

THE AMERICAN

Postal Worker

APWU

July/August 2023

AUTOMATION AND
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ARE HERE



**Will Technology Serve the Bosses
or the Workers?**

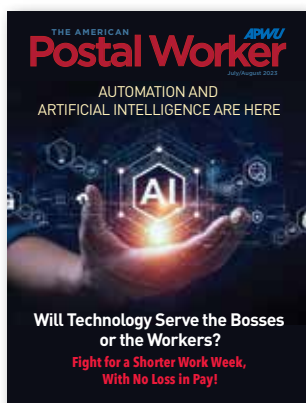
**The Fight for a Shorter Workweek,
With No Loss in Pay!**



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ABOUT THE COVER:

We face a new technological "revolution" with the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), the question is whether that new technology will serve the bosses or the workers. One way to challenge this threat to jobs is to build working class power, and to launch and win the fight for a shorter workweek, with no loss of pay.

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PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

A Case For the Shorter Workweek

The Luddite movement was born in England in the early 1800s. It mobilized workers to destroy and sabotage new machinery of the Industrial Revolution that was threatening jobs. Not surprisingly, the Luddites failed to stop the march of technology.

New technology has changed postal work over the years. I was hired on the Letter Sorter Machine (LSM), a mechanized piece of equipment that replaced about 80 manual clerks with a crew of 18 operators. LSMs no longer exist, replaced with bar code technology and automation. Two workers on a Delivery Bar Code Sorter sort more letters per hour than an entire LSM crew did. Much of what is driving management's network modernization plan is automation.

Workers worldwide are now staring down the barrel of a new technological "revolution" with the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI).

It is predicted that AI technology could shockingly eliminate one-third of jobs in the U.S. In addition, it has many negative implications for how we think, learn, write, interact, and obtain information.

One of the main answers to this challenge is to build working class power, and to launch and win the fight for a shorter workweek with no loss of pay. I was proud that the APWU brought such a resolution to the 2022 AFL-CIO convention in Philadelphia. Below are my comments introducing the resolution.

"I rise to introduce a resolution addressing the vital issue of working hours and what must be the labor movement's fight to secure a shorter working week with no loss of pay. This is not a new fight, but should be a continuing one.

U.S. workers' struggle for shorter working hours is nearly as old the country itself. And it started here, in Philadelphia, when in 1791, organized carpenters struck the city, demanding a 10-hour workday, a reduction from the sunup to sundown schedule normal at the time...

In 1866 the National Labor Union passed a resolution saying 'The first and great necessity of the present to free labor of this country from capitalist slavery, is the passing of a law by which eight hours shall be the normal working day... We are resolved to put forth all our strength until this glorious result is achieved.'

And our modern movement takes inspiration from the struggles for the shorter workweek at Haymarket in 1886, and those leaders murdered by the government for their audacity to demand "eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for what you will." And it was this struggle for the eight-hour day that led to the creation of May Day, the international holiday of the working class.

But once we secured the eight-hour day and 40-hour workweek through generations of struggle, the labor movement largely abandoned the fight for the shorter workweek. We now witness increased work hours with forced overtime, workers compelled to work multiple jobs, and an increase in the retirement age. The issue of long working hours was a key driver of some of the recent militant strikes.

Instead of liberating workers, the rapid advances of automation and artificial intelligence are being used to enrich the profits of corporate America and Wall Street, cause more unemployment, and less job opportunities for coming generations. Last year corporate profits surged to a record \$3 trillion...

Workers deserve better. We deserve more for our time at work, and we deserve more time away from work to enjoy our families, strengthen our communities, appreciate and protect the wonders of our planet, and to build a working-class movement that secures justice for all workers."

