongoing mail delays for the upcoming election. Postal workers and other Grand Alliance partners organized, united with the people, and halted the worst of management's hasty decisions. We ensured that the election mail was handled with the priority it deserved.

Then, of course, there was the letdown of the holiday season that followed. Despite the gallant efforts of postal workers, the postal system – burdened by decades

of understaffing, lack of investment and the weight of COVID-related absences – simply failed to deliver on its promise to the public.

Once again, as we did in the face of management's delays last summer, we sprung into action, demanding a new course for the people's Postal Service.

Allies across the Alliance have been pushing the new Biden administration hard to move quickly in filling the vacancies on the Postal Board of Governors. We moved on Congress to secure meaningful and lasting postal reform and COVID-related financial relief, including a repeal of the burdensome prefunding mandate. And we continue to organize members of the Alliance to develop a new *People's Postal Agenda*, to lay out a positive vision for the Postal Service that meets the needs of the country in the years ahead.

As was true in the crises that battered us last year, uncertainty is the only certain thing in the moment we face now. While the stakes in the months ahead are high, the opportunity to make real progress in advancing our agenda for the Postal Service is just as real. The pandemic has underscored the public's need for robust and reliable postal services. The staffing and financial crises are crying out for a lasting solution and more sustainable resources for the post office.

The changing political environment, particularly the new administration's more active approach to addressing the layered crises of the pandemic, means a real opportunity is at hand to rethink the role of our public Postal Service and make the necessary investments to expand and enhance it.

But as ever, nothing is certain. We must organize, campaign and mobilize to make it happen. ■

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.



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

What is Next?

We cannot afford to just clock in and clock out each day. We can step up and help fight together with our co-workers for that decent work environment we deserve. There is protective language in our union contract, but the fact is, management violates our contract in some way almost every day. You are the contract law enforcers along with your stewards and officers. The 2021 negotiations begin in June; to improve our union contract we need you strong and active. Every local has an army of retirees and family members. We need our local union organizations to have a powerhouse of activists on call.

During this pandemic we have suffered physically and emotionally at work and home. We have lost co-workers, and family members. We have worked understaffed over the last nine years due to the last round of consolidations, that changed the service standards and slowed the mail service, which also overloaded the gaining facilities and caused outrageous transportation costs. Management has failed to replace enough full-time positions as members retire. With tens of thousands of COVID-19 quarantines last year, understaffing gets worse.

The USPS is in disarray and we need each other's activism to remedy our working conditions. We need a supportive Postal Board of Governors, more full-time jobs, and we must pass legislation that reverses the service standards changes made in 2012 that destroyed prompt services.

More importantly, APWU members need to be there for each other.

Congressmembers do not move quickly enough, so it is important to have local forces around this country to help push them to do the right thing and support legislation that supports us. As essential workers, we need to build and expand our union and our services to the country.

It takes all of us. If you have not yet you can still participate in these efforts by calling your representatives about the *USPS Fairness Act* and signing up to join or start a Collective Action Team in your local.

WE NEED A SUPPORTIVE POSTAL BOARD OF GOVERNORS, MORE FULL-TIME JOBS, AND WE MUST PASS LEGISLATION THAT REVERSES THE SERVICE STANDARDS CHANGES MADE IN 2012 THAT DESTROYED PROMPT SERVICES.

Decide today to volunteer to become an activist. How? Contact your local president or steward. Seek them out, give them your contact information, and your pledge. ■

April Suicide Alert: EAP and You to the Rescue

Each year, the rate of suicide attempts and deaths peaks in the spring. The USPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) published a list of suicidal signs you might notice from your co-workers.

The following are just a few signs you may observe:

- Talking, discussing, fixating on death or suicide
- Giving away valuable or meaningful possessions
- Having reckless and dangerous behavior
- Increasing the use of alcohol and/or drugs
- Sleep issues, too much or too little
- Not taking basic care of self
- Having a history of suicide attempts
- Putting personal business in order
- Neglecting doctor's orders
- Increased anger & intensified mood swings
- Withdrawing, isolating and disconnecting from others

The EAP notes that suicidal signs may reveal themselves in conversation, through actions or even social media posts. APWU members are encouraged to recognize the above signs, reach out and speak up.

Remember that our EAP program is here to help. Utilize the tools at www.EAP4YOU.com or call 800-327-4968, TTY 877-492-7341.

Turn on the light for someone else, and with love and persistence we can make a difference.

Join President Dimondstein in APWU Live with the President Events!

Starting in 2021, President Mark Dimondstein launched *APWU Live with the President*, a regular virtual event for members to learn about the status of different APWU national actions and ask questions about important issues.

Each session begins with President Dimondstein providing the latest news and updates, before taking questions from members. Each stream can be viewed live on the APWU's Facebook or Twitter pages, as well as on apwu.org. President Dimondstein answers questions directly from the Facebook comments during the event.

Members can go to the live webpage to submit questions in advance. Members unable to watch live can always view the stream afterwards at apwu.org/live.

On the January livestream, President Dimondstein discussed the APWU's eventful 2020, including our efforts to Save the Post Office, our involvement in Labor 2020, and the increased staffing and conversion of over 5,000 PSEs to career positions. He discussed the APWU's ongoing health and safety efforts during the pandemic, our campaign to expand services, and the upcoming



contract negotiations. President Dimondstein answered questions on hazard pay, postal banking, conversions, and COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

As this issue goes to press, the next APWU Live with the President is scheduled for February 25. President Dimondstein plans to continue the discussion on the upcoming opening of contract negotiations, our push for full vaccine access for postal workers as part of a national vaccination plan, the delivery of our petition for President Biden to fill the USPS Board of Governors, and the *USPS Fairness Act's* reintroduction in Congress.

All members are encouraged to sign up and participate. Information on the dates of the next events will be published on apwu.org and in News Service Bulletins. To sign up and for more information, go to apwu.org/live. ■

APWU Signs onto THRIVE Agenda to Address Systemic Inequality and Racism

In February, the APWU signed onto a letter to President Biden, encouraging him to incorporate the "Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy" (THRIVE) Agenda in the development of the administration's Economic Recovery Plan. The letter, also signed by fellow unions Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), Association of Flight Attendants (AFA-CWA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), urges the Biden administration to adopt the THRIVE principles in drafting its own economic plan.

The THRIVE Agenda's goal is building a "new economy to address the inequality and racism the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare." It is based on eight pillars:

- Creating millions of good, safe jobs with access to unions,
- Building the power of workers to fight inequality,
- Investing in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities,

- Strengthening and healing the nation-to-nation relationship with sovereign Native Nations,
- Combating environmental injustice and ensuring healthy lives for all,
- Averting climate and environmental catastrophe,
- Ensuring fairness for workers and communities affected by economic transitions,

- Reinvesting in public institutions that enable workers and communities to thrive.

As the Biden administration formulates its economic plan, APWU members are encouraged to join the Green New Deal Network in writing to President Biden to encourage the adoption of the full THRIVE Agenda in any final proposal.

The full THRIVE Agenda is available to read on thriveagenda.com/agenda. To write to President Biden, go to greennewdealnetwork.org/write-to-biden. ■





SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

The Merger Guidelines: What are our Options?

When locals are faced with circumstances whether foreseen or unforeseen that result in the local being unable to provide the representation it was chartered to provide and comply with LMRDA provisions, the procedures provided in the Merger Guidelines would need to be considered and administratively fulfilled.

The merger guidelines outline the steps and documents locals considering a merger would need to follow and submit to the Secretary-Treasurer's office. Upon receipt the documents are reviewed to ensure the criteria for the type of merger requested is met and documented. The merger guidelines stipulate that members must vote to approve a merger and set the terms of the merger. There are three guidelines to consider depending on the local's status.

