Postal Worker January/February 2022

APWU & USPS Reach Tentative Agreement!



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- **COLAs**
- **✓ Protection from Layoff**
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The American Postal Worker

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

www.apwu.org

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKER, 1300 L Street NW, Washington, DC, 20005

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PRODUCED BY THE APWU COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

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The "Gift" That Keeps on Giving...

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

ne of the greatest gifts ever given to postal workers was not one delivered by Santa. It is our right to collective bargaining over our wages, benefits and conditions of employment. It was won and passed on to us by the courageous actions of our foremothers and forefathers in the Great Postal Strike of 1970!

It is these hard-won rights that laid the foundation for the *GOOD NEWS* of our new tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement, our Union Contract.

The new "Tentative Agreement" (TA) is very positive and achieves many of the union's goals: annual wage increases, continuation of full Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), more opportunities for conversion to career status, addressing the needs of PTFs and protecting job security. It represents advances for every group of APWU-represented workers and every single member.

I am extremely pleased the TA has the unanimous approval of the National Negotiations Committee and the support of the National Executive Board. The TA received the unanimous approval of the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee for a membership ratification vote.

Since many of the pages of this magazine will delve into details of the TA, I will simply share some observations.

First, unlike management of non-union workplaces who are free to dictate almost every aspect of employment, postal management must meet us at the bargaining table and negotiate over wages, benefits and working conditions. Provided the union leadership organizes, mobilizes and unifies the membership and community allies and refuses to engage in concessionary bargaining, the results of collective bargaining are a "gift" that indeed keeps on giving.

Second, the success of negotiations comes down to building and exercising power and leverage. Our power begins with you, the member, and is amplified through the union activism of thousands of postal workers. The contract campaign many of you participated in included a strong "kick off" rally, union gear days, buttons/stickers, and "talking" union. All these activities helped send

the message to management, from the workroom floor to postal headquarters, that postal workers are united in the struggle for a good contract. The APWU and its leadership has established itself as a strong force to be reckoned with. That was reflected in the outcome of these negotiations.

Third, management and the union generally have opposing goals. The union strives to advance the general well-being of postal workers and the cause of all labor. Since we are not negotiating with ourselves, hammering out an agreement is always difficult. This holds true even when postal management comes to the negotiating table in good faith, as they did in this round of bargaining. We should judge the results of any TA in its entirety.

Fourth, planning is vital to success. Led by our chief spokesperson, Industrial Relations Director Vance Zimmerman, immense preparation and coordination went into negotiations. Economic analysis on wage trends, assessing the history of collective bargaining, research of other union contracts, study of Convention resolutions, development of proposals, and much internal discussion and debate within the negotiating committee took place over the last year and more. Throughout this process the Craft Directors, members of the negotiating committee, officers and union staff worked extremely hard and effectively in the necessary planning and preparation, as well as in the negotiations themselves. Kudos to a job well done!

Lastly, I am extremely honored to have been your lead negotiator and proud to have worked alongside the entire negotiating committee. In addition to myself and Vance Zimmerman, the committee included Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, Clerk Craft Director Lamont Brooks, Motor Vehicle Service Craft Director Michael Foster, Maintenance Craft Director Idowu Balogun and Support Services Director Stephen Brooks.

Throughout the battle, you, the member, proudly stayed "Union Strong All Day Long!" The ratification vote is now up to you. Our negotiating team encourages you to let your voice be heard and urges you to "Vote Yes!"

GOOD NEWS

APWU-USPS Reach Tentative Agreement!

The National Negotiations Committee reached a Tentative Agreement (TA) with the United States Postal Service on December 9. The negotiating team voted unanimously to approve the TA. In accordance with the APWU Constitution, the TA was then presented by the negotiating team to the Rankand-File Bargaining Advisory Committee for their consideration.

Over the course of December 9 and December 10, the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee considered the TA, submitted questions and received clarifications from the negotiating team. On December 10, the Rank-and-File Committee voted unanimously to approve the TA and to send it to the full APWU membership for a ratification vote (see page 9 for more from the Rank-and-File Committee).

Collective Bargaining - Negotiating as Equals

Postal workers won the right to collective bargaining as a result of the heroic Great Postal Strike of 1970. Before the Strike, postal workers had limited union rights and were forced to petition Congress for increases in pay – a practice we call "collective begging." Since 1971, however, we've enjoyed full collective bargaining rights and have been able to sit across from postal management as equals in negotiating the contract that governs our pay, benefits and working conditions at the Postal Service.

This latest round of national negotiations kicked off in June, 90 days before the 2018-2021 contract was due to expire on September 20, 2021. Union negotiators had been preparing for negotiations months before that, with Collective Action Teams established in the field, membership surveys produced and solicited, and officers and staff preparing proposals and bargaining priorities.

When the previous contract was set to expire on September 20, the National Negotiations Committee agreed unanimously to "stop the clock" and continue bargaining rather than begin the process of mediation heading towards interest arbitration. With the clock "stopped", the terms and provisions of the 2018-2021 contract remained in force, continuing until a new contract is approved by the members.

Ratification Packet Mailed to Members

Every member will receive a ratification packet delivered to their home. Included in the packet is your ballot to vote on the proposed contract that governs the wages, benefits and working conditions of all APWU-represented employees at the Postal Service.

Pages 6 and 7 of this magazine include highlights of new provisions in the TA. Pages 8 and 9 showcase the role of members in the contract campaign and the statement of the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee. The craft directors'

columns (pages 18-21) explore provisions of the TA specific to their respective crafts and the Industrial Relations Director's column (page 16) dives deeper into the economic provisions of the TA.

Members are encouraged to consult this material as they consider their vote on the tentative agreement. Additional resources have been made available on the APWU website and social media channels. A detailed summary of the TA and a complete updated contract with all the tentative changes will be included in the mailing.

TA Ratification Process

As this edition goes to press, we anticipate that the ratification packet will be mailed to members in the third week of January. Members will have ample time to return their ballots on the ratification vote. Deadlines will be included in the ratification packet, posted to the APWU website and on union bulletin boards.

For more updates on the ratification process, visit *apwu.org/ratification* or use the QR code below.



SUMMARY TERMS OF THE TENTATIVE

Contract Length:

September 21, 2021 - September 20, 2024

General Annual Wage Increases and Cost of Living Allowances (COLA)

- 1.3% November 20, 2021 (Retroactive)
- 1.3% November 19, 2022
- 1.3% November 18, 2023
- Six (6) Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) for career employees (March and September of each year) with no change to the current formula based on the July 2021 CPI-W. (After the fourth month of the six-month measuring period, the next COLA increase stands at \$0.39 per hour and will be based on the January 2022 CPI-W Index)
- PSEs receive the general wage increases and an additional 1% increase each year in lieu of COLA (i.e. 2.3% each November)
- \$0.50/hour additional increase for PSEs effective the first pay period of the second full month after the Agreement is ratified

Job Security

- Protection from layoff for career employees with six years of service remains in effect.
- Any current career employee on the rolls as of September 20, 2021, with less than six years of service will be included in the no-layoff protections for the life of the National Agreement, providing an additional 72,000 career employees protection from layoffs.
- 50-mile limit on excessing of employees
- The current moratorium on subcontracting of Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) work will continue in its present form during life of the Agreement.

Holiday Pay

 Juneteenth added to the holidays for career employees for a total of 11 paid holidays PTF pay rate will be increased effective January 1, 2022 to reflect 11 holidays each year.

Health Insurance

- No change to the Postal Service contribution to premiums for those participating in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program.
- 95% Postal Service contribution to premiums of the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan (CDHP)
- PSEs converted to career will receive credit for time they were enrolled in a FEHB plan towards the 1-year qualifying period for the 95% Postal Service contribution to CDHP premiums

Enhanced Level 8 & 11 Pay Scales

- Grade 8 Pay Scale:
 - Bottom Steps FF-AA eliminated with Step A becoming the first Step.
 - New top Step P added
 - Employees currently in Grade 8 will move into new steps while retaining all credit toward next step
 - Steps FF-BB moved to Step A
 - Step AA moved to Step B
 - Steps A-O moved up one Step
- Grade 11 Pay Scale increased by an average of 2.3% prior to any general increases or COLAs

Part-Time Flexible (PTF) Work Rules

- Schedule guarantee of 24-hour per pay period, increased from 2 hours a pay period
- Guaranteed at least four hours of work or pay when scheduled
- Forty (40) hours of annual leave will be advanced at the start of each leave year for immediate use
- Guaranteed a minimum of one (1) nonscheduled day each service week except

- during the peak season exception period with notice Wednesday the week prior
- Within 90 days of ratification a one-time Voluntary Transfer Opportunity to residual full time regular vacancies in larger offices within a district.

Automatic Conversion of PSEs in Level 20 offices and above

- PSEs will be converted to career status upon reaching 24-months of relative standing
 - Clerk PSEs assigned to offices Grade 21 or higher will be converted to Full-Time Flexible with such assignments made in accordance with the Clerk Craft provisions of Art. 37.4
 - Clerk PSEs assigned to Grade 20 offices will be converted to Part-Time Flexible
 - MVS PSEs assigned in any size office will be converted to Part-Time Flexible
 - PSEs converted under this provision start at a new Step GG in Grades 5-7 and Step A in Grade 8.
 - Automatic Conversion does not apply to PSEs assigned to Level-4 RMPOs
- Conversions will still occur prior to the 24-months
 - The "Filling of Residual Vacancy MOU" and Article 37.5.D remains in full force and effect
 - MVS Craft Conversions will be made in accordance with Article 39.2.A.11
 - Conversion occurring earlier to
 24-months start at Step FF for Grades
 5-7 and Step A for Grade 8

Other PSE Provisions

- Forty (40) hours of advanced annual leave upon completion of an initial 360-day PSE appointment in Level 20 offices and above.
- PSEs assigned to Level 4 RMPOs receive an additional one (1) hour of paid annual leave per pay period upon completion of two (2) 360-day appointments

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

- PSEs assigned to Level 4 RMPOs upon completion of two 360-day appointments will receive 40 hours of advance leave.
- PSEs will be offered one (1) nonscheduled day each week except during peak season with notice given the Wednesday the week prior.