The resolution passed overwhelmingly, as did a similar resolution at the 2022 APWU National Convention. It is up to us, and all unions, to move this struggle from words to actions – in contract negotiations, with political allies, and in the streets. Let's get to work - a brighter future for workers depends on it. ■

Memorandum Signed Regarding General Principles on Sorting and Delivery Centers

As has been shared through the pages of this magazine, on the APWU website, and in online informational meetings and presentations, a major part of the management network modernization plan includes the creation of Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DCs). These centers will centralize many delivery operations into larger buildings with automated package sorting equipment. Management currently projects the creation of 400-500 S&DCs.

Over many months the APWU leadership engaged in numerous, and at times, productive discussions with postal management over the union's serious concerns regarding job protection, as well as service to the customers.

On June 15, 2023, the APWU and postal management signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) "Re: General Principles on Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DC.)" The MOU was signed by Deputy Postmaster General Doug Tulino and APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

First and foremost, the MOU makes it clear that no retail operations (window or box sections) will be reduced or closed due to the implementation of management's S&DC plans.

Furthermore, the MOU confirms that customers will still be able to pick up their certified mail, held mail, etc., at their local post offices, and will not have to travel long distances to S&DCs to conduct their postal business.

In addition, the MOU clarifies that distribution duties in the S&DCs will be categorized as function 4 operations.

In relation to motor vehicle operations, the MOU establishes that, unless already subcontracted, it is postal Motor Vehicle Services employees who will be moving the mail from the processing facilities to the S&DCs, and from the S&DCs to the local post offices. There will be discussions about bringing subcontracted truck driving work back into the Postal Service to be performed by APWU-represented employees.

The MOU indicates that there is more work to do and that the parties (union and management) will continue discussions on a variety of subjects, including job duties, staffing levels, and job postings, and to resolve the appropriate processes for the opening of Local MOU (LMOU) negotiations.

The MOU also addresses local management's obligations to forthrightly communicate with local union leadership about timely and important information regarding the implementation of the network modernization plans.

"This MOU is a positive step forward in addressing a number of the union's concerns. The union had received these commitments verbally many months ago, but it was important to get them in writing," shared APWU President Dimondstein. "This initial settlement should put to rest some of the rumors, claims, and legitimate concerns regarding the reduction and closing of retail operations and post offices. Obviously more in-depth discussions are needed and will continue between the APWU leadership and management, as the union works to address and resolve a number of ongoing union concerns, and we will continue to share the results with all APWU members" he concluded. ■



The True Cost of the Debt Ceiling Crisis

After months of contentious negotiations between House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden, an agreement was reached to raise the debt limit, effectively curtailing a default. With the Republican-controlled House of Representatives refusing to honor the country's debts without concessions, the Treasury Department came within days of failing to meet its obligations, including paying Social Security checks and government salaries.

The deal means that the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund, the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefit Fund, and the G Fund of the Thrift Savings Plan will be compensated for lost revenue caused by the Treasury's "extraordinary measures," which were taken to buy time before a national default.

The agreement also imposes cuts to planned spending on social programs and increases in the military budget. Consumer advocate, lawyer, and author, Ralph Nader, whose organization, *The Center for Study of Responsive Law*, is a member of A Grand Alliance, has highlighted just how bad the deal is for everyone except for a tiny number of billionaires, defense contractors, and corporate interests. Below are excerpts from his article: "Reverse the Accelerating Warfare State Before It's Too Late!"

Most of the cuts [in the deal] will slash the domestic programs that protect the health, safety and economic well-being of the American people. Cuts will also be made to the starved I.R.S. budget, further weakening its capacity to pursue super-rich tax cheats and giant corporate tax escapees. The GOP insisted on continuing its aiding and abetting of grand-scale tax evasion that fuels bigger deficits.

Biden also agreed not to restore any of Trump's tax cuts on these same plutocrats and corporatists who refuse to pay for the undeclared wars of Empire from which they massively profit.