Local/Area Local Merging with a Local/Area Local:

Merging with an existing local is usually the best option for a local that wants to maintain a locally negotiated contract, but does not have the dues structure, officers, or stewards to represent local members. Locals that merge into existing locals become members of that local and often can negotiate specific terms for the merger that ensure a voice in local affairs.

Member-at Large (MAL) Merger with a Local or Area Local: A Member-At-Large (MAL) merger is between a MAL office and a Local or Area Local, so long as the requesting MAL office is within the jurisdiction of the gaining Local or Area Local.

Dissolve the local and become Members at Large: If a merger is not an option because of location or membership choice, local members can choose to dissolve their local and become members of the state APWU. In these cases, the state's union representative serves as steward and chief negotiator. If the local is dissolved, the members of the defunct local become Members-at-Large (MALs).

A copy of the Merger Guidelines can be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer's page on apwu.org. Local officers can also request a copy by emailing Annette August-Taylor, Executive Assistant to the Secretary-Treasurer, at aaugust@apwu.org.

Schedule a Virtual Finance Training

During the month of January and February, the Secretary-Treasurer's department provided training on covering important information that will assist in keeping local finances in compliance with their legal requirements. Local officers, either newly-elected or looking to schedule a refresher training for executive board members, can schedule a specific local training utilizing Zoom. Please contact Annette August-Taylor to schedule your request. ■

The APWU Scholarship Deadline is March 31st, 2021



The deadline for a child, grandchild, stepchild, or legally adopted child to a current, retired or deceased APWU member to submit scholarship applications for the E.C. Hallbeck, Vocational or Best Essay Award is March 31, 2021.

The **E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship** awards \$8,000 (\$2,000 annually) to ten recipients (one male and one female from each of the five postal regions) to apply towards their four-year college tuition.

The **Vocational Scholarship** winners will receive up to \$3,000 for specialized training in such fields as culinary arts, medical or dental assistant, electrician, real estate, auto mechanic, certified IT/computer education, cosmetology or massage therapy, etc. Eligible programs can be of a nine-month to three-year duration.

One **Best Essay Award** winner is selected from the applicant pool to receive a one-time \$2,000 award towards his or her four-year college tuition.

Additional information and scholarship applications are available on apwu.org.

APWU National Convention



The American Postal Workers Union's 25th Biennial Convention is tentatively set for Monday, October 4 through Thursday, October 7, 2021, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas, NV.

The National Convention is the union's highest decision-making body and helps the union chart its course for the future. Approximately 2,000 APWU delegates will debate and vote on resolutions that will be introduced on a wide variety of subjects. The resolutions give focus to the union's goals and help us better serve our members.

While we all cannot wait to gather together again, the leadership of the APWU takes the health and safety of our members seriously. As a result, the National Executive Board will determine if it is safe for members to gather as a result of COVID-19 during the above-mentioned dates.

Additional information, including a decision on holding an in-person convention, will be posted on apwu.org and communicated to all local and state presidents in a timely manner.

COLA Increase Announced

In accordance with the 2018-2021 Collective Bargaining Agreement, career employees represented by the APWU received a 20 cent per hour cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective February 27, 2021.

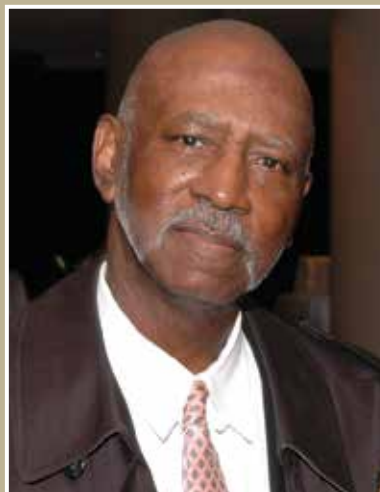
The increase is the result of a rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W). It will appear in paychecks dated March 19, 2021 (pay period 06-2021), and will total \$416 per year. The value of the COLA for full-time employees in each step and grade will increase by \$416 annually, and the hourly rates for part-time employees will be adjusted accordingly.

The COLAs are in addition to general wage increases. This is the fifth cost-of-living increase under the 2018 contract. The COLAs received so far during the 2018 National Agreement total \$1,414 per year.

Postal Support Employees (PSEs) do not receive cost-of-living increases, but have several general wage increases under the 2018 contract. The next increase is effective on May 22, 2021 when PSEs will receive another 20-cent raise.

Go to apwu.org/pay-information for updated pay scales. ■

Former APWU National Officer Passes Away



George McKeithen, former Director of the Special Delivery Division, passed away on January 10 at the age of 90.

Brother McKeithen joined the Postal Service in 1957, retiring in 1989 after a 32-year career.

A member of the

Nation's Capital Southern MD Area Local, Brother McKeithen became an APWU officer in 1986 before retiring in 2001. As Special Delivery Division Director, McKeithen also served on the APWU National Executive Board.



Using the JCIM to Settle Disputes

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

Finalizing all the documentation around a contract is a long process. For the 2018-2021 contract, the APWU and the USPS first had to agree on the production of the written contract. This included agreeing to the finest details like the color of the cover, the font, and to use the cliché, making sure that every “i” was dotted and “t” was crossed.

It does not end there. Next was finalizing the *Joint Contract Interpretation Manual* (JCIM). This past December, the text of the JCIM was finalized and printed. I want to thank all of the national officers who helped update the new version.

Each state and local president was sent complimentary copies for their local. Additional copies can be purchased from the APWU store. You can also download a copy of the bookmarked JCIM and other important documents from this page: apwu.org/contract-information-and-frequently-used-resources.

The JCIM is the manual that should be used by both parties when attempting to settle disputes, whether in the grievance process or before it becomes necessary to file a grievance. The JCIM addresses various contract subjects. Not all contract issues are addressed; rather it is a collection of agreed-upon interpretations that have been made over decades of collective bargaining. Whether those interpretations have been made by simple discussion and agreement, interpreted by a national arbitrator in arbitration proceedings, agreed upon in memoranda of understanding or through dispute settlements, the JCIM is the final word on issues printed in the booklet for all levels of the grievance process.

The purpose of the JCIM is stated at the beginning of the manual:

*When a dispute arises, the parties should first go to the JCIM to determine if the issue in disputes is addressed. If it is, the parties **are required** to resolve the dispute in accordance with this manual.*

If the parties effectively use and consult the JCIM, many disputes can be settled early on in the grievance/arbitration process.

Some of the changes that were made in the 2020 version of the JCIM include the following:

- Language updated in Article 8 to reflect PSE overtime application in accordance with the *Workforce Benefits Fund* settlement.
- Language added on the citing of previous discipline issued prior to a career conversion.
- In Article 26 – added items to the authorized Uniform and Work Clothes Programs and updated PSE uniform allowance.
- In Article 37, updated Mutual Exchange language as well as multiple questions and answers.
- In Article 38, multiple sections were updated, including the Filling of Maintenance Vacancies pecking order.
- In Article 39, added new language in multiple sections and updated Question No. 23 on retreat rights.

These are just a few of the updates. All of the updates are listed at the beginning of the JCIM in the “Summary of Changes” table on pages I-IV.

Article 16 Changes

One change that is of particular note was the change to Article 16. Article 16 covers the procedure the USPS must follow when disciplining an employee. The Postal Service had taken a position in the field that when a PSE was converted to career status that any previous discipline followed them. Management was citing discipline PSEs had been issued as being “progressive” for removals that newly converted career employees were subsequently issued. Throughout the country, local stewards and officers had argued that this discipline should not follow PSEs into career status. Many of these cases went to arbitration where arbitrators were ruling that citing this previous discipline was improper. With rulings mounting against them, the Postal Service agreed to put language in the JCIM that PSE discipline would not follow new career employees.

If not for the hard work of our front-line stewards, officers, NBAs, and arbitration advocates this change may not have been added to the JCIM.