PSE Staffing

- The 12 PSEs per District assigned to Level 4 RMPOs will no longer count against the 20% District cap
- 10 PSEs in the 46 Package Support Annexes (PSAs) will not count against the District cap (for a total maximum of 460 PSEs) and will be allowed to work in any facility in the installation the PSA is attached to
- During a four (4) week "ramp-up" period prior to the start of accounting period 3, the 20% PSE District cap will be temporarily increased by 1% per week equating to no more than a 4% increase.
- New protections for the OTDL during "ramp-up" whereby prior to utilizing a PSE more than 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a service week, qualified and available employees on the appropriate OTDL will be utilized. No requirement to use an OTDL employee on the second non-scheduled at the penalty rate prior to using a PSE in excess of 40 hours.

Uniform/Work Clothes Program Allowances

- 2.5% increase to the uniform/work clothes allowances in 2022, 2023, and 2024
- Delivery/Sales Service Distribution Associate (DSSDA) will receive Type 1 uniform allowance
- New "Rollover" program where unused funds can carry over to a successor allowance year

Additional Work Rule Improvements

- Remote Encoding Center staffing ratio changed to 62% Full-time Regular and 38% PSE and all career duty assignments are Full-time Regular.
- 90-day waiting period to use annual leave eliminated for new career employees with 90 days continuous service prior to their conversion.
- · Updated the Deaf and Hard of Hearing MOU
- Work Environment Improvement Task Force
- Workplace Free of Harassment
- Enhanced and Expanded Services
- Environmental/Sustainability issues, EAP, and Child and Elder care, included in the jurisdiction of the National Labor Management Committee
- District Safety Committees made permanent
- Right of Union Officials to Enter Postal Installations
- Regional Safety and Health Representative Training Opportunities
- · Repromotion MOU
- Article 8 Task Force to address excessive overtime, particularly in relation to nonlist employees
- Election Mail Task Force MOU
- Full per diem for employees training at the NCED facility

Additional Clerk Craft Provisions

- · Window training starts within 10 days after posting of the senior bidder
- Updated NTFT duty assignments language
- Pilot program to test new pecking order for the assignment of PTF Hub Clerks
- Filling of Residual Vacancy MOU updated

Additional Motor Vehicle Service Craft Provisions

- PTFs identified for conversion to FTR converted within 28 days
- APWU will have opportunity to submit recommendations on new vehicles prior to specifications being sent to contractors and before manufacturing and completion of new vehicles
- · National committee established to address training initiative and opportunities
- . HCR limitation on Subcontracting MOU remains in full force and effect.

Additional Maintenance Craft Provisions

- No additional custodial staffing packages will change from MS-47 TL-3 to TL-5 for life of the contract
- Change the calculation method of PS Form 4852 for Juneteenth Holiday
- Annual cap on the number of times an employee can be involuntarily assigned to off-site training courses
- Career employee may request to be tested for maintenance craft positions and if rated eligible may request placement on the appropriate in-service register.
- · Updates to the posting of relief assignments in the craft
- · Agreement to consolidate and upgrade multiple legacy jobs.
- Employees traveling to NCED for training receive full per diem for length of stay

Additional Support Services Craft Provisions

- In Material Distribution Centers Maintenance Mechanic General Grade 7 eliminated and Building Equipment Mechanic Grade 9 added.
- Penalty Overtime provisions applied to Operating Service employees

APWU Members Instrumental in Securing a **Strong Tentative Agreement**

s the APWU National Negotiations Committee (NNC) began negotiating with postal management on a new collective bargaining agreement, they were not alone at the bargaining table. This year, led by Collective Action Teams (CATs) across the country, you the members showed your support and unbreakable solidarity for APWU – Our Union, Our Contract, Our Future!

Members proudly participated in Union Gear Days, showing union pride on the workroom floor, hundreds more members joined CATs, and joined virtual Town Halls and CAT calls during the contract campaign. This strong support from APWU members united for a good contract was key in achieving the gains in the tentative agreement.

"Thank you to all the members for your incredible solidarity on the workroom floor throughout this contract campaign," said President Dimondstein. "By showing up for Union Gear Days, proudly wearing APWU shirts and stickers, and remaining united, the NNC was able to deliver a tentative agreement that will undoubtedly improve the lives and working conditions for all our members. Congratulations to you, the members, on a victorious campaign and a job well done!"

"Thank you to the CATs and to all members for your support during contract negotiations," said Industrial Relations Director Zimmerman. "The strength you showed was instrumental in securing the pay raises, COLAs, no-layoff protections, and other vital provisions in this agreement. You should be proud of your efforts and know that your impact was made in negotiations."

Though we have a tentative agreement, our work fighting for *APWU – Our Contract, Our Union, Our Future* is far from over. Members are encouraged to talk to co-workers and urge them to cast their vote for ratification.

and urge them to cast their vote for ratification.

Additionally, members are encouraged to join a

CAT and get involved in the APWU's other

ongoing campaigns.





Upper Piedmont Area Local (SC)

Statement of the Rank-and-File Committee

he 2021 Rank-and-File Bargaining
Advisory Committee is comprised of
Local Officers from all crafts as well as all
five Regions and one Deaf / Hard of Hearing representative of the American Postal
Workers Union as required by the National
Constitution. Each member was appointed
by one APWU National Executive Board
Member. On December 9, 2021 the Rankand-File Committee was provided a copy of
the negotiated tentative agreement.

On December 9, 2021 the members of the R&F committee were given a presentation from the National Negotiations Committee (NNC) which included the main points of the negotiated tentative agreement.

Following the presentation by each member of the NNC, all tentative agreements were reviewed and discussed by the members on the Rank-and-File between December 9, 2021 and December 10, 2021. During the review and discussions all officers were made available to the R&F when there was need for questions or clarification.

On December 10, 2021 the Rank-and-File unanimously voted to send the tentative agreement for a ratification vote to the members.

The following points were taken into consideration when making the unanimous vote:

 Tentative Agreement is a 3 Year Agreement from September 21, 2021 through September 20, 2024.

- Basic Salaries for career employees will be increased by 1.3% for each year (Will be Retroactive to November 20, 2021). Career employees will have Six Cost of Living Allowances (on March and September of each year).
- PSE Salary increase will be 2.3% each year for the life of the contract with a one-time \$0.50 per hour increase.
- Automatic Conversion for PSEs in level 20 and above offices after 24 months of relative standing in an installation. The original Residual Vacancy Memo for conversions is still in effect so a PSE can get converted prior to but no later than 24 months in offices level 20 and above
 - Clerk PSEs in offices of level 21 or above will be converted to Full Time Flexible (FTF).
 - Clerk PSEs in level 20 offices will be converted to Part-Time Flexible (PTF).
- MVS PSEs will automatically be converted to PTFs after completion of 24 months of relative standing.
- Part-Time Flexible (PTF) employees will have a guarantee of at least 4 hours of work when scheduled. In addition, PTFs will have a minimum of 24-hour work guarantee per pay period.
- PTFs will be guaranteed one day off per week with notification of the NS Day given the Wednesday of the week prior, with the PTF's option to waive their guaranteed nonscheduled day (Guaranteed NS Day is with the exception of peak season).

- PSEs will be offered one day off a week with notification of the non-scheduled day off by notification Wednesday of the week prior (Offered NS day is with the exception of peak season).
- No-layoff clause for career employees with a minimum of six years of service remains intact. Any current career employee on the rolls as of Sept 20, 2021 regardless of years of service will also have a no-layoff protection for the life of this contract. The 50-mile radius limit for excessing remains in effect.
- Juneteenth will be added to the holidays for career employees. Full time career employees will get the additional holiday while PTFs will have their hourly rate increased to account for the additional pay required due to the addition of Juneteenth holiday.
- HCR limitation of Subcontracting MOU remains in effect.
- Enhanced Pay Scales and Pay Steps for level 8 and level 11 positions.
- Health Care Premium percentages remain the same.
- Increase in uniform allowance with additional language that unused money can be rolled over to the following year.

The above-mentioned negotiated items are some of the major points that the Rankand-File took into consideration when they unanimously voted to send the tentative agreement to the members for ratification.

Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee



Chairperson Peggy Whitney Minneapolis, MN



Greg Jones Indianapolis, IN



Co-Chair Sandra Munoz-Hernandez Broward Co (FL)



Jim Sizemore Cincinnati, OH



Secretary Stacey Sabir Brown Atlanta, GA



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Yared Wonde Dallas, TX



Christopher Anaya Fresno, CA photo unavailable

New Year's Resolution Pass Postal Reform!



As we enter the second session of the 117th Congress, it is absolutely critical that Congress pass *The Postal Service Reform Act of 2021* (H.R. 3076/S. 1720). Your Legislative Department has been engaged with lawmakers and stakeholders in every step of this long process. This legislation, which has broad labor, public and bipartisan support, will provide the Postal Service with much-needed financial relief by eliminating the 2006 pre-funding mandate for retiree health benefits and integrating postal workers into Medicare. In addition, this bill maintains 6-day delivery and mandates more frequent reporting on service performance.

Now is the time for Congress to make this bill a priority and send it to President Biden's desk to be signed into law!

A few highlights of the legislation include:

REPEAL OF THE PRE-FUNDING MANDATE

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

'MEDICARE INTEGRATION'

Active postal employees and retirees will be placed in a postal-only program in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB). This new plan will be regulated and operated the same way the current FEHB plans are regulated and operated today. There will be an annual open season that will allow users to choose among health plans. Current annuitants who did not enroll in Medicare B at age 65, but now wish to do so, will be given a one-time opportunity to enroll in Medicare B without penalty.

Maximizing participants use of Medicare will eventually reduce health care costs for both postal participants and the Postal Service.