Not only did the Pentagon, and indirectly the giant munitions corporations like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and General Dynamics get exempted, they were told by both the GOP and the Democrats to get ready, in the coming years, to receive additional tens of billions of dollars that the Generals and Biden didn't even ask for. Biden wants to increase last year's Pentagon budget by \$48 billion, and the blank-check solons on Capitol Hill are inclined to match him. Except for a few dozen progressives, the support for this Niagara of dollars is bipartisan even though the Pentagon budget is and has been unauditale.

Yet, since 1992, the Department of "Offense" has been violating the federal law that requires DOD to submit an auditable budget to Congress every year. Every Secretary of Defense has admitted this noncompliance and promised to correct it. Yet year after year the violation of law continues. No one can fathom the waste, redundancy and gigantic cost overruns by the coddled big business military contractors with their government-guaranteed arrangements [...] The two-Party duopoly has turned Congress into a giant shovel of unaudited money for the military to secure misguided bragging rights for your Representatives and Senators back home about being "strong on defense" rather than watchdogs over your tax dollars.

Meanwhile, back home, schools crumble, existing public transit is dangerously antiquated and in need of repair, as are bridges, roads, clinics, ports, airports, public drinking water systems and waste management facilities. Care for the public lands and national parks suffers massively due to deferred maintenance. Funding to deal with land erosion, toxic water and air pollution is in short supply.

The failure of Congress to provide support for desperately needed programs such as Head Start and other programs to reduce child hunger, homelessness and poverty involving 80 million people, either without health insurance or under-insured, is beyond shameful. Why is the United States, the richest nation on the planet, providing less to its citizens than Western European countries and Canada? Answer: The runaway power of Big Business over public budgets!

Read the full article at nader.org. ■



What is Supposed to Happen When Workplace Harassment is Reported? ← — — — — —

With the many legitimate complaints against Postal Service management's inappropriate treatment of employees and unacceptable behaviors, there is a process in place that all our APWU sisters and brothers need to familiarize themselves with.

During our Workplace Environment Committee meetings, Initial Management Inquiry Processes (IMIPs) are frequently discussed to find solutions to the recurring question of why is there so much harassment of our members? The sheer number of grievances related to the constant harassment complaints across the entire country is indicative of why this process, and others, are necessary.

The IMIP requires that managers, postmasters, and supervisors gather enough information at the onset of a complaint to properly proceed. There are many determinations to be made by management, such as separating the employees, and if applicable, a recommendation to seek Employee Assistance Program counseling.

This process must be completed by a higher-level supervisor or manager who has the authority to launch the inquiry. The IMIP will not replace a harassment investigation conducted by Human Resources. The IMIP requires that management react promptly to complaints associated

with harassment, and mandates that management properly address the problem. It is not appropriate for management to refer the problem to any other process, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity process; they should punctually investigate concerns that are brought forth by any employee.

Once the complaint is received, management must separately and thoroughly interview the harassed worker, the harasser, and all witnesses relative and specific to the complaint. This process must be acted upon promptly. Management's failure to act promptly can result in loss of evidence and finding management did not act reasonably. Once a thorough investigation has been completed, management must evaluate the information derived from interviews with all of the parties involved in the investigation. APWU national and local officers are committed to ensuring that management follows all of the established protocols by the local manager, Human Resources, Headquarters (HQ) and HQ field units.

Interviews must be confidential to the greatest extent possible, and employees should report this to their local union's leadership if this isn't the case. Documentation related to the interviews should be provided to the manager, Human Resources, local or area offices, for HQ and HQ field units. APWU regional Safety and Health representatives throughout the country report on and address management's lack of commitment to improve conditions. The dedicated regional Safety and

Health representatives, will continue to fight for our members. We are exploring the possibility of an enhanced process to ensure IMIPs are promptly addressed.

We recently received an arbitration award for a grievance pertaining to an IMIP that was not properly conducted by the USPS. Four employees were awarded \$10,000, with an additional penalty of \$50 per day until the award is fully paid.