Solidarity! ■

COVID-19 Spotlights the Need to Continue the Fight for Safety and Health

Every year on April 28, workers come together for Workers Memorial Day to remember those who have died, been injured, or contracted an occupational disease at work. The memorial day is on the anniversary of April 28, 1971, when the *Occupational Safety and Health Act* became effective and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was formed.

In a normal year, a worker is killed on the job every seven seconds. In particular, postal workers have some of the most dangerous jobs in government service. In the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented disaster for working people in the country, including postal workers.

Over 500,000 people have died of COVID-19 in the United States. Recent studies show that essential workers outside health care are 20 percent more likely to die from COVID-19 than other workers. Tens of thousands of postal workers have been forced to quarantine, and over 150 have died.

Other essential workers have also borne much of the brunt of the pandemic as they kept vital services running. Instead of protecting their workers, too many employers sacrificed their employees' health and safety in the name of the economy. COVID-19 tore through meatpacking plants, long-term care facilities, kitchens, Amazon warehouses, and countless other workplaces across the country, while workers were left without proper PPE and the White House took a 'hands off' approach to worker safety.

As of January, At least 239 meatpacking workers died and 45,000

had contracted the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, according to a *USA Today* report. Some employers did not report these deaths to OSHA.

In New York City alone, 136 transit workers had died of COVID-19 by the end of January.

At Amazon, which has made record profits during the pandemic, nearly 20,000 workers were reported to have contracted COVID-19 by October 2020. When employees protested the company's poor safety policies, Amazon cracked down, firing workers for speaking out and protesting for safe workplaces. New York Attorney General Letitia James brought a lawsuit against the company in February, suing Amazon for not properly conducting contact tracing and improving ventilation in its facilities in the state, as well as illegally firing a worker at its Staten Island warehouse for whistleblowing about its lack of safety.

OSHA Failed to Protect Workers During the Pandemic

President Trump's OSHA failed workers during the pandemic, making many safety recommendations voluntary for employers and allowing them to determine whether a death from COVID-19 was workplace-related. Workers were forced to choose between putting food on the table and keeping themselves and their families safe during the pandemic. Fortunately, the Biden administration has made worker safety a priority, and important changes have been made on the federal level to protect workers across the country (see page 10).



Though this progress is welcomed, we must continue to demand that OSHA aggressively enforce workplace health and safety regulations, and hold employers accountable for unsafe working conditions.

"The APWU's top priority is keeping postal workers safe. Management's priority must be the same," said Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman. "As we honor the struggles of our fellow workers during this difficult year, we must continue to demand management honor their responsibility to us each and every day."

On April 28, we will remember our fellow workers who have been hurt or died on the job, and recommit ourselves to the fight for safe jobs and workplaces through the pandemic and beyond. Mark your calendars and start speaking to your local representatives about what your local/state union or retiree chapter can do to mark the day.

"As essential workers, postal workers have deeply felt the impact of COVID-19 in the workplace," said President Dimondstein. "On every Workers Memorial Day, we 'remember the dead, and fight like hell for the living.' This year has shown just how important that fight still is." ■

Resources: <https://khn.org/news/tag/lost-on-the-frontline/>.



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

Who Conducts Function Four Reviews (or Scams) in the Middle of a Pandemic?

The Postal Service intends to conduct 607 Level 3 Function 4 reviews and 8,772 modified Level 2 Function 4 reviews in offices across the country. There will be no change to the way Level 3 Function 4 reviews are conducted.

However, the Postal Service will conduct modified Level 2 Function 4 reviews, which will consist of virtual desk audits of the offices being reviewed.

Performing Function 4 reviews in the midst of a pandemic is not a nice way to tell all of your dedicated employees “thank you” for an amazing job done during the holiday season and throughout one of the most difficult years in postal history. How can anyone be that insensitive?

Function 4 reviews are done for the sole purpose of reducing staffing hours. They use invented data and ridiculous formulas to draw the conclusion that an office is overstaffed, instead of using realistic data (actual work hours) to determine proper staffing.

WE HAVE REVIEWED THE POSTAL SERVICE'S STAFFING DATA AND, BASED ON ACTUAL WORK HOURS, HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THESE OFFICES ARE UNDERSTAFFED, WHICH REQUIRE THE HIRING OF ADDITIONAL EMPLOYEES (IF DONE CORRECTLY).

We have reviewed the Postal Service's staffing data and, based on actual work hours, have concluded that these offices are understaffed, which require the hiring of additional employees (if done correctly). This is a global pandemic and nothing is normal. Earned hours is nothing more than legal fiction, as stated by an esteemed Arbitrator.

Why would there be a need to hire additional Postal Support Employees (PSEs), going over the PSE authorized hiring cap in most Districts?

Why would the Postal Service be disciplining employees on COVID-related attendance matters if they are over-

staffed? They should be encouraging clerks to take leave since, according to them, there is a lack of work.

The Postal Service tried this same nonsensical kind of action in Function 1 Mail Processing four years ago using another flawed program called the Function 1 Scheduler (based on earned hours), which has no contractual basis and drew the conclusion that mail processing plants nationwide were overstaffed by over 9,000 employees. These same employees were identified to be excessed outside of their craft/installation.

The American Postal Workers Union members and officers were united throughout the country and fought back. In the end, only 133 employees were displaced. Many returned within months as a result of the grievance-arbitration procedure.

This is an insult to the intelligence of postal clerks. Management is sadly mistaken if they think the Clerk Division is going to sit back and watch. Stay tuned!

APWU President Mark Dimondstein is in discussions with higher-level management, in an effort to at least pause these reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I can assure you that by the time you read this article, the Clerk Division will have already filed a national dispute on behalf of the clerks in these Function 4 offices. There are times we get upset, there are times we get bothered, but this is a time we should get mad. How dare the Postal Service make the decision to commit such an egregious action? Many have lost loved ones and close friends over the past year and are still finding ways to come to work, are dealing with the stress, and are admirably performing their job at a high standard.

This is the time for members to band together, while encouraging non-members to join us in this fight for survival. Do not kid yourself, your very job is on the line. At some point you will have to take a stand for what is right. If not now, then when? Young folks, we need you more than ever. This is your future that we are fighting for. You have to get active in your union, you community and legislative matters, locally and nationally. Be safe and wear your mask! ■

Custodial Team Cleaning Failed the COVID Test



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

In the March-April 2019 issue, we raised the alarm that the Custodial Team Cleaning Program (CTC), along with its chemicals, was doomed to fail. We raised the alarm that CTC drastically reduced custodial staff employees by over 30 percent across the country. Cleaning Frequencies were gutted to bare bones and cleaning chemicals and tools were “standardized.” We loudly warned the USPS in private and during the national interest arbitration that the safety and well-being of our employees is a serious concern and is at stake. Unfortunately, the warning and our efforts fell on deaf ears as postal management marched forward blindly towards the cliff.

Unfortunately, since inception, the CTC program deteriorated and management failed to make necessary suggested changes after our Kansas City joint meeting, during which they promised to do better. No wonder when the pandemic hit in March 2020, the Postal Service was not prepared for the COVID-needed cleaning.

The lack of adequate custodian staffing led to the creation of several emergency “bandage” measures to meet the daunting tasks required of COVID-19 cleaning, including the unilateral creation of MMO-31-20, aka “Deep Cleaning.” The creation of “Deep Cleaning” is proof that CTC does not currently provide for necessary, regular extensive cleaning.

The CTC chemicals, sold to the Postal Service as “good enough to drink,” did not meet the standard that is required of the CDC. MMO-31-20 is management’s temporary solution to a permanent CTC problem. The APWU at all levels worked with management to jointly combat the national COVID-19 outbreak, which requires additional cleaning frequencies.

The APWU, like other unions, agreed to temporary exemptions to help with the pandemic, temporarily allowing the usage of “Contract Custodians.” Other non-custodial personnel were allowed to cross the occupational group to keep all postal employees safe. However, the CTC Program problem will not go away via a temporary bandage measure.