This legislation increases participation in Medicare by requiring Medicare A and B enrollment for future postal retirees once eligible. Members who receive healthcare through the VA, Indian Health Services, live abroad, or live in an area that does not offer Medicare will not be required to enroll in Medicare Part B and can keep their FEHB.

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

Postal employees and the Postal Service have long subsidized Medicare, paying over \$34 billion in Medicare taxes since 1983. Postal employees, retirees, and the Postal Service will realize the benefit of those contributions through Medicare integration.

USPS TRANSPARENCY

The bill would require USPS to set up a public "dashboard" on their website, which will publish weekly performance data. This data will allow the public to monitor any service failures, identify mail slowdowns and pinpoint zip codes experiencing consistent diminished service performance. These tools will also allow us to determine specific areas across the country in need of additional postal investment.

SIX-DAY DELIVERY

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

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

As this bill moves through the legislative process, we will post updates on *apwu.org*.

We encourage the House of Representatives to put this urgent bill on the floor in January! ■

Voting Rights Legislation of the 117th Congress: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

head of important elections, ACongress and the Biden Administration must strengthen and enshrine voting rights at the federal level. With many states across the country having passed or introduced voter suppression legislation, new federal voting rights laws are urgently needed. Congress must pass the *John* R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and either the For the People Act or the Freedom to Vote Act. Together, these bills would restore the promise and protections of the *Voting Rights* Act of 1965.

Below are some of the highlights of these bills.

John R. Lewis Voting Rights **Advancement Act** (H.R. 4 / S. 4)

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which passed the House in August and is awaiting a Senate vote, would restore the full power of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), weakened by two recent Supreme Court decisions. This bill would strengthen and modernize the VRA by:

- Protecting against racial voter discrimination
- Re-establishing "preclearance," the federal oversight (dismantled by the 2013 decision in *Shelby* County v. Holder) that would prevent any states or localities with a recent history of voter discrimination from restricting the right to
- Protecting access to the ballot box for all voters, regardless of race or the language they speak
- Restoring the right of voters to challenge discriminatory laws, a process made more difficult by the Court's 2019 decision in Brnovich v. DNC

For the People Act (H.R. 1 / S. 1)

The For the People Act (FTPA) passed the House of Representatives last March and has stalled in the Senate. FTPA would expand and strengthen voting rights. The bill would:

- Expand voter registration by allowing for automatic, same-day, and online registration
- Restrict the Postal Service from implementing any operational changes, such as the removal of mail collection boxes or mail sorting machines, in the 120 days prior to Election Day (this provision is included only in the House version of the bill)
- Create independent redistricting commissions and outlaw gerrymandering
- Expand voting access, reducing long lines for voters by allowing for no-excuse vote-by-mail and early voting
- Restore full voting rights to those who have completed felony sen-
- Reform our broken and corrupt campaign finance system
- Limit purging voters from voter rolls
- Prohibit the dissemination of election misinformation
- Create a voluntary small-donor matching system for all federal

Freedom to Vote Act (S. 2747)

The Freedom to Vote Act (FTVA) was introduced by Senate leadership last September as a compromise to the For the People Act. The bill has majority support in the Senate, but

due to the antiquated filibuster rule, this much-needed piece of legislation does not have the required 60 votes to pass. In some ways, the FTVA is less expansive than the FTPA, dropping provisions that overhaul the Federal **Election Commission and create** independent redistricting commissions and limiting the scope of public campaign funding. However, the FTVA does indeed expand on voting rights protections and would mark a significant improvement to our current election laws. The bill includes the FTPA's provisions on voter registration expansion and Postal Service operational change restrictions. The bill would also:

- Outlaw partisan gerrymandering
- Make Election Day a public holi-
- Expand voting access and reduce long lines and wait times for voters by allowing for no-excuse vote-by-mail and early voting
- Restore full voting rights to those who have completed felony sen-
- Require states that have a voter I.D. requirement to accept different forms of I.D., such as bank
- Reform our broken and corrupt campaign finance system
- Place limits on purging voters from voter rolls
- Prohibit the dissemination of election misinformation
- Create a voluntary small-donor matching system only for House elections

APWU's Legislative and Political Department fervently supports the long-overdue passage of federal voting rights legislation. ■



New Memorandum of Understanding on **Discrimination** in Tentative Agreement

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

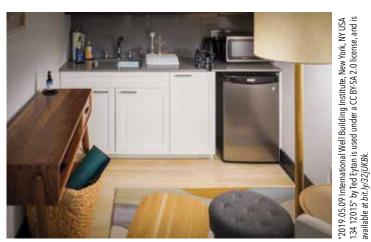
Ur new Tentative Agreement has a Memorandum of Understanding on Discrimination & Harassment. It clarifies what kind of discrimination violates Article 2. It also includes the creation of an educational APWU/USPS taskforce that will increase the knowledge and understanding of the protections the law provides to post office employees around the country. This education is desperately needed.

This article describes a specific form of discrimination that violates the *Pregnancy Discrimination Act* (1978), *Affordable Care Act* (2010) Section 4207 and the *Fair Labor Standards Act*. It occurs when management fails to provide lactation accommodations to express breast milk. Article 2 and Article 5 stipulate that management cannot be inconsistent with its obligations under the law.

Management is required to provide a reasonable break time, in a temporary space that is secure, clean, private and appropriate for new mothers to pump milk. That area cannot be a bathroom – it must be a place that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public during at least the first year after the birth of a baby.

Management should not force a woman to choose between the health of herself and her baby when it comes to breastfeeding. There have been recent cases where management has stated to employees that if they want to express milk while at work that it would be a problem. Some supervisors suggest it must be done in the bathroom, breakroom, or locker room. These spaces violate management's obligations under the law. There are some workers who have felt forced to quit their job.

One brave woman recently filed a case against the USPS. She filed her case in District Court based on the USPS failure to provide accommodations, violating the *Pregnancy Discrimination Act* and the *Fair Labor Standards Act*. The case took two years to litigate, but in February of 2021 management was obligated to pay her compensation for emotional damages, and was required to provide training to the supervisors and managers in the district. The USPS had to direct their supervisors to



Lactation room in New York, NY office building

affirmatively tell employees who ask about parental leave, or when a new parent comes back to work, about their rights to be able to express breast milk at work and offer the worker lactation accommodations. They also had to provide employees with the fact sheet from the Department of Labor on employee rights after returning from maternity leave that explains nursing mothers' rights.

Management cannot refuse to hire a woman because of her pregnancy related condition as long as she is able to perform the major functions of her job. The law forbids discrimination based on pregnancy when it comes to employment, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoffs, training, fringe benefits, hiring, firing, and any other term or condition of employment including leave (for more information on pregnancy discrimination laws, see page 29).

A frustrating part of this story is that many of these discrimination laws are between 11 and 43 years old. Clearly much progress remains to be made. But by adding this MOU to the tentative agreement, I hope that the task force can educate postal managers on the rights they must provide postal workers, and make sure our members know what those rights are, before they feel forced to quit their job. Always seek help from your union steward. Don't fight your battles alone: an injury to one, is an injury to all.

APWU Communications Department Wins 13 ILCA Awards

For our work during the 2020 calendar year, the APWU Communications Department was awarded 13 International Labor Communications Association (ILCA) Awards, including five honors for First Place.

See below for the list of awards:

First Place, Best Multimedia Campaign Save the Post Office Campaign

First Place, Best Use of Social Media #SaveThePostOffice

First Place, Best Use of Earned Media Save The Post Office Campaign

First Place, Best Flyer August 25 Day of Action Flyer

First Place, Best Longform Video 50th Anniversary of the Great Postal Strike

Second Place, Best Flyer "Make Your Vote Count! Biden and Trump on the Issues"



Third Place, Best Audio/Podcast/Radio Broadcast

PSA: Gratitude

Third Place, Best Promotional Video Ol' Timer: Support Postal Workers and a **Public US Postal Service**

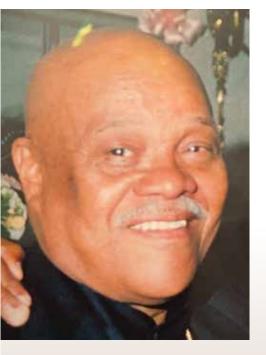
Third Place, Best Labor History Story When the Mail Stopped! 50th Anniversary of the 1970 Great Postal Strike

Third Place, Best Editorial or Column "The People are Proving We're No 'Joke'" - President Dimondstein column, September-October 2020 American Postal Worker

Third Place, Best Mail Piece "You're Front Line Heroes in Times of Crisis"

Honorable Mention, General Excellence -Single-Issue Publication/Collateral When the Mail Stopped! 50th Anniversary of the Great Postal Strike of 1970

Honorable Mention, Best News Story "APWU Members Rally with Community to **Demand Congress Save the Post Office and** Stop Mail Delays"



Former MVS Craft Director **Donald Ross Passes Away**

onald Ross, former Motor Vehicle Service Craft Director, passed away on November 13 at the age of 89.

Brother Ross joined the Post Office as a mechanic driver in 1954, following six years of service in the United States Army. In 1966, he became president of the Chicago Local of the National Federation of Motor Vehicle Employees and Special Delivery Messengers, and in 1970 began serving as a regional representative for the Central Region. In 1982, Brother Ross became the national Assistant Director for the MVS Craft, a position he held for five years before becoming the MVS Craft Director in 1987. Brother Ross left the position in 1995, and stayed active in the APWU after his retirement. At the time of his passing, Brother Ross was president of the Chicago Local Retiree Chapter.

During his time as MVS Craft Director, Brother Ross was instrumental in multiple cases that advanced the APWU's goals, built union power, and improved the lives of countless postal workers. Even following his retirement, Brother Ross stayed involved, including in the 2004 Driving Instructor Examiner case which secured the position (now Driving Safety Instructor) for the MVS Craft for generations to come.

"The Motor Vehicle Service lost one of its staunchest leaders with the passing of former MVS Director Donald A. Ross," said MVS Craft Director Michael O. Foster. "Those members who were around in the 80s and 90s benefited from Brother Ross's strong leadership and passion for the MVS Craft. Much of the contract language and benefits negotiated by Donald remain in today's CBA. I am proud to have known and been mentored by Don Ross and considered him a friend. Condolences to the Ross family, may he rest in peace."