As per Publication 552, the USPS must always conduct IMIPs without delay, and they must follow the rules and procedures to ensure that a legitimate investigation was performed. The APWU leadership implores each of you to stand together, just as we have on many occasions, to combat the monsters in the Postal Service who will continue to bully as usual, if they are not held accountable for their actions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Industrial Relations Department for information and assistance regarding IMIPs. ■

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT!

Any local or state can organize events and rallies to protest harassment, and to stand up for respect and dignity. Please send your photos and videos of your union-organized events and rallies to: communications@apwu.org.

Amy Puhalski Appointed as New Coordinator

Western Michigan Area Local President Amy Puhalski has been appointed to fill the vacant position of Central Regional Coordinator following the retirement of Sharyn Stone. She assumed the duties of the position on June 5, 2023 following her appointment by President Mark Dimondstein, with the approval of the National Executive Board.

Sister Puhalski is a 29-year clerk craft postal employee. She served as Western Michigan Area local president for 13 years and as vice president for six years prior. She also served as Research and Education Director for the Michigan state APWU. In addition, Amy served on various national convention committees, including as chair of the Constitution Committee.



"I am truly honored and humbled by my appointment to the position of Central Region Coordinator and thank President Mark Dimondstein and the National Executive Board for this great opportunity to continue to

serve the membership in my new position," shared Amy Puhalski.

"On behalf of the APWU membership, I congratulate Sister Stone on her well-earned retirement and thank her for her decades of leadership and many contributions to improving the lives of postal workers and our families," said APWU President Dimondstein.

"The National Executive Board and I welcome Sister Puhalski as the new Central Regional Coordinator and National Executive Board member and we look forward to working with her in the continuing struggle for justice," concluded Dimondstein. ■

Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence for the Postal Board of Governors

The APWU stands firm in its commitment to advocate for the nomination of Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence to the Postal Board of Governors. With her extensive knowledge of both postal operations and the workforce, as well as her strong advocacy of the public Postal Service during her tenure in Congress, Lawrence is the clear choice to serve on the Board.

Congresswoman Lawrence was the only member of Congress to have been a card-carrying member of the American Postal Workers Union and the National Association of Letter Carriers. She understands the commitment and dedication that each postal worker provides to the nation.

Lawrence would bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to this role. Her nomination would be crucial to ensure that the Board has more equitable representation of the Postal Service's workforce. Despite African Americans making up nearly 30 percent of the postal workforce in 2021, the Board has not had a woman of color serve in over

15 years. As the Postal Service implements a massive network reorganization, nominating Lawrence will ensure the makeup of the Board includes diverse voices that better represent the Postal Service's workforce and customer base. Nominating Lawrence would also guarantee that any reforms from the Postmaster General would be vetted by an independent voice, and would be critically reviewed to make sure that management proposals would not adversely affect historically-underrepresented groups.

The Board is comprised of nine governors, as well as the Postmaster and Deputy Postmaster General. These governors serve seven-year terms, and together select the Postmaster General. In addition to this role, governors set postal policies, control expenditures, and review postal practices. The Board also deals with service standards, which is an issue of critical importance to all APWU members. In order to fill vacancies, the President of the United States sends a nomination to the Senate, where a candidate's confirmation is then put to a vote. ■

Human Relations Educational Assembly Educates, Engages, and Empowers



The Human Relations Department held its Educational Assembly in Baltimore, MD, June 13-15, meeting in person for the first time since 2017. Human Relations Director Daleo Freeman opened the conference with greetings and remarks. He explained to the 140 attendees the purpose that gathered everyone there. "Building unity, solidarity, and a sufficiently equipped membership... this is the intent of the conference," he said. Through three days, members were educated, engaged, and empowered on topics such as Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Veterans' Rights, Civil Rights, Voting Rights, Economic Justice, Social Justice, and Equal Employment opportunities. The APWU-appointed Regional Resource Assistants were formally introduced. President Dimondstein helped open the conference with a presentation on the importance of the connection of the labor and civil rights movements. "On our unity lies our strength" stated Dimondstein, "and our strength is stronger when labor and civil rights are united in solidarity."