It is time that the USPS revisit its Custodian Team Cleaning once again. It is time to upgrade the chemicals, as

promised, and abide by CDC cleaning requirements at all times, not just during a pandemic.

It is unfortunate to report that at the time of writing this article, thousands of fellow postal employees are infected with COVID-19, and 150 of our fellow brothers and sisters have died since the beginning of the pandemic from COVID-19.

It is our collective, humble opinion that the pandemic should be seen as an opportunity to completely overhaul CTC, return to the bargaining table and seriously negotiate with the union, using a new acceptable Center for Disease Control (CDC) Cleaning standards that will meet the test of safety going forward.

Since our 2019 article, we have received several emails and telephone calls concerning blatant safety violations, that not only puts our custodians’ safety in jeopardy, but also the safety of all postal employees. Let’s face it: CTC failed miserably, with a grade of “F minus.” As usual, we would love to hear from you at Maint-HQ-Update@apwu.org. ■

CDC Recommendations: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

Areas unoccupied for 7 or more days need only routine cleaning. Maintain existing cleaning practices for outdoor areas.

Consider the type of surface and how often the surface is touched. Prioritize disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

Keep in mind the availability of cleaning products and personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for cleaners and disinfectants.

Use an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved disinfectant against COVID-19 and read the label to make sure it meets your needs.

Continue or revise your plan based on appropriate disinfectant and PPE availability. Dirty surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection. Routinely disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily.

MVS Challenges Zero Base Review



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Kenneth Prinz

The APWU initiated a National Dispute on January 29, 2021, challenging the Postal Service's National Zero Base review program and Transportation Logistics Training Program that unilaterally implemented a national policy of systematically assigning bargaining unit work to non-bargaining unit personnel in violation of Article 1.6.A.

The parties have clearly agreed that the duties of creating PVS schedules is bargaining unit work.

Arbitrator Das held in case number Q10V-4Q-C 15292655, "that there is no dispute between the parties over the fact that Schedule Examiner Vehicle Runs (SEVR) work is bargaining unit work which the employer may not assign to non-bargaining unit personnel."

In the case brief, the Postal Service stated: "The Postal Service does not dispute that Schedule Examiner work is bargaining unit work, and that supervisors (and EAS employees) cannot perform bargaining unit work unless one of the exceptions provided for in Article 1.6 applies."

Transportation Managers are required to complete Zero Base reviews nationwide at Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs). The reconfiguration of PVS routes that are part of Zero Base reviews is bargaining unit work that must be performed by bargaining unit personnel. This work is now being done by non-bargaining unit employees in violation of Article 1.6.A of the National Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Postal management has implemented a Transportation Logistics Training Program (VITAL) and Zero Base training for non-bargaining unit personnel. This training includes instruction on how non-bargaining unit personnel are to perform bargaining unit Schedule Examiner work. Presently, SEVRs are not provided this training.

The parties have also signed a SEVR MOU dated October 28, 2019, which states:

The parties agree that the SEVR position is an applicable best qualified position within the Motor Vehicle [Service] Craft bargaining unit whose primary duties and responsibilities are listed in the Position Description and Qualification Standards. It is appropriate to post these duty assignments for bid when they become vacant when there are sufficient work

hours to justify a full-time assignment. In the event that local management determines that there are insufficient work hours to justify a full-time duty assignment, these duties must still be performed by bargaining unit employees of the MVS Craft.

Go Anywhere HCR Inquiry

The APWU became aware in December 2020 that the Office of the Inspector General was conducting an audit of the Postal Service's use of Go Anywhere Highway Contract Route Services. The OIG explained that Go Anywhere contracts "allow HCR suppliers to travel anywhere within the continental U.S. based on the mail transportation needs of the Postal Service." We understand that these Go Anywhere contracts are currently being utilized in several parts of the country.

In response to our question to define Go Anywhere HCR Service, we received a response dated February 12, 2021:

There is no Postal definition for Go Anywhere HCR services. However, Go Anywhere HCR services are contracts which do not include a set origin or destination. These contracts are put in place to provide service on existing Highway Contract Route (HCR) work as operational needs dictate. Some examples which may require the use of a Go Anywhere HCR service are, supplier failure, additional volume, emergency situations, etc. These contracts are not intended to be used to cover existing Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) work.

Article 32.2 of the National Collective Bargaining Agreement, the *MVS Jobs* MOU and the *Contracting or Insourcing of Contracted Service* MOU requires certain contractual provisions to be met. We will continue our investigation and apprise the field of our findings.

Trailer FAT

The APWU received a notification in early February to participate in a First Article Test (FAT) for new trailers. The FAT will be held virtually in March.

An OIG Audit Report dated December 4, 2020 stated: "As of May 2020, the Postal Service had 2,905 owned trailers and approved a business case to purchase 825 trailers for about \$24.5 million."

We will provide additional information at the conclusion of the FAT. ■

Learning the Union Difference



Director Steve Brooks

There is certainly something to be said for developing working relationships with postal management or company representatives. When you have someone from the other side that you discuss issues with, you develop a feeling for how each other operates and can plan around their responses.

The Support Services Division met regularly with the operations manager for the Salmon Companies and Mail Contractors of America (MCA) group. Since Salmon bought out the MCA company years ago, the operation manager was the same person for both companies. Although they had separate collective bargaining agreements, they were negotiated by the same parties. In addition, the same person took responsibility for labor management and grievance issues.

This meant our contract negotiating and grievance procedures were streamlined and the parties were able to retain the history between each other over the years. This helped us with the many issues that arose.

It seems that all of that has changed. The Salmon and MCA group were bought out by a private sector trucking company named Hoovestol Trucking. At the time, Hoovestol also owned a mail haul company called Eagle Express. Hoovestol's goal was to create the largest private sector mail hauling company. The companies merged and they are now operating under one company called 10 Roads Express. The new operation went into effect January 1, 2021.

As you can imagine, when you attempt to combine four major companies together you will have issues. In addition to the administrative issues with this type of venture, you throw on top of it the fact that each company had their own operational procedures. To make things even more complicated, 10 Roads decided to change payroll companies. Why would you not wait until you had the kinks worked out before attempting to take that on?

Needless to say, this change has caused many problems.

The merger meant putting employees from the different companies under one umbrella for health benefits, so

they solicited health care companies for rate and benefit quotes. The timing of the merger also meant the benefit packets were late in being issued to the employees for their selections. This decreased the amount of time an employee had to make decisions on personal health care plans, long/short term disability insurance, 401k, life insurance, and dental and vision programs.

**THROUGH THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING
PROCESS [WORKERS] CAN ACHIEVE ADDED
BENEFITS AND PROTECTIONS**

Perhaps the biggest challenge has been the need for the Support Services representatives to educate the new company on the union collective bargaining agreement and members' rights under their contract. It is quite clear that this company has not dealt with union represented employees and working under the terms of a union contract.

We have to constantly remind them that they need to approach the union prior to implementing working condition changes. The newly formed company did not retain the Salmon operations personnel and appear to be making decisions without getting any advice or information on the history of the unit from the previous administration.

From the labor relations aspect, this has proved to be challenging. The company finally determined that they need to have a permanent representative who handles grievance situations and has hired a full-time labor relations manager.

On a positive note, the non-union drivers are seeing the union difference. Many are beginning to understand that through the collective bargaining process they can achieve added benefits and protections. We have had many drivers approach our union representatives wondering how they can form or join the union. ■



Sharyn M. Stone, Central Regional Coordinator

Postal Workers Are Essential Workers

Moving forward into 2021, we can be amazed and be proud of how we persevered and managed to get through the past year of COVID-19 battered but unbowed. The work of representation did not stop, but the way we got the work done had to be identified and modified. Local, state, regional, and national levels of APWU are working together to serve the membership to the fullest extent necessary. You can see some of the vital union business being conducted through MOUs and bulletins. Our national officers continue to work tirelessly to stay on top of all relevant issues and ensure that necessary information is sent out.