Are You Ready for 2022?

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Rowledge, staying organized and prioritizing responsibilities all play an important role for local and state officers, specifically presidents and treasurers maintaining financial accountability and viability. Attending the various training opportunities offered by the Secretary-Treasurer's Department ensures officers have the ability to properly execute their duties and responsibilities. Knowledge is the key to success, whether you are a newly elected officer, an officer who has been performing the duties for some time. Attending training, whether for the first time, or as a refresher, has proven beneficial.

Organizing and prioritizing your responsibilities and duties for the year is crucial in ensuring all legal requirements are timely filed. Writing down and keeping track of important monthly deadlines assist in keeping officers organized. The following dates should be included in prioritizing your monthly schedule of important dates:

January 31: W-2s and 1099s

March 30: DOL – LM2, LM 3 or LM 4 (Mandatory Electronic filing)

File within 90 days after the end of the fiscal year

May 15: IRS – 990, 990-EX, 990-N (Electronic filing) File by the 5th month and 15th day after the end of fiscal year

The Secretary-Treasurer's Department's virtual trainings will continue to be scheduled until in-person conferences can safely resume.

Deadline to Apply for APWU Scholarships is March 31, 2022

The scholarship deadline for the E.C Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship, Vocational Scholarship, and Best Essay Award for 2022 is March 31, 2022. Every year the Union selects deserving students to receive scholarships for college or vocational institution of their choosing. The APWU Scholarship Program is one of the great benefits of being a member of the Union. The E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship awards 10 recipients \$2,000 annually for four years to use toward an undergraduate program. Five Vocational Scholarship winners receive up to \$3,000 to be used for three years of study in a specific trade, technical, industrial, or vocational school. One "Best Essay" winner is selected from the applicant pool to receive a one-time \$2,000 award to his or her four-year college tuition.

2021-2024 Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the APWU and USPS Ratification Vote.

The 2021-2024 Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement between the APWU and USPS and the ratification ballot will be mailed to each member. Please make sure you vote as your future is in your hands. Non-members will also receive a copy of the tentative agreement with a membership 1187 form, required to be completed in order to participate in the ratification vote. The summary of the 2021-2024 Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement can be reviewed on the apwu.org home page.

National Convention: August 15-18, 2022

Preparations are ongoing for the August 15-18, 2022 APWU National Convention. Local and State officers should pay close attention to information in the American Postal Worker, email correspondence and information posted on the APWU webpage. The official Convention Call will be in the March-April magazine, as well as other important information to assist local and state organizations with budgeting and planning for convention dates. The deadline for submission of resolutions printed in the convention book is June 6, 2022. Resolutions from local or state affiliates and local and state retiree chapters must be submitted electronically through the 2020-2022 resolutions@apwu.org email address.

Additional Benefits for APWU Members and Retirees: AFL-CIO Employees Federal Credit Union!

The American Postal Workers Union has secured an additional benefit for our members and retirees, who are now eligible to access the variety of products and services offered by the AFL-CIO Employees Federal Credit Union. APWU members and retirees can conduct business through an AFL-CIO EFCU branch office, at 5000+ shared branches throughout the country, via internet and mobile banking.

Services that the AFL-CIO EFCU offer to members include ATMs, Mobicint Internet Banking, Direct Deposit, Visa Check/Debit Card, Savings and Checking Accounts. Members and Retirees will also have access to Auto Loans, Mortgage Loans and Personal Signature Loans and more. All services offered by the AFL-CIO EFCU are available on the Secretary-Treasurer's webpage under Benefits, as well as *aflcioefcu.org*.



President Biden Names Two Nominees to Board of Governors

In November 19, President Joe Biden announced two new nominees to the Postal Service Board of Governors to replace outgoing governors. The President nominated Dan Tangherlini, who served as Administrator of the General Services Administration in the Obama Administration and has worked in various roles in the District of Columbia government. He also nominated Derek Kan, who worked in the Trump Administration's Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Transportation.

Their appointments are to fill the spots on the Board being vacated by Governors Ron Bloom and John Barger. Bloom's term expired last year; he was finishing a holdover year that ended December 8, 2021. Barger's term expired the same day, but he's begun his holdover year and will stay on the Board until a replacement is confirmed by the Senate, or until December 8, 2022.

The APWU looks forward to meeting with the nominees, sharing our views on matters affecting postal workers and learning where they stand on the future of the public United States Postal Service.



What the Proposed Contract Means for Wage Increases

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR VANCE ZIMMERMAN

agreement was reached with the Postal Service and approved to be sent out to members for ratification by the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee. This contract will provide good wage gains, hold the line on health insurance contributions, and provide a level of job security not seen in any previous APWU agreement.

I want to address just exactly what the wage changes mean for career employees under this agreement. The APWU, unlike the other postal unions, represents employees across a large swath of grades and steps. It would be impossible to address every step and level in this article, so I will lay out what the wage improvements will mean to the grade and step that is most populous under this contract—Grade 6 Step-A (Grade 6-A).

When looking at the wage increase an APWU-represented employee receives, one must consider that the contract includes both general wage increases and Cost of Living Allowances (COLAs). When ratified, the agreement will deliver a Grade 6-A employee a significant wage increase with the three general wage increases of 1.3%, adding \$2037 to their pay. The APWU had an independent economist project what the Cost of Living Allowances (COLA) will be for each employee by using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Congressional Budget Office. Based on the current projections from December 10, 2021, each employee could receive \$3,786 in COLA increases over the life of the agreement. For a Grade 6-A, the total projected dollar amount is \$5823. This represents an 11.2% increase in salary in 3 years.

But don't forget that anyone who has not reached top step will continue to earn step increases as well. The same Grade 6-A would earn four step increases over the life of the agreement, adding an additional \$4101 to their salary over the agreement. Adding this in, the Grade 6-A employee has now increased their salary by \$9,924 or 19.0% over three years!

The Industrial Relations Department has looked at every Grade and Step in the pay scales under this agreement. Based on the current projections, the average increase, excluding any step increases, is \$6857 or 11.9% over three years. Additional step increases make the wage increases even greater.

This contract made strides in restoring our pay schedules to the pre-2010 levels. Grade 8 will be restored to the pre-2010 step-progression and a new top step is added for everyone in Grade 8. The six bottom steps will be eliminated and the employees occupying them will be moved into the new higher schedule. There will no longer be a "new" and "old" pay schedule. Like Grades 9, 10, and 11, there will be only one schedule. This lays the foundation for future negotiations on the pay schedules and the APWU making further progress on this primary issue.

I am proud of what the APWU has done on wages in this contract. The pay raises are the highest the APWU has had on average, dating back to the 2000-2006 agreement. Our last contract that was awarded to us by an interest arbitration panel provided lower increases than we were able to negotiate. But if we look at just November 2020 until September 2021, that same Grade 6-A employee saw their salary increase by a general pay increase of 1.0% and two COLAs, for a total of \$2351 or 4.7%.

Once ratified, this contract will provide more job security to all covered by it than at other time in our history. With significant increases in guaranteed work hours, day-off scheduling, a solid and predictable path to career, no excessing beyond 50-miles, and the continuation of no-layoff protection that will protect 72,000 employees who were not previously protected, I believe this contract is second to none!



Employees have the right to submit PS Form 1767s to report hazards, unsafe conditions or practices, without fear of restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination or reprisal.

I Submitted a PS Form 1767, **Now What?**

- Management's Obligation:
 - To make the PS Form 1767 readily available and accessible.
 - Management must accept the form as written. They may not alter, change, or destroy/throw away the form.
 - Within the tour of duty of person submitting PS Form 1767, the immediate supervisor must:
 - Investigate the allegation and if possible, abate/correct/rectify condition.
 - Give the employee a signed copy indicating what actions were taken.
- What if management doesn't follow their obligations?
 - Request to consult with your union representative for assistance.
 - o Article 14, Safety and Health, allows for a grievance to be filed at Step 2 for management's failure to properly respond to PS Form 1767.

Latest COVID MOUs and Liberal Leave Policy Extensions until February 11, 2022

n December 20, President Dimondstein signed extensions on the COVID MOUs through February 11, 2022. The liberal leave policy has also been extended.

The latest extensions of the COVID MOUs come as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is rapidly spreading across the country. According to experts, the Omicron variant is more contagious than the Delta variant and the original strain of coronavirus.

The APWU believes that the safety and health of our employees is paramount, and we must use the tools we have in place to keep our sisters, brothers, and customers safe. Masks must be worn in jurisdictions where they are required, and we recommend masks be worn by all employees no matter their location. Social Distancing must be practiced, and good hygiene practices must be followed. All APWU members, officers, and stewards must insist management enforce these current policies and procedures.

Additionally, members are encouraged to receive a COVID-19 vaccination if they have not done so already. Boosters are also strongly recommended if it has been more than six months since receiving the last dose of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines or two months since receiv-



ing the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. According to experts, receiving a COVID-19 vaccination is the most effective way to prevent serious illness from the Omicron variant.

The latest extension of the COVID MOUs is in line with the APWU's commitment to keeping our members safe during this latest wave of the pandemic. All MOUs, as well as the liberal leave policy, are available to view on apwu.org/ coronavirus.

Clerk Craft Negotiates Improvements in 2021-2024 CBA



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

ending ratification by APWU membership, the 2021-2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) will contain major gains for Clerk Craft employees. The CBA will also retain many of our most important achievements from past contracts. These accomplishments include:

- For career employees, 1.3% wage increases each year from 2021-2023, and six COLA raises;
- · General wage increases for PSEs and an additional 1% increase each year in lieu of COLA;
- Continued no-layoff protection for career employees with at least 6 years of service. Current career employees on the rolls as of September 20, 2021 with less than 6 years of service will have no-layoff protections for the life of the CBA;
- A limit of 50 miles for excessing employees;
- All Clerk Craft-related MOUs secured/retained;
- Window training begins within 10 days of senior bidder notice;
- Improvements in the Clerk Craft Residual Vacancy MOU;
- Additional rights for PTFs and PSEs;
- Clarifying language in the NTFT (Non-Traditional Full-Time) MOU;
- Pilot program for PTF Hub Clerks;
- Within 90 days of ratification, a one-time voluntary transfer opportunity for PTFs in Level 18 and 20 offices to residual full-time vacancies in offices with more than 100 career clerks within the district.