Attendees discussed the history of The Great Postal Strike of 1970, and the APWU's involvement in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa in 1994. Members discussed 21st century issues such as the current struggles in the fight for social justice and equality for all, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, or background.

"Learning about the marriage between the civil rights movement and the labor movement reenergized me," said APWU member Chiezika Nwanyanwu, Executive Treasurer of the Greater Los Angeles Area Local. "Getting caught up in the day-to-day, often times we forget why the labor movement exists in the first place."

At the conclusion of the Assembly members left with a renewed sense



Human Relations Director,
Daleo Freeman

of understanding and purpose surrounding the fight for justice in our workplaces and communities. Attendees were encouraged to share the information learned and use it to implement or reboot Human Relations Committees at the local level.

Fittingly the Assembly was held around the Juneteenth holiday celebrating the end of slavery. At the concluding dinner the attendees were treated to an inspiring Juneteenth performance by 40 young people from the Baltimore area. ■



The Singing Sensations Youth Choir performed in observation of Juneteenth.



The Social Security Fairness Act

APWU members are continuing to advocate for the passage of the *Social Security Fairness Act*, H.R. 82 and S. 597. These bills were introduced by Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA-06) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), with a number of bi-partisan original co-sponsors in both chambers. The Act would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO), which unfairly reduces, or sometimes eliminates, Social Security benefits for millions of federal annuitants. The WEP and GPO penalize Civil Service Retirement System retirees and their spouses who meet the requirements for Social Security benefits and have paid their fair share into the program through secondary employment.

The APWU Legislative Department has been very active over the years in advocating for legislation that would right this wrong, and have continued to engage with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle to advance these bills. We have been working with other unions and organizations as a part of a broader coalition to educate members of Congress, as well as our own individual memberships, on this legislation. Currently, H.R. 82 has 282 co-sponsors, and S. 597 has 45.

Please call our legislative hotline at 1-844-402-1001 to urge your members of Congress in both the House and the Senate to support H.R. 82 and S. 597, the *Social Security Fairness Act*! ■

Corrections: In the process of editing the Northeast Regional Coordinator's column on page 30 of the May/June edition of *The American Postal Worker*, we wrongly attributed the quote "The purpose of creating the S&DCs is to reduce transportation and mailing costs, as well as provide Postal customers with additional services," to the USPS Office of Inspector General. The quote actually comes from the Article 12 regional notification sent from management to Regional Coordinator Foster.

In the May/June 2023 issue of *The American Postal Worker*, the Clerk Division article on page 26 incorrectly stated that "In those circumstances

2023 ALL CRAFT CONFERENCE SAVE THE DATES!

Secretary-Treasurer's Training:
Friday, Sept. 29 to Sunday, Oct. 1

•

Young Members Conference:
Friday, Sept. 29 to Saturday, Sept. 30

•

**Legislative Conference
Building Grassroots Power:**
Sunday, Oct. 1

•

2023 All Craft Conference:
Monday, Oct. 2 to Wednesday, Oct. 4

•

Retirees Conference:
Monday, Oct. 2 to Wednesday, Oct. 4

•

**Horseshoe Las Vegas Hotel. Hotel room
rate \$109/night + \$35 resort fee/night +
tax. Book online at:**
<https://book.passkey.com/go/sbapw3> or
the APWU website.

Deadline: Aug. 8, 2023

in which the opportunity to convert is declined, any PTFs or PSEs in the same installation/bid cluster will have the opportunity, by PTF installation seniority or PSE relative standing on the rolls, to elect to be converted to full-time/career." The only one who can decline is the PSE/PTF in the level-4 office. The corrected language states, "In those circumstances in which the PSE/PTF in a level-4 RMPO opportunity to convert is declined, any PTFs or PSEs in the same installation/bid cluster will have the opportunity, by PTF installation seniority or PSE relative standing on the rolls, to be converted to full-time/career."