In this new world, where everything that can be done virtually is online for the safety of all involved, we use Zoom as a means to communicate with each other, do trainings, conduct union meetings and discuss issues. We have also utilized Zoom to assist locals with issues including a means to address constitutional issues and have timely elections in accordance with local/state and our national constitutions. With this tool we have extensively educated, informed and stayed in touch with the membership.

I look forward to continuing the work with our locals and our officers at every level to maintain representation and move the union forward.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL MEMBERS KNOW THEIR RIGHTS AND ASSERT THEM, ESPECIALLY YOUR RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION AND THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE.

Safety

It is imperative that all members know their rights and assert them, especially your right to representation and the right to be safe.

Wearing a mask and maintaining social distancing is not always easy, but it is always necessary. We are still in the throgs of COVID-19. We have to make safety a priority, especially now. Continue to mask up and stand up for safe jobs while maintaining social distancing. We're not just essential workers; for the most part

there are not enough employees to replace us. Please do everything you have to do to protect yourself, which also protects your loved ones and family.

Now that we have a COVID-19 vaccine, hopefully state/local health authorities will prioritize vaccinating essential postal employees.

Article 12

A number of DMUs (Detached Mail Units) were discontinued because some businesses closed operations or moved for economic reasons. Once employees at these DMUs returned to their home offices, those offices became overstaffed and an Article 12 impact notice was issued. There were also several Article 12 impacts issued for Maintenance in some offices. However, as of yet, management has not moved forward with any action for anyone. Most of these impacts were issued months ago. There is now more evidence that the impacts are improper and should be rescinded.

Essential workers: we get the job done!

We need everyone to get involved. There are still many opportunities for all our members to get active and support our organization. You do not have to be a national, state, or local officer to be involved. Members are our most important asset. Volunteer for a committee or a single event, or just attend a local meeting. My first local position was Entertainment Committee member. We all have something to contribute.

As Coordinator, I am available to assist locals. In addition, Tiffany Foster (Northeast Region), AJ Jones (Eastern Region), Kenneth Beasley (Southern Region), and Omar Gonzalez (Western Region) are also always available to work with you and for you to present a stronger united front and be successful in the workplace. ■

*Stand up, Stand up
Stand up for your rights
Get up, Get up
Don't Give up the fight*

– Bob Marley

MAY 1 is International Workers' Day

May Day, also known as International Workers' Day, is the annual holiday recognizing the working class. Originating in the 1880s, the holiday came out of the historic fight in Chicago for the eight-hour work day.

The holiday is celebrated worldwide in 80 countries (although it is not recognized in the United States as a federal holiday).

The APWU encourages all members to safely participate in May Day activities, virtual or in-person, in your area if possible. If participating in an in-person event please be safe and follow all recommended COVID-19 mask and social distancing protocols.

If you take part in an event, please send pictures of you, your family, and/or co-workers to communications@apwu.org for a chance to be featured on the APWU website or in future publications. Remember to wear your union gear! ■

New Policy Brief Shows Importance of Postal Service to Black Families in Present and Future

In February, the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) released a new policy brief, titled "Black Families Have a Major Stake in the Future of the public Postal Service." The brief, written by Sarah Anderson, Scott Klinger, and Brian Wakamo, shows the present importance of the public Postal Service to Black families, while discussing how they would benefit more with expanded services such as postal banking.

In the brief, Anderson, Klinger and Wakamo discuss the importance of the Postal Service as a source of good union jobs for Black workers. "In 2020, Black workers made up nearly a quarter of the Postal Service workforce — more than double their share of the total U.S. labor force," the brief says. "Postal workers have the highest average

annual wage (\$51,740) and the highest median hourly wage (\$25.03) among the 10 occupations with the heaviest representation of Black workers."

Cutting services in order to lower costs would not only have a profoundly negative affect on Black workers, but fail to meet the needs of Black families that the Postal Service is uniquely equipped to address. Though the Postal Service is experiencing severe financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the continued burden of the retiree health benefits pre-funding mandate, the brief argues that instead of cutting services to bring costs down, as the APWU argues, the mandate should be repealed and the USPS should expand services into the financial sector.

Expanding into postal banking, the brief says, would meet important social needs, providing banking options for the 13.8 percent of Black households that do not have a bank account, compared to just 2.5 percent of white households.

Additionally, the brief says, "a 2019 S&P Global report found that majority-Black neighborhoods have lost more bank branches than non-majority-Black neighborhoods. JPMorgan, for example, reduced the number of branches in majority-

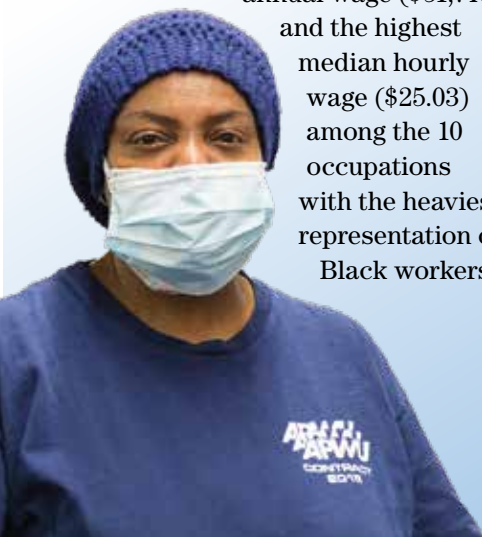
THE POSTAL SERVICE IS A
SOURCE OF GOOD UNION
JOBS FOR BLACK WORKERS.



Black areas by 22.8 percent from 2010 to 2018, compared to a decline of 0.2 percent in the rest of the country."

"With more than 31,000 post offices across the country and a high level of public trust, USPS is well-positioned to provide dependable, affordable financial services," the brief says. "According to a 2015 USPS Office of Inspector General report, expanding postal financial services such as check-cashing, ATMs, and electronic money orders could generate as much as \$1.1 billion in annual revenue."

The policy brief is available to read at bit.ly/3ushxEo. ■



Teamsters Joint Council 16



1,400 Warehouse Workers and Drivers in New York Win Raise After Strike

Teamsters Local 202 and Warehouse Worker during strike on January 19

On January 17, around 1,400 members of Teamsters Local 202 who work at Hunts Point Produce Market in The Bronx, NY went on strike after management refused to meet workers' demands for desperately-needed pay raises and additional health care support.

Following the six-day strike, workers voted over 97 percent in favor of a new three-year contract. The collective bargaining agreement includes a wage increase over the course of the contract above the workers' initial demand and additional health benefits at no additional costs to workers.

The strike, the first at Hunts Point since 1986, saw strong solidarity from fellow union members and

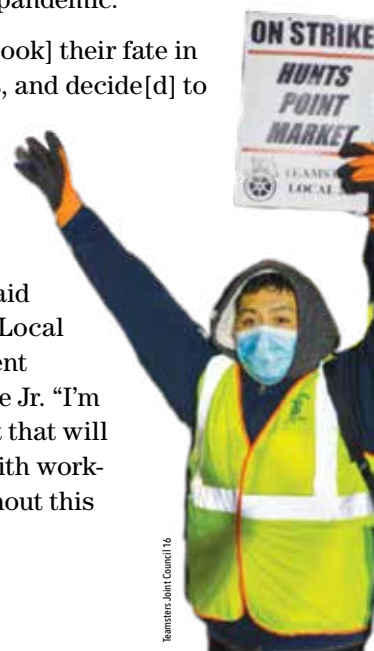
some elected officials, gaining national attention. Train conductors, who are fellow Teamsters, refused to cross the picket line and stopped the delivery of over 21 train cars of merchandise on January 20. Additionally, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY-14), New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and New York State Assembly member Amanda Septimo joined workers on the picket line.