Previously, clerks who bid to duty assignments with window who were not already qualified had to wait long periods of time, in many cases for months, before a slot became available for window training. Many clerks bid to window jobs to achieve daylight hours or for other personal reasons. In the past, these clerks were impeded from gaining those desired Tour 2 hours because of the

delay in attending the required training. The new language solves that problem.

Enhancements in the MOU, Re: Residual Vacancies -Clerk Craft, were also achieved for PTFs and PSEs. PTFs will have preference over PSEs when choosing to accept a residual vacancy or PTF job within 50 miles of their office. PSEs with a relative standing older than a transfer request will be converted to a full-time opportunity first. The Clerk Craft at headquarters level will also be provided an electronic list of all residual vacancies on each 21-day posting and 50-mile canvassing.

PTFs now have a guarantee of 24 hours per pay period, an increase of 22 hours from prior contracts. Additionally, PTFs are guaranteed at least four hours of work or pay when they are scheduled to report for work, are guaranteed a minimum of one non-scheduled day each service week except during the peak season exception period, and they will be advanced 40 hours of annual leave at the beginning of each leave year. This is not additional leave, but an advance on what the PTF will earn during the upcoming leave year.

The advance of 40 hours of annual leave also applies to PSEs, as does the guarantee of a minimum of one non-scheduled day each service week, except during the peak season exception period. PSEs in Level 21 or higher offices who reach 24 months of relative standing will be converted to full-time flexible status in accordance with Article 37.4.

The Clerk Craft also updated the language in the NTFT MOU to confirm that NTFT duty assignments must be between 30 and 48 hours per week and created a pilot program to improve the MOU, Re: Assignment of PTF Hub Clerks. The current Hub Clerk MOU allows PTFs to choose whether or not they wish to volunteer to be loaned to certain post offices. This pilot program, wherever implemented, will further allow PTFs to designate offices they desire to be loaned to. In many cases, a PTF may wish to loan into offices that are a few miles from their home but not to offices that are several miles away. This pilot program makes that possible.

2021 National Maintenance **Agreements**



Assistant Director Terry Martinez, Director Idowu Balogun and Assistant Director Jason Treier

The following summary identifies all of the maintenance agreements successfully achieved during the 2021 national contract negotiations, with text from the tentative agreement.

Per Diem for Maintenance Employees at Off-**Site Training**

USPS and APWU agree that it is in their mutual interest to increase maintenance craft participation in off-site training at NCED.

The parties agree to pilot a per diem meal allowance for Maintenance Craft employees attending such training. Within 90 days of the effective date of the 2021 CBA, parties will meet to discuss current postal policies and obligations regarding meal service at NCED.

Starting date of pilot will be no later than 6 months from conclusion of the aforementioned discussions unless mutually agreed upon by the parties to extend the start date.

Pilot will continue for a period of at least 3 years, commencing on the date that employees subject to this Memorandum of Understanding are first provided the full per diem.

Inservice Examination - Annual Frequency

Annually (from March 1 - 31), career employees may submit a written request to test for maintenance craft eligibility ratings for all occupational groups (excluding NST ET-11).

Once an employee receives eligibility ratings, the employee may then request placement, or reinstatement, on Inservice registers. If no In-Service Register exists, the employee's eligibility ratings become part of their eOPF. Management shall notify the employee of the results no later than 60 days after testing, provided that the applications have been properly completed. Annually on April 1, (beginning in 2023), employee names from the preceding year's In-Service Registers shall be purged, with the following exception: employees on In-Service Registers must submit a written request to the MSS Coordinator during the month of March to remain on the registers.

Annual Off-Site Training Cap

38.6.A.4. Employees selected for off-site training will be given as much advance notice as is reasonably possible. Additionally, two (2) weeks notice will be given. Employees will not be involuntarily selected for off-site training courses more than three (3) times within a twelve (12) month period.

TL-3 to TL-5 Conversion Suspension During **2021 CBA**

The parties agree to suspend any further custodial staffing conversions from MS-47, TL-3 to TL-5 for the duration of the 2021 CBA.

MS-47 Handbook to reflect Juneteenth as **Holiday**

MS-47 Handbook to reflect Juneteenth as an official holiday, reducing 1,760-hour man-year to 1,752.

NST ET-11 Pay Raise

Hourly rate of pay between ET-10 and ET-11 is insufficient and is contributing to lack of promotions to NST ET-11 occupational group.

Relief Assignments: Amend Article 38.7.C. as follows:

Newly created and reposted relief assignments shall be by occupational group and tour. Positions posted prior to ratification of the 2021 national agreement are not subject to this section. Relief positions shall be no greater than 10% (or 1 minimum) of the occupational group and tour.

The following occupational groups shall be consolidated or upgraded:

- Elevator Operator and Laborer Materials Handling Level 4 will be reclassified as Labor Custodian Level 4.
- Fireman Laborer Level 5 will be reclassified as Building Maintenance Custodian Level 5.
- Materials Handling Equipment Operator Level 5 will be reclassified as MM Level 7
- · AMS and Letter Box Mechanic Level 8 will be reclassified as AMT Level 9.
- Machinist, Maintenance Electrician, Carpenter, Painter, Plumber and Welder Level 8 will be reclassified as BEM Level 9.

Members should see Jobs Consolidation MOU for more details.

We thank NBA Dave Sarnacki for his contributions to negotiations.

What About the Level 7's, Mike and Ken?

Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Kenneth Prinz

he tentative agreement will now be mailed to each APWU member for their vote to approve or reject this agreement. The opportunity to ratify the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) has not occurred since the 2010-2015 Contract. This means that the Union and the Employer have not agreed on the wages, hours, and working conditions of APWU members for the last six years. The two agreements in between were decided by an Interest Arbitrator.

ALTHOUGH WE WERE NOT ABLE TO ACHIEVE THESE CONTRACTUAL PROVISIONS FOR THE LEVEL 7 MEMBERS DURING THIS ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS, WE MUST TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES AND CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR EVERYONE.

The right to vote on your contract and your future is very important and every member should exercise this right.

The MVS Craft made some advances in this difficult round of bargaining. The USPS once again demanded work rule concessions that the Craft could not agree with, so many of each parties' proposals were unachieved.

Among the MVS highlights of the tentative agreement:

- The elimination of the Double Steps FF-AA for Level 8 employees and the addition of Step P. The level eight (8) employees' average salary projected increase is about \$7,635. With this three (3) year contract, the Level seven (7) employees' average salary projected increase is \$6,620 with the cost of living and the 1.3% general wage each year over the term of the contract.
- The renewal of the Highway Contract Limitation MOU (No contracting of PVS operations for the life of the agreement 2021-2024). Renewal of the parties' commitment to establish the Pilot Programs in Louisville, KY and Tacoma, WA. In this MOU, management retains the 80% Full Time, 20% Part Time ratio, and up to 20% split off days.

- The establishing of a Training Committee to address MVS training that includes VMF members, Mechanics, Lead and Automotive Technicians, Stockroom personnel, and General Clerks. The goal will also be to try and develop additional training for the MVOs, TTOs, and the DSIs.
- The opportunity for the Craft to submit recommendations and be involved earlier in the development of new vehicles prior to the specifications being sent to contractors and before manufacturing and development of the vehicles. The opportunity for more involvement in the development of future purchases should be able to avoid problems such as the 7 leaf springs, seat problems, and seat and steering wheel clearance issues with the old Mack tractors that were on a dump or garbage truck frame.
- The requirement to convert and promote eligible and identified PTFs within 28 days, except for the month of December, and conversion of MVS PSEs who have been on the rolls for twenty-four months to PTFs.
- The rollover of the unused amount of the Uniform Allowance into future years' allotments. This is a provision that we have been trying to achieve for at least three previous contracts.

As we entered into negotiations, among our main objectives was seeking upgrades for positions within the Craft due to the USPS problems with hiring and retaining drivers and Technicians. The USPS rejected our efforts to raise the Level 7 positions because they were not having problems hiring MVO's and Mechanics. We are committed to fighting for the rest of the Craft and Union, including Level 7s in the next and future negotiations.

Although we were not able to achieve these contractual provisions for the Level 7 members during this round of negotiations, we must take advantage of any opportunity to improve the lives of postal employees and continue to fight for everyone. It was because of the shortage of Tractor Trailer Operators and the difficulties in hiring drivers to comply with the Das 110 Award that the USPS was willing to make adjustments to the Level 8 pay scale that affected over 9,000 APWU members. We will continue our fight for equality for all members.

SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

Tentative Agreement Gains for Support Services **Craft Members**



Director Steve Brooks

rothers and Sisters, there is exciting news to report regarding the APWU main agreement. The Postal Service and the American Postal Workers Union have agreed-upon terms, the APWU Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee is recommending the terms to the members, and a ratification vote will take place.

In this Tentative Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Support Services Division negotiated the terms for the Operating Services/Facility Services (Article 40) and the Material Support Craft (Article 41). Assisting me in the negotiations for these crafts were Judy McCann, NBA, Arrion Brown, Support Services representative for the Nation's Capital Southern Maryland Area Local, and Clint Holbert, President of the Western Area Supply Center Area Local (KS).

In the Operating/Facility Services Craft, we were able to achieve a penalty overtime provision. Prior to 2010, this group had its own separate bargaining agreement. In the 2010 negotiations, the parties agreed to merge the group into the main APWU agreement and establish them as Article 40. At that time the Postal Service, for some reason, would not agree to a penalty overtime provision because in their prior separate agreement they did not have one.

I attempted to get the language in the 2015 and 2018 agreements but was unsuccessful. Those two agreements were decided in interest arbitration. In this agreement we were successful in obtaining the same penalty overtime provisions that the other crafts have had in place for years.

In addition to this provision, the employees in Level 8 positions in this craft will have their salary changed to reflect the elimination of steps FF-AA and the creation of a new top step P. The employees in steps A-O will be advanced one step.

In our Material Support Craft, we proposed several changes to the job posting process. We were not successful in resolving our issues to come up with actual contractual language. However, the parties have agreed to continue talks in attempts to develop a process that the parties can accept outside of the contractual language change.

We were successful in permanently eliminating the Article 41 Maintenance Mechanic General Level 7 position and replacing it with a Building Equipment Mechanic Level 9 position. Keep in mind that the members under Article 41 are separate from any Article 38 positions.

In addition, the PSEs at the Material Distribution Center will receive the PSE wage increase, and will be advanced annual leave after their first 360-day term.

Naturally we do not always get everything that we want in bargaining. I believe that the Support Services Crafts were able to achieve some of the most important demands we put across the bargaining table.

In my opinion, the total agreement is a very good agreement. I was very proud to be a part of this negotiation team. I wholeheartedly encourage members to ratify this agreement.



During this holiday season the Texoma Local, one of our private sector driver groups, started its first ever food and toy drive for

CENTRAL REGIONAL COORDINATOR

ILLINOIS | INDIANA | IOWA | KANSAS | KENTUCKY | MICHIGAN | MINNESOTA | MISSOURI | NEBRASKA | NORTH DAKOTA | OHIO | SOUTH DAKOTA | WISCONSIN

Here We Come Again - Where There's a Will There's a Way

Sharyn M. Stone, Central Regional Coordinator

Who knew? Another year has passed and we are still dealing with COVID-19. We remain battered but unbowed. During the pandemic, we found ways to represent our members, communicate between members and our leadership, and file timely grievances. We continued to enforce the contract, keep our members informed, have local and state meetings, hold elections, negotiate agreements and more. Just writing it out still amazes me. Dare I say Zoom? Zoom has never been my favorite way to go, but it has been a major and vital part of our means of communication through the past two years. The APWU has proven, once again, that we are resilient and we find a cooperative means to get the job done.

WHO KNEW WE'D STILL BE ENGULFED
WITH COVID-19 A YEAR DOWN THE
ROAD? ALONG WITH COVID-19 CAME
NEW AND CHALLENGING ISSUES. APWU
NATIONAL HAS PROVIDED GUIDANCE
AND NUMEROUS SIGN-OFFS FOR OUR
PROTECTION. PLEASE STAY SAFE AND
HEALTHY. SAFETY PROTOCOLS ARE FOR
OUR CONTINUED PROTECTION.

It is a good thing when we can reach an agreement without going to interest arbitration. As I write this article, our tentative national agreement is being sent out to our membership for ratification. It's up to you. We are essential workers and we deserve a decent and good contract.

The membership will have the final word on the tentative agreement's ratification. Please take the opportunity to discuss the provisions of the tentative agreement with your co-workers and your state and local leaders. Go to union meetings and discuss it together in whatever process your state or local follows. Soon after you read this, the membership will be returning ballots. The decision is yours, the members.

Article 12 Language/Our Saving Grace

There are 12 local offices in the Central region under an Article 12 excessing impact. I met with management of all of the potential impacted offices in August 2021. Some of the offices have both clerk craft and maintenance craft impacts. All of the offices are on the list for potential consolidation in the Central Region. I have also met with management at the regional level on all initially impacted offices.

The initial meeting is required by the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement). Subsequently, one impact was cancelled and three were postponed until 2022, which is, of course, now only days away from the writing of this article. The 50-mile radius for excessing is contained in the current CBA. This language is retained in the tentative agreement.

This contract language we have on limiting employee movement to the 50-mile radius is definitely an essential key for our employees impacted by forced movement. There are presently no potential residuals within 50 miles of any of the impacted offices.

COVID/Safety

Who knew we'd still be engulfed with COVID-19 a year down the road? Along with COVID-19 came new and challenging issues. APWU National has provided guidance and numerous sign-offs for our protection. Please stay safe and healthy. Safety protocols are for our continued protection.

There are Regional Safety representatives in each region as well as local reps. We are all working together for collective and continued safety at our worksites. Always file a PS Form 1767 when necessary and follow up with management. Safety First!

I feel safe speaking on behalf myself and all my fellow coordinators, Omar Gonzalez (Western Region), Kennith Beasley (Southern Region), Tiffany Foster (Northeast Region) and AJ Jones (Eastern Region) in saying "Safety First" now and always.



FROM the FIELD

Below are quotes from various APWU local and state publications throughout the country. All the publications listed are part of the Postal Press Association (PPA). For more information on the PPA, visit apwupostalpress.org or email ppa@apwupostalpress.org.

"I can't count the number of times somebody has come to me and talked about 'the union.' So often they are asking 'What is the union doing about a particular problem or situation?' 'The union' might mean something different to each and every one of us, but it is important to understand what 'the union' really means. 'The union' is all of us. It is the president of our national, the member who just started yesterday and everybody in between. ... A union is a group of people that join, unite, and link together to form a bigger unit. As a bigger unit, it gives them more strength to protect the 'rights and interests of its members.' 'The union' is not just the officers, stewards and delegates. It is all of us."

> - John Hunt Kentucky Postal Workers Union Maintenance Craft Director The Kentucky Postal Worker

"Many of the folks that have held officer positions in locals across the country are 'timing out' and getting ready to retire. I know I've been sounding like a broken record on this subject but I believe that 'brain drain' is the biggest threat facing the APWU. Because of the turn-over, this is an excellent time for our younger members to get more actively involved with the union. There are opportunities for quick advancement up through the union officer ranks throughout the country. None of us are getting any younger and some (who, me?) already have one foot out the door. Who knows, maybe one of our current PSEs or PTFs will be a future local officer, national business agent or national president! The opportunity is knocking, the question is, are you going to answer it?"

> - Jim Varner Youngstown (OH) Area Local Motor Vehicle Service Craft Director The Dispatcher

"Our customers have come to find out that if the USPS is not able to meet their needs for customer service, they can go elsewhere. ... Why is this happening? Because USPS decided several years ago that customer service was too expensive for them to afford. They have slashed staffing on the windows, closed and consolidated local mailing resources to help them find packages, file a complaint, or even make a phone call to their local post office. ... I don't care how you spin the story, it does not equate to a picture of customer service. ... The true way to increase revenue is to bring customers into your door, or using your products and services, is to invest in excellent customer service. That means investing in your employees. Hire and retain enough people to offer excellent customer service as soon as they walk in the door. Offer a product that is delivered when you say it will be. Don't relax or reduce delivery standards, live up to them. You can only achieve those goals when you treat your employees right. Make them feel valued, respected and not just cogs in a giant wheel that is only noticed when it is not there."

> - Russ Franklin Salt Lake City (UT) Area Local President The Six-Bits

"More and more hard-working people are fighting to form unions. The latest success being Starbucks employees working in a company owned store. This type of success will encourage other underpaid non-union employees to stand up and fight for better working conditions and pay. The stagnant minimum wage and Congress's failure to raise the minimum wage is finally lighting a fire to unionize. More hardworking people know that \$7.25 is not a living wage and no family could live on it without government assistance. I could not begin to imagine raising a family on two minimum wage checks much less one. We must continue our push for a \$15.00 minimum wage."

> - Ruben Campos Texas Postal Workers Union Vice President Lone Star Postal News



Starbucks Workers in Buffalo, NY Win First Union at Company

n December 9, workers at a Starbucks store in Buffalo, NY, became the first in the company to form a union and win an NLRB election. The workers at Buffalo's Elmwood location, organized under SEIU affiliate SB Workers United, won the election 19-8, following a long campaign and brutal union-busting attempts by the massive corporation.

Workers first went public with their desire to form a union at three Buffalo locations in August, and were immediately met with strong resistance from corporate management. The company intimidated baristas by sending several members of the executive suite to the stores, forcing workers to attend mandatory anti-union meetings, and routinely changing shift schedules. Even former CEO Howard Schultz, who was paid more than \$21 million in his final year as Starbucks CEO, was sent to Buffalo to dissuade the pro-union vote.

Instead of holding one election across all three stores, workers opted for three separate votes. The victory at Elmwood makes it the first of over 9,000 Starbucks corpo-

rate stores to be unionized. The union organizing drive was defeated at a second location and was in the lead at the third location with challenged ballots pending as this magazine goes to press.

In the wake of the union victory, workers at two locations in Boston filed for NLRB elections, with other locations around the country also working on union drives. The company has ramped up its union-busting activity in Buffalo in the wake of the initial victory, attempting to stop the union's momentum at other stores in the city, but workers are confident that this momentous victory will lead to more successful elections at other stores.

"Since we've become public with our campaign, we've received countless messages from partners all over the country from different stores that are interested in unionizing," employee Alexis Rizzo said at a press conference following the vote. "I don't think it will stop in Buffalo."

St. Vincent Hospital Nurses Ratify New Contract Following 300-Day Strike

On December 17, over 700 nurses represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) reached a tentative agreement on a new union contract with St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, MA. Nurses overwhelmingly ratified the new contract on January 3, ending one of the country's longest strikes at over 300 days.

Nurses began the strike on March 8, calling for improvements to nurse-to-patient ratios

and more resources in the hospital. Instead, hospital management set out to break the strike by hiring replacement labor, and spent over \$30,000 per day on police details and surveillance equipment outside the hospital.

In the later months of the strike, hospital management refused to guarantee that striking nurses would be able to return to their jobs, threatening to permanently replace them with the scab labor that crossed the

picket line. The new contract, mediated in part by Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, will allow the nurses to return to their jobs, while also keeping the replacement workers on staff.

"Our patients are going to get the best care possible with the most respect and dignity, and we have been anxious to get back to work, get back to what we call our home, our hospital," nurse Marlena Pellegrino told the Worcester Telegram & Gazette.