The warehouse workers and drivers at Hunts Point are responsible for handling over 60 percent of all produce in New York City. Workers were poorly paid in one of the most expensive cities in the country, all while risking their safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's been different this year with the pandemic, and actually seeing and knowing some of your friends that you've worked with in here for 28 years die, and then have friends of yours not coming to work because they're home quarantined, sick, makes a big difference," Hunts Point worker Francisco Flores told *Gothamist*/WNYC.

Now that the workers won a strong new contract, they hope the strike becomes an inspiration for other essential workers struggling during the pandemic.

"Workers [took] their fate in their hands, and decide[d] to put their hands together to fight for a better tomorrow," said Teamsters Local 202 President Daniel Kane Jr. "I'm hoping that that will resonate with workers throughout this country." ■



Teamsters Joint Council 16

Public Workers Strike in Myanmar Following Military Coup

On February 1, Myanmar's military overthrew the country's democratically elected government. Myanmar's governing party, the National League for Democracy, had recently won a landslide in a parliamentary election, but the military launched a coup on false claims of electoral fraud on the day the new legislative session was set to begin.

After the military's illegal deposition of the country's elected leaders, crackdowns began across the country, with hundreds of pro-democracy supporters arrested in the days immediately following the coup. As the military presence increased in Myanmar's biggest cities, the people, led by public workers,

immediately mobilized to act against the unlawful overthrow of the government.

Beginning with doctors on February 5, the protest movement quickly spread to railway workers, power plant workers and students. By February 14, hundreds of thousands of civilians joined the strike against the coup. The civil disobedience movement has gained steam even as the military cut internet access and increased the presence of armored vehicles and water cannons in the country's largest city of Yangon.

The strikes are ongoing as this issue goes to press. More information will be provided on apwu.org as the situation develops.

Historic Union Election Begins at Bessemer, AL Amazon Warehouse

In the last issue of the *American Postal Worker*, we reported on the union drive at Amazon's warehouse in Bessemer, AL. In November, The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) filed a petition for an election with the NLRB, and while Amazon argued to delay the election during hearings, the NLRB ruled against the company, allowing the election to proceed in early 2021.

Following the RWDSU's filing, the union drive has captured national attention for both its significance – the 5,800-worker election is the first at the notoriously anti-union company since 2014 – and the lengths Amazon has gone to prevent a union from forming at the Bessemer warehouse.

Following the RWDSU's initial victory in preventing a delay of the election, Amazon pushed to have the election held in-person at the facility, even as the COVID-19 positivity rate in the area rose above 5 percent. The NLRB denied the company's petition, ruling that the election would take place entirely by mail. Ballots were sent to workers at the end of February, and are due on March 29.

Amazon has waged a ferocious campaign to defeat the union. The company, represented by the infamous unionbusting law firm Morgan Lewis, launched an anti-union campaign at the warehouse, harassing workers with multiple text messages per day and forcing them to attend anti-union meetings.

"Some of the young people are kind of confused. They're afraid because Amazon told them in the meeting that if you get the union, your

benefits will be taken away," said warehouse employee Jennifer Bates, in a video from *More Perfect Union*. "It's just not true."

The company posted anti-union flyers everywhere in the building, including in bathroom stalls. It took the unprecedented step of lobbying the city government to shorten the stoplight times outside the warehouse to prevent RWDSU organizers from having time to speak with workers as they waited at red lights.

However, organizers have been undeterred by Amazon's tactics, and have kept organizing workers ahead of the vote. "[Amazon] is continuing to keep them down, and that's not something we're going to allow," RWDSU Organizer Michael Foster said. "We're going to stay here, we're going to continue to fight, continue to help, and do whatever we think is necessary."

When the results of the election are published, we will update this story on apwu.org. ■

Fast Food Workers Strike as Lawmakers Debate Raising Minimum Wage in COVID-19 Relief Bill

On February 16, fast food workers in over 15 cities across the U.S. engaged in a one-day strike for a \$15/hour minimum wage, demanding a raise from the current \$7.25/hour that has remained unchanged since 2009.

The work stoppage, organized by workers in the *Fight for 15* campaign, took place purposefully during Black History Month to bring attention to the inequity faced by Black and Latino minimum wage workers. According to the Economic Policy Institute, raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour would increase income for nearly one in three Black workers. Black or Latina women would be 23 percent of workers who could see a boost in wages.

"This Black History Month, we have a chance to make our own history by winning a living wage of at least \$15 an hour and lifting millions of families out of poverty," Taiwana Milligan, a McDonald's worker from South Carolina, told the *Guardian*. "I'm striking today because I need at least \$15 an hour to survive, and because I know the only way to make change is to stand up, speak out, and demand it."

The strike took place as federal lawmakers debated including the *Raise the Wage Act* in the \$1.9 billion COVID-19 relief bill under consideration as this issue goes to press. The bill would increase the federal minimum wage to \$15/hour by 2025, and adjust the minimum wage each year thereafter to keep pace with growth in the median wage. The bill would also phase out the subminimum wage – currently \$2.13/hour – for tipped workers.

Like the rest of the COVID-19 relief package, the *Raise the Wage Act* can realistically only be passed through the budget reconciliation process that would allow the Senate to avoid a filibuster and pass the legislation with 51 votes. The Biden administration has signaled its desire to include the minimum wage rise in the final bill.



▶▶▶ Become a COPA Contributor Today!

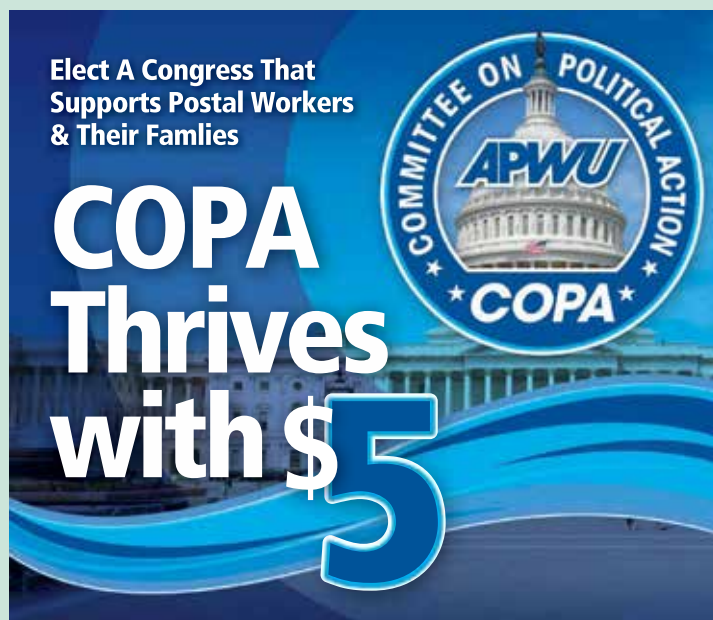
With the recent attacks on the Postal Service, and the need to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, contributing to COPA is more important than ever. APWU active and retired members are encouraged to join us in our fight by volunteering to become a COPA contributor today!

Understanding how we can be impacted by federal law is critical to COPA. 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. Any amount you can contribute is welcome! No amount is too big or too small.

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.



Disclaimer: This COPA solicitation is paid for by the American Postal Workers Union, 1300 L Street, 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.

SIGN UP FOR ALERTS from the Legislative and Political Department!

The new administration and Congress may be sworn in, but the APWU's work continues in Washington to demand strong, pro-postal legislation that will preserve the people's Post Office and the important services we provide.

The Legislative & Political Department helps advance the union's cause on Capitol Hill and keeps APWU members informed about important issues and legislative developments. APWU members are encouraged to stay informed by subscribing to receive important text and email updates from the Legislative & Political Department.

To sign up for alerts, go to apwu.org/legislative-and-political, or text LEGISLATIVE to 91990.