17,000 Member Student Researchers Union **Recognized Following Strike Authorization**

On December 9, following months of resistance, the University of California system formally recognized the union of over 17,000 student researchers. The student researchers are now officially members of the UAW, after initially submitting a supermajority of union cards to the state's Public Employment Relations Board in May 2020.

The university system dragged out union recognition for over a year, leading to workers organizing a strike vote in November. A near-unanimous number of voters authorized moving forward with a strike, and the university system responded with officially recognizing the union two weeks later.

"Today, after months of delay, the University did the right thing," said Aarthi Sekar, a Student Researcher at UC Davis, said following the recognition announcement. "We want to do our work in an environment that is fair and equitable, where we are protected from the frequent discrimination and harassment we face, and where we are able to contribute on our merits. Today we are one step closer to that goal. We look forward to working with UC to bargain a fair contract that improves working conditions for the people whose labor has made UC one of the most respected research institutions in the world."

Richmond, VA Teachers Become First in State to Win Collective Bargaining Rights

n December 4, teachers and other school staff in Richmond, VA became the first public school staff in the state to win collective bargaining rights, following an 8-1 vote by the Richmond School Board. The long-awaited victory puts Richmond's school workers one step closer to a negotiated union contract.

Public employees in Virginia have been prohibited from collective bargaining for decades. Only this May did a law go into effect granting rights to public-sector workers, provided the locality's authority votes in favor. With the vote by Richmond's school board passing, teachers and school staff can now gain their rightful place at the bargaining table.

"We still are showing up and showing out because we can't continue to be ignored," said Rachelle Ruffner, a sixth-grade teacher at River City Middle School, at the school board hearing. "Teachers are tired of being passed over in regards to their pay, and their hours, their job safety and their mental health for themselves and their families."

While many school workers are already members of the Richmond Education Association (REA), they must still hold an election to make the REA their exclusive bargaining representative. Once the election takes place, school workers will be able to directly negotiate with the school board on a contract.



Unions Around the World Rally for Swiss Package Workers

rorkers at the European package company DPD in Switzerland, fighting for months to win their union, got a boost in their organizing efforts in early December. Organized by UNI Global Union, postal unions around the world demonstrated in a Global Day of Action on December 1 to demand DPD respect the union rights of their Swiss employees and recognize their union, UNIA.

APWU joined in the action, with President Dimondstein sending a recorded message encouraging the Swiss workers to keep up the fight and calling on management to recognize the union.

Workers at DPD in Switzerland have been mandated to work 12 and 14-hour shifts, without overtime, throughout the pandemic. They've reported instances of wage theft, union-busting subcontracting, intrusive monitoring by management and poor workplace safety protocols.

Unions around the world highlighted DPD's abuses and called on them to recognize the union and enter into bargaining around the conditions affecting workers in Switzerland.

NLRB Orders New Election at Bessemer, AL Amazon Fulfillment Center

On November 29, following the recommendation from the regional hearing officer, NLRB Regional Director Lisa Henderson ordered a new union election at the Amazon fulfillment center in Bessemer, AL. Henderson upheld six objections from the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU).

Ahead of the first election, Amazon routinely intimidated workers and held mandatory anti-union meetings. The company also defied the NLRB by illegally installing a mailbox outside the building and giving Amazon security guards access.

A date for the new election has not been set as this issue goes to press. Amazon also has the opportunity to appeal the decision to the full NLRB board.

LEGISLATIVE & POLITICAL

It's Time to Get Rid Of Gerrymandering



Judy Beard, Director

As we gear up for the midterm elections in 2022, partisan and racial gerrymandering threatens to disenfranchise voters and further erode our democracy. That's why we must pass federal voting rights legislation which would put an end to gerrymandering.

very ten years, the United States census is conductded. When the new census data on the population is collected, state legislatures begin redrawing new congressional district maps based on this data.

Following the 2020 census, state legislatures across the nation went to work drawing their new congressional and state legislative district lines. Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive federal legislation to prevent state lawmakers from drawing district lines however they see fit. Therefore, many new districts discriminate against voters based on age, race, and ideology to benefit a political party - a practice commonly known as gerrymandering.

As of early January 2022, around 20 states have approved new congressional maps. A majority of states allow for

redistricting to be carried out by state legislatures. It is a well-known fact that congressional maps drawn by state legislators often skew in favor of the state party in power. The very process of redistricting itself is often shrouded in mystery. In many cases, deliberations occur confidentially and the redrawn maps are hidden from public view until the day a vote is scheduled. All of this makes it harder for watchdog groups and even the opposing political party from holding the party in power accountable.

Right now, about 50 percent of states have yet to approve new congressional maps. With the 2022 elections coming up, it is not too late to strengthen voting rights and finally do something about the egregious practice of gerrymandering.

That is why it is important that Congress passes the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act along with either the For the People Act or the Freedom to Vote Act. The bills, beyond making it easier to vote and expanding voting rights, include provisions to ensure the fairness of the redistricting process and outlaw partisan and racial gerrymandering. To learn more about these voting rights bills, turn to page 11.

Gerrymandering has no place in any democracy. In the face of such a clear threat to the sanctity of our elections, we desperately need action at the federal level to put an end to partisan redistricting.

We must pass these voting rights bills, which promise to put our elections back into the hands of the people instead of the hands of the powerful and wealthy few.



League of Women Voters holding a rally for Fair Maps in Washington, D.C. in 2019

ORGANIZATION

Let's Get Organized in 2022!



Anna Smith, Director

rganizing with our co-workers is the only way we can strengthen our union. As 2021 came to a close, together we have signed up over 25,000 new members! After coming out of a turbulent year in 2020, we made great strides in organizing at every level of the APWU. As we enter 2022, we cannot let that momentum die. Take a moment to enjoy the success of increasing our strength, but let's not let it stop us from organizing the unorganized. Be on the watch for upcoming organizing events and drives to help keep our momentum going as we take on 2022.

Union power by being an informed, involved and active Member

As every member prepares to express their voice and vote on the new Tentative Agreement (TA), our nonmember co-workers will have an opportunity to become members and express their voice by voting on the TA as well. I encourage each of you to be informed and involved - review the TA, attend the union town halls, ask your co-workers and leaders questions. Most us have heard co-workers discuss improvements they want in our contract with the Postal Service, now is the time to have that conversation and get those co-workers involved in the process. Whatever your position is, speak up. One vote can make a difference, and if you are passionate about your position, let your co-workers know and encourage them to vote as well.

Printable Membership Cards

As has been done, APWU membership cards will be mailed out at beginning of the year to every member on the rolls. The Organization Department will still have a limited number of blank cards available for locals and states to offer to new members who join throughout the year. However, members can now print their membership card at any time by visiting the Members Only section of apwu.org.

Membership Involvement

Our union is only as strong as the members who participate in it. To be effective, and have power on the workroom floor and in our communities, the members must be active participants in the union. Since offering new members the chance to get involved on the membership applications, we have captured thousands of new members who have volunteered from the start. But we need every member actively involved. In the Members Only section of the website, members can learn how to get involved in the organizing activities that interest them most.

The options available to choose from at this time include:

- Outreach representing the APWU at events and meetings, etc.
- Welcoming New Members orientations, organizing, etc.
- Work Place Safety daily huddles, weekly talks, safety captain, etc.
- Community Involvement speaking with neighbors, family and friends about issues
- Transportation getting people to and from events, meetings, etc.
- Bilingual please specify other language known
- Social Media Skills creating websites, computer skills, data entry, etc.
- Local Involvement annual picnics, membership events, union hall assistance, etc.

If you have other ways you can contribute that aren't listed, please send an email to Organization@apwu.org and we will be sure to pass that info on to your local or state for you.

Local Contact Info

On a regular basis, the Organization Dept. receives inquiries from members who need representation but are not sure who they should contact. The contact info for the Local or State union that represents you can be found in the Members Only section of the website, under "MY LOCAL". Here you will find not only the Local Name, but the full address, union office phone number, fax number (if one is available) as well as your elected officers.

Above are just a few of the tools available to you on the Members Only section of *apwu.org*. You have a wealth of information at your fingertips. Should you have any issues logging in, do not hesitate to reach out.

ME FRO

Time Limit Extended for Gulf War Veterans to Claim Presumptive Disability

he Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently extended the time limit for Gulf War Veterans to claim

presumptive disability for certain chronic illnesses related to their military service.

The illnesses, commonly referred to as "Gulf War Syndrome," are considered "presumptive" by VA, meaning Veterans claiming a disability related to them are *not* required to prove they were caused by military service.

While there is no time limit for claiming disability benefits from VA in normal circumstances, some presumptive conditions do come with time restrictions.

According to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Gulf War Syndrome affects approximately 200,000 Veterans of the 650,000 service members who served in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

To qualify as disabling, a covered illness must have caused illness or symptoms in the Veteran for at least six months and:

- Occurred during service in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations from Aug. 2, 1990, to the present. This also includes Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2010) and Operation New Dawn (2010-2011), or;
- Been diagnosed as at least 10% disabling by VA after service.

Originally, VA was scheduled to stop awarding benefits to new Gulf War

Veterans with a related disability diagnosis that was given after Dec. 31, 2021. However, VA has extended that cutoff date to Dec. 31, 2026.

In the Sept. 14, 2021, Federal Register posting, VA gave two major reasons for this change:

- 1. As of Sept. 14, 2021, no end date for the Persian Gulf War had been established:
- 2. Medical evidence is still unclear as to how long illnesses caused by Persian Gulf service take to show up in affected Veterans.

Normally, for a disability or illness to be considered "service-connected" by VA, it must have either occurred, or been diagnosed, while the member was in the service. However, the group of illnesses covered by this ruling may develop after leaving the service, even if there were no symptoms while on active duty. So, additional Veterans may be eligible for newly enacted service-connected benefits.

This is similar to many Vietnam Veterans seeing new health conditions related to Agent Orange exposure decades after the fact. It took years before researchers could connect those illnesses to military exposure.