Contact Your Representatives and Senators to Support the USPS Fairness Act!

In February, the *USPS Fairness Act* was reintroduced in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The bill, which would fully repeal the 2006 *Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act* requirement to prefund retiree health benefits 75 years into the future, passed in the House of Representatives in the 116th Congress. However, the bill stalled in the Senate.

Now, with a pro-postal majority in both houses of the 117th Congress and in the White House, we must keep up the pressure and make sure the bill is passed and signed into law.

APWU members are encouraged to call your member of Congress and senators! Call 844-402-1001 and ask them to cosponsor the legislation.





Judy Beard, Director

Fighting to Include Postal Workers in Stimulus Package

Since the beginning of the 117th Congress, we have focused a lot of attention on making sure the White House and Congress include USPS in the upcoming stimulus package, titled the *American Rescue Plan*. We were able to build support on two issues: emergency paid leave and the workers compensation claims process. The package from the House of Representatives included language for postal workers that need leave should they fall ill from COVID-19 or need to care for a loved one as a result of the virus. We also secured language in the House package which would streamline the Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP), to ensure that workers who contract the virus are assumed to have contracted it through work, allowing them to qualify for the compensation they deserve. Once the House passes the stimulus package, it will move to the Senate.

In the Senate, this stimulus bill will only require 51 votes to pass. Each fiscal year, Congress has the opportunity to pass a “budget reconciliation” bill that requires only a simple majority in the Senate to pass. However, while these bills can provide the Postal Service with emergency leave funding and infrastructure funding, there is a litany of rules that narrow the scope of legislation that can be included in these packages. The primary constraint to this style of legislation is that the proposed bill must have a significant impact on the budget, and that impact must not last longer than 10 years.

When this article went to press, the Senate had not yet released its version of the American Rescue Plan. In the days and weeks ahead, we will continue pressing the Senate to keep the House language. Before this legislation can become law, it must be passed in identical versions by both the House and Senate and signed by President Biden. Please visit apwu.org for any updates on this legislation.

Both Sides Must Work Together to Save the Postal Service

In the 117th Congress, one of our primary goals will be to grow bipartisan support of the Postal Service. While Democrats currently control the White House, Senate,

and House of Representatives, it is still important for members of both parties to understand the vital role the Postal Service plays in every community in the nation.

In addition, the vast majority of legislation, including postal reform and the *USPS Fairness Act*, will require 60 votes out of the Senate’s 100 members to proceed to the floor for a final vote. As the Democratic party only has 50 votes in the Senate (plus the Vice President’s vote to break any ties), in most cases we will need to persuade 10 Republican Senators to support our legislative reforms. ■

USPS Fairness Act Reintroduced in the House and Senate

In early February, both the House of Representatives and the Senate re-introduced the bipartisan *USPS Fairness Act* (S. 145 and H.R. 695). This legislation would fully repeal the onerous prefunding of retiree health care benefits required by the 2006 *Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act* (PAEA). The PAEA forced the Postal Service to prefund its retiree health care benefits 75 years in advance, paying for retirement health care for individuals who had not been born yet. The pre-funding mandate is accountable for 92 percent of the Postal Service’s net losses since 2007 and is a constant threat to the financial sustainability of the Postal Service.

The *USPS Fairness Act* would return the Postal Service to procedures in place prior to the PAEA, utilizing a pay-as-you-go method for retiree benefits, the standard practice across federal agencies and private businesses. Ending the pre-funding mandate gained immense support from both sides of the aisle in the last Congress. Now is the time to right the errors of the failed pre-funding policy, and allow the USPS to remove this manufactured debt from its books.

Please contact your representative and Senators and ask that they cosponsor this critical legislation, 844-402-1001.



Anna Smith, Director

It Pays to Be Union

On January 22, the Department of Labor (DOL) released its annual Union Membership Report. These figures are not based upon unionized postal employees alone, but rather unions as a whole including other federal, state and local government employees as well as a large variety of occupations and industries.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported unionized full-time wage earners receive more pay than workers not represented by unions. The median weekly earnings of union members was \$1,144 compared to \$958 for non-union workers. In addition to higher wages, statistics also showed union members have greater access to benefits, like health insurance, retirement plans, paid leave and holidays.

According to the report, while the union membership percentage rate rose by 0.5 percent to 10.8 percent in 2020, the total number of unionized workers declined by 2.2 percent. Hawaii and New York continue to have the highest union membership rates (23.7 and 22 percent respectively) in country. To help put these two states' figures into perspective, the unionized workforce in the nine lowest states is below five percent.

**THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS (BLS)
REPORTED UNIONIZED FULL-TIME WAGE
EARNERS RECEIVE MORE PAY THAN
WORKERS NOT REPRESENTED BY UNIONS.**

While the labor movement simply is not what it was 20 years ago, I know as we can do better and we can do more. We are fortunate to have a union, and everyone who enjoys the benefits of our being a unionized workforce should be contributing to the effort to not only maintain what we have, but to build the labor movement back up. Our struggle for better wages and working conditions is directly tied to the rise of the non-union workforce.

In today's postal climate, there is no justifiable excuse not to belong to the APWU. We are not in a position to tolerate non-members taking a free ride. They reap the benefits and must be held accountable. We need everyone's support if we are going to thrive in the future.

APWU-represented employees have a distinct advantage over unrepresented employees in the postal workforce thanks to the support of dues paying members.

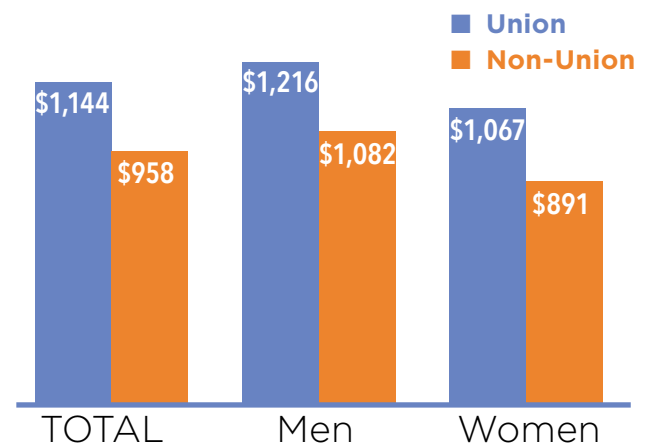
Members are encouraged to join forces in asking our non-member co-workers to stand with us. The Organizing Department is constantly working to improve the process for non-members to join online. Co-workers who have been on the rolls for a few weeks, and in our database, are able to join online within minutes via our online join process.

This year, we will be rolling out a process so that those who have yet to populate our database have a method to joining the APWU as well. The Organizing Department will be sending out information on navigating through the new process.

The Organization Department is continuing to reach out to all of our non-members via mail asking them to stand with us. While we continue to be successful in bringing a lot of new members in using this method, speaking with non-members about joining at every opportunity is essential.

If you are in need of the updated organizing material to help you in your efforts, do not hesitate to email the department at Organization@apwu.org. ■

The Union Difference



Median weekly earnings for full-time workers in 2020

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

Alleviating Stress During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on postal employees. Many are working longer hours with a reduced workforce and are required to listen to customer complaints about bad service and slow delivery of mail.

This, along with the loss of family members, close friends and/or co-workers can be stressful and overwhelming. Data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) revealed that symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorder increased in the United States last year and that stress, substance abuse and mental illness are on the rise.

IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OUR MENTAL STABILITY, WE MUST FIND HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE.

Learning to Cope with the Stress of COVID-19

Although it is necessary during this pandemic to practice social distancing, this leads to isolation and loneliness for many people. In order to maintain our mental stability, we must find healthy ways to cope. When faced with a highly stressful event in your life, use these methods to help you cope:

Keep a stable home environment – Avoid making major changes in your home and schedule so you can focus on any stressors caused by the pandemic.

Clear your mind – Use meditation, deep breathing and other calming exercises to clear your mind of negative thoughts.

Focus on the present – The past is gone and the future will take care of itself. Focus on how to make things better today.

Return to other successful coping methods – If you've successfully dealt with stress from other causes in your life, use the methods from that situation in dealing with your current one.

Take action – Promise to yourself to deal with what is causing stress in a reasonable way. Action can be an effective way to reduce stress. Do not fear taking an action because you may make the wrong decision.

Value yourself – You are somebody. Respect your abilities and forgive your errors.

Limit projects – Stop trying to accomplish everything. Finish one task before starting another.

Delegate Authority – No one person can do it all. Utilize others who are willing to help.

Maintain a positive attitude – Avoid relationships with negative thinking people.

Take time to relax – Music, exercise and other activities can help calm the mind.

Learn to compromise – Find alternative solutions to handling incidents; stop arguing or fighting.

See your doctor regularly – Assuring that you are in good health aids stress reduction.

Know when to walk away – Avoid prolonged bad relationships and friendships.

In closing, never be ashamed to seek help.

If you are or someone in your family is suffering from severe depression, anxiety or if you have or suspect they have suicidal thoughts, contact the USPS Employee's Assistance Program (EAP) toll-free hotline: 1-800-327-4968 or TTY: 1-877-492-7341. Counselors provide confidential emergency, urgent care intervention for Postal employees and family members.

Also, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline, 1-800-662-4357 or TTY: 1-800-487-4889, is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish. ■

Resources: The USPS Employee's Assistance Program, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "How to Beat Serious Stress," via Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts.



Nancy Olumekor, Director

COVID-19 Vaccination and You

People have questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine. While this article provides a few of the most commonly asked questions and answers, the CDC website provides more details as well as a complete list of facts and myths about the COVID-19 vaccines: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines.

Will a COVID-19 vaccination protect me from getting sick with COVID-19?

Both of the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in the United States as this issue goes to press are shown to prevent at least 90 percent of infections. For those who do still contract COVID-19 after getting the vaccine, data shows a strong decrease in severity of symptoms.

The COVID-19 vaccination works by teaching your immune system how to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19, protecting you from getting sick with COVID-19. Being protected from getting sick is important because even though many people with COVID-19 have only a mild illness, others may get a severe illness, have long-term health effects, or even die. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you, even if you don't have an increased risk of developing severe complications.

How long does protection from a COVID-19 vaccine last?

It is unknown how long protection lasts for those who are vaccinated. What is known is that COVID-19 has caused very serious illness and death for a lot of people. If you get COVID-19, you also risk giving it to loved ones who may get very sick. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a way to protect yourself and limit the spread of the virus.

Experts are working to learn more about both natural immunity and vaccine-induced immunity. The CDC will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

Do I need to wear a mask and avoid close contact with others if I have gotten two doses of the vaccine?

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, President Biden's chief medical adviser for COVID-19, said in recent interviews that Americans may still be wearing masks outside their homes a

year from now, even as he predicted the country would return to "a significant degree of normality" by fall. "When it goes way down and the overwhelming majority of people in the population are vaccinated, then I would feel comfortable saying...we don't need to have masks."

To protect yourself and others, follow these recommendations:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands often.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine?

You should talk to your medical provider to receive advice on what could be the best choice for you.

Experts do not yet know how long you are protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19. Even if you have already recovered from COVID-19, it is possible that you could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 again.

Those treated for COVID-19 with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, are recommended to wait 90 days before getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure what treatments you received or if you have more questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

If I have an underlying condition, can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

The CDC writes that people with underlying medical conditions can receive the FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines as long as they have not had an immediate or severe allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine or to any of the ingredients in the vaccine.

Vaccination is an important consideration for adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions because they are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. ■



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

Vaccination Health

Vaccines are part of a plan for overall optimum health. Unlike most medicines, which treat or cure diseases, vaccines can prevent them. A vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. The Health Plan covers in-network CDC-endorsed vaccines at 100 percent; making them free for our members.

Childhood vaccinations - When children are vaccinated, their immune systems develop infection-fighting antibodies to protect them from contracting the targeted disease if they are exposed to it later in life. The full course of recommended childhood vaccinations, largely completed for most children by age 6, not only protects the vaccinated child but also contributes to a larger umbrella of protection known as “herd immunity.” By doing so, it helps prevent the spread of disease to those who cannot be vaccinated, including newborns who are too young to be vaccinated, and people with compromised immune systems, who cannot effectively develop antibodies to fend off disease.

Shingles - Shingles is a viral infection that causes a painful rash. Although shingles can occur anywhere on your body, it most often appears as a single stripe of blisters that wraps around either the left or the right side of your torso. Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus – the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you have had chickenpox, the virus lies inactive in the nerve tissue near your spinal cord and brain. Years later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. While shingles is not a life-threatening condition, it can be very painful. Vaccines can help reduce the risk of shingles. Risk factors for the vaccine include: being older than 50, having certain diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cancer, undergoing cancer treatment, and taking certain medication. People looking to receive the shingles vaccine now have two options, Shingrix or Zostavax. Talk with your doctor about your vaccination options.

Pneumonia - Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs. The air sacs may fill with fluid or pus (purulent material), causing a cough with phlegm or pus, fever, chills, and difficulty breathing.



A variety of organisms, including bacteria, viruses and fungi, can cause pneumonia. Vaccines are available to prevent some types of pneumonia. Talk with your doctor about getting these shots. The vaccination guidelines have changed over time so make sure to review your vaccination status with your doctor even if you recall previously receiving a pneumonia vaccine.

COVID-19 - The COVID-19 pandemic continues to rapidly evolve. The CDC has issued guidance to wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart from others, and avoid crowds. Now vaccines are available in limited supply. Contact your local health department to see when you would be eligible. With most COVID-19 vaccines, you will need two shots for them to work. Ask your health care provider about getting started with V-safe, a free, smartphone-based tool that uses text messaging and web surveys to provide personalized health check-ins after you receive a COVID-19 vaccination. V-safe also reminds you to get your second dose if you need one.

In an ongoing effort to partner with and provide education to our members, visit apwuhp.com and click on COVID-19 for further information.

For further information, please go to: cdc.gov, niaid.nih.gov, mayoclinic.org. ■



SUBMIT a Contract Campaign Slogan!



APWU National is again putting out the call to active members and retirees to submit slogan ideas for the 2021 Contract Campaign.

The last year was historic for the country and historic for postal workers. We reminded our community members about our essential services and the need for reliable, public postal services.

Throughout the pandemic, postal workers courageously fulfilled our mission to 'bind the nation together.' From

vital medicines to ecommerce and business mail, from distant greetings and gifts, from census forms to 65 million mail-in ballots, postal workers proved once again that we are essential to every person and community across the country.

Now is the time to create a slogan for our contract negotiations for good wages, strong benefits, and safe workplaces that incorporates our essential work and our tremendous community support.

CONTEST RULES:

1. Open to all active and retiree APWU members and auxiliary members.
2. Must be submitted no later than April 20, 2021 (exactly five months before our contract expires)!
3. Enter as many times as you wish by filling out the online form at apwu.org/slogan or emailing ncc@apwu.org. Ideas can also be submitted by mail in a letter addressed to:

APWU Contract 2021
National Campaign Committee
1300 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

4. Include in the letter your name, address, phone number, email, local/state/chapter name, and union position (if applicable).
5. By entering the contest, participants agree to grant the APWU exclusive rights to use the chosen entry.
6. The winning entry will be determined by the APWU National Executive Board. The Board reserves the right to pick a second and third place entry to be used as a secondary slogan.

Remember to keep the suggestions focused and short – it will need to fit on T-shirts, buttons and stickers. The winner will be featured online and in *The American Postal Worker*.