According to VA, Gulf War Syndrome can manifest itself in various ways in affected Veterans. Over the course of the last six months, VA has begun processing serviceconnected disability claims for six new presumptive conditions related to environmental exposures during military service. It's important that Veterans are aware of these newly added presumptive conditions so

that if applicable, they can file a claim and obtain any earned benefits.

New Conditions Added as Associated with Agent Orange Exposure

In May 2021, VA started implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism to the list of medical conditions presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange. VA later added asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis) on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas.

Any Veteran who was previously denied service-connection for any of these six conditions but had symptoms manifest within 10 years of military service would need to file a supplemental claim.

Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

Toxic exposure to airborne hazards created from open burn pits continues to be a growing concern for Veterans who were exposed to hazardous materials during their military service. As such, VA is encouraging all Veterans who are eligible to participate in VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry (AHOBPR). By joining the registry, you can provide information that can help VA better understand the long-term effects of burn pit exposures.

Source(s): Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Disabled Veterans of America (DAV), Federal Register

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Understanding the **Pregnancy Discrimination Act**



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

he *Pregnancy Discrimination Act* (PDA) of 1978 amends Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions constitutes unlawful sex discrimination under Title VII. Women affected by pregnancy or related conditions must be treated in the same manner as other applicants or employees who are similar in their ability or inability to work.

Pregnancy Discrimination Violates the Collective Bargaining Agreement

Pregnancy Discrimination also violates the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Postal Service and the Union. The CBA Article 2, Non-Discrimination and Civil Rights, Section 1. Statement of Principle states:

"The Employer and the Union agree that there shall be no discrimination by the Employer or the Union against employees because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), age, or marital status."

Therefore, if an employee is temporarily unable to perform her job due to pregnancy, she must be treated the same as any other temporarily disabled employee by providing light duty, modified tasks, alternative assignments, disability leave, and/or leave without pay. In addition, it violates the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM), Article 672.1 b.

A JOB MUST BE HELD OPEN FOR A PREGNANCY RELATED ABSENCE THE SAME LENGTH OF TIME THAT JOBS ARE HELD OPEN FOR EMPLOYEES ON SICK OR TEMPORARY DISABILITY LEAVE.

Pregnancy and Maternity Leave

Under the PDA, an employer may not single out pregnancy-related conditions for medical clearance procedures that are not required of employees who are similar in their ability or inability to work. If an employee has been absent from work as a result of a pregnancy-related condition and recovers, her employer may not require her to remain on leave until the baby's birth. Nor may an employer have a rule that prohibits an employee from returning to work for a predetermined length of time after childbirth. Temporarily disabled leave or leave without pay must be granted for pregnancy the same as for other illness. A job must be held open for a pregnancy related absence the same length of time that jobs are held open for employees on sick or temporary disability leave.

What to Do if You are a Victim of Pregnancy **Discrimination**

If you feel that you are a victim of pregnancy discrimination, take the following actions:

- Write down what happened Record the date, time, and place of the incident, include what was said, and identify witnesses. Keep a copy of these notes at home.
- Contact your union representative File a grievance within 14 days of the incident citing a violation of Article 2, Article 13, Article 19, and Article 30.
- Keep copies of job evaluations Keep records at home of all evaluations that show that you do a good job at work. Your supervisor may criticize your job performance later in order to defend the discrimination.
- File a charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) - A pregnancy discrimination charge must be filed within 45 days of the discriminatory action in order to preserve your legal rights. You can file a charge even if you do not work for the Postal Service anymore.

Resources used were: Pregnancy Discrimination Act, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Collective Bargaining Agreement Between APWU and USPS, and the ELM. ■

RETIREES

APWU Retirees Still Fighting for Justice



Nancy Olumekor, Director

Celebrating 30 Years

he APWU Retirees Department "will offer great benefits to retirees and will make APWU bigger, better and stronger than ever!"

This was the message in the January 1992 letter to all APWU local and state presidents from the National Executive Board. With a broad range of knowledge, skills and abilities, retirees have proven to be an asset to the union at every level, as a support system for our union as well as legislative activists. Retiree members participate in social, political, legislative and educational activities for the dual purposes of improving retirees' quality of life and reaching out to help those less fortunate. Retirees work with local unions to mentor young workers and reignite the spirit of unionism in all workers. An important part of our fight for justice to protect and secure our hard-earned benefits and to help to preserve the Postal Service includes the continued growth of the APWU Retirees Department.

Joining the APWU Retirees Department is the first step to continue being involved when you retire, because your union dues stop when you retire. You can join online on apwu.org "Members Only" page or download and print an application. In addition, we can mail an application to you. Our dues are just \$36.00 per year. It is our collective efforts that will help us achieve our goals. Working collectively lightens the burden for all of us and we are much more effective together, which is one reason we formally organize into retiree chapters.

In accordance with the APWU National Constitution Article 16 Section 2 (i), "Ten (10) or more Retirees Department members residing within a local or area local geographical jurisdiction may form a Local Retiree Chapter." Organizing a local retiree chapter begins by contacting the Retirees Department for information. The members then move forward to formalize the Retiree Chapter with assistance from the Retirees Department.

As we begin the new year, we welcome new retiree chapters: Southwest FL Retiree Chapter and Wichita KS Retiree Chapter. Celebrate with us!

5 Ways the Pandemic Will Be Different in 2022:

Rachel Nania writes about health care and health policy for AARP. She originally published the following on Dec. 21, 2021. Highlights are provided - the full article is available at bit.ly/3FB0tS1.

Treating COVID could get easier because of the new treatment from Pfizer for COVID-19, the pill authorized by the FDA on Dec. 22 from Pfizer.

Rapid, reliable and accessible testing will be key to the drugs' success and we are reminded that the pills do not prevent COVID-19, so they won't be a substitute for getting vaccinated.

At-home testing will play a bigger role in slowing the spread because rapid antigen tests answer the question 'Am I infectious right now?' Even with at-home testing, people must follow the protocol:

- If you test positive, the CDC recommends staying away from others for 10 days, even if you don't have COVID symptoms and
- You should also check in with your doctor especially if you have any underlying conditions that put you at risk for complications.

With Omicron, the focus on boosters will be big because health experts say that a booster shot is key to building the best defense against the highly contagious variant. The booster dose ramps up the antibody response and "gives you much better protection against omicron".

We should learn more about long COVID. The NIH launched a study on what is commonly called long COVID to try to understand what's causing people after a COVID-19 diagnosis to suffer for months from lingering effects that can interfere with everyday life, how to prevent it and how to treat people who are suffering from it.

We can expect to see more variants continue to emerge as the virus continues to spread. We have to use every resource and every tool we have to suppress the virus, that includes getting vaccinated and boosted, wearing a mask in public and steering clear of crowded situations.

HEALTH PLAN

APWU Health Plan Makes a Commitment to the Community



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

Walk. Donate. Educate.

The Health Plan made a decision in 2021 to become actively involved in its surrounding community. As a health insurance company, it is important to not just talk about healthy goals but to actively promote healthy causes. After considering many different worthy organizations, the Health Plan decided to support organizations involved in what we affectionately nicknamed the Big 3 – Breast Cancer, Diabetes, and Heart Disease. We participated in fundraising and provided teams to walk in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, Step Out for Diabetes, and Greater Maryland Heart Walk fundraising events. Health Plan employees participated in all three walks and walked almost 10 miles. Working with our partners Cigna and United Healthcare, the Health Plan team donated \$7,500 for all three events.

It's time to get back on track. Rightfully, all attention was on COVID-19, and for a while, most providers suspended preventive care, but it is now time to catch up. We want to encourage everyone to get their annual physical along with screenings for breast cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Preventive screenings are covered at 100% by the Health Plan when services are performed at a network provider.

Breast Cancer – Breast Cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death in women. Early detection is key to survival. Breast cancer, when found early, is easier to treat successfully. Talk to your doctor about scheduling your routine mammogram.

Diabetes – Diabetes is the No. 7 leading cause of death in the U.S. in adults over 20 years of age. If you are diagnosed with prediabetes, small lifestyle changes are important to lower your risk of diabetes. Talk to your doctor about your weight and blood pressure and if you smoke, ask how this will impact your diabetes.

Heart Disease - Heart Disease is the No. 1 cause of death in the United States. The more risk factors you have, the higher your chance of developing coronary heart disease. Major risk factors include age, gender, and heredity. Major risk factors you can control include cigarette smoking, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and physical inactivity.

Our Health Plan employees participated in the efforts to raise funds in support of #4MyCity and Maryland Food Bank. These organizations provide meals to local families in the Maryland metro areas. You might have noticed our Facebook posts for Toys for Tots. We surpassed our goals and provided toys to many children. The Health Plan will continue with all these worthy projects and want to step up our involvement. We will add service projects to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. that will benefit the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Lighthouse Shelter.

IT'S TIME TO GET BACK ON TRACK. RIGHTFULLY, ALL ATTENTION WAS ON COVID-19, AND FOR A WHILE, MOST PROVIDERS SUSPENDED PREVENTIVE CARE, BUT IT IS NOW TIME TO CATCH UP. WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO GET THEIR ANNUAL PHYSICAL ALONG WITH SCREENINGS FOR BREAST CANCER, DIABETES, AND HEART DISEASE.

I could not be prouder of the Health Plan team. Their participation in these projects is a great example of their concern for our members and commitment to their health. Please check out our efforts on our Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube pages.

Tentative Agreement and your Health Plan

Great news about your Health Insurance in the tentative agreement: APWU career members enrolled in the APWU Consumer Driven Health Plan (CDHP) will continue to receive their 95% Postal Service contribution towards their premium. This agreement has a new added benefit for Postal Support Employees (PSE) who are converting to a career position. The time PSEs are enrolled in the APWU CDHP prior to conversion will count towards the year required to qualify for the 95% postal contribution.

In addition, there is no change to the Postal Service contribution to the premiums for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB). This agreement will keep your excellent health insurance benefits in place.