Supreme Court Attacks Right to Strike

On June 1, the U.S. Supreme Court struck yet another blow against working people's right to organize. The case – *Glacier Northwest vs Teamsters* – concerned a strike at a Washington State-based concrete company that sued its workers' union for walking out on strike because the company had to dump drying concrete.

Despite a history of rulings that found strikes that result in a loss of perishable goods are protected under the National Labor Relations Act, an 8-1 majority of justices found that the workers were not allowed to walk out while the concrete dried, because they must exercise "reasonable precautions," and therefore could be sued.

Reacting to the decision, International Brotherhood of Teamsters President, Sean O'Brien, said: "The political hacks at the Supreme Court have again voted in favor of corporations over working people. These corruptible justices should be ashamed of themselves for throwing out long-standing precedent and legislating from the bench. The ability to strike has been on the books for nearly 100 years, and it's no coincidence that this ruling is coming at a time when workers across the country are fed up and exercising their rights more and more.

"Unions will never be broken by this Court or any other. Today's shameful ruling is simply one more reminder that the American people cannot rely on their government or their courts to protect them. They cannot rely on their employers. We must rely on each other. We must engage in organized, collective action. We can only rely on the protections inherent in the power of our unions."

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was the only member of the court to oppose the decision. "Workers are not indentured servants," she wrote in her dissenting opinion, "bound to continue laboring until any planned work stoppage would be as painless as possible for their master." ■

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RELY ON THEIR GOVERNMENT OR
THEIR COURTS TO PROTECT THEM.
THEY CANNOT RELY ON THEIR
EMPLOYERS. WE MUST RELY ON
EACH OTHER."**

Leave Carryover MOUs Extended

APWU President Mark Dimondstein signed a pair of extending Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) on May 2, 2023. The MOUs continue the increased annual leave carryover and annual leave exchange limits that were negotiated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the MOUs, the Postal Service agreed to increase the maximum number of annual leave hours that career employees may carry over into the next leave year. For leave year 2024, the maximum number that career employees can carry over is 520 hours.

Career employees may also exchange annual leave by selling it back to the Postal Service. Employees can exchange up to 80 hours of annual leave if they meet the criteria outlined in the MOU.

The leave year begins on the "first day of the first full pay period of the calendar," meaning that in 2024, the leave year will begin on Jan. 13, 2024. The MOUs are set to expire on Dec. 31, 2024. ■



Protecting our Communities Nationwide

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

The 118th Congress is taking up a “Sense of the House” Resolution (HRes 277) calling on the Postal Service to restore Service Standards to July 1, 2012. While a House Resolution is not binding, nor law, the APWU fully supports its passage. There are currently 30 co-sponsors. A consensus from Congress in the form of HRes 277 would represent a step in the right direction as we continually seek congressional legislative and binding action that would compel the USPS to restore the prompt Service Standards prior to 2012.

Prompt service has taken a nose dive. The PMGs' Donahue/Brennan plans consolidated over 160 plants including the removal of cancelling machines, mail processing equipment, and degrading Service Standards, affecting mail service. Now we have the “10 Year PMG DeJoy Plan.” He took out more mail processing machines in 2020. Now he is consolidating the mail and workers into large warehouses, and has twice degraded Service Standards to deliver mail slower. The USPS is a service that is to provide prompt mail services which, by the way, includes prompt service for our mail-in ballots, protecting democracy in our communities nationwide.

WE PROVIDED PROMPT SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITIES IN 2012, WHEN WE HAD A NETWORK WHERE ALL MAIL PROCESSING CENTERS HAD CANCELLING AND MAIL PROCESSING EQUIPMENT TO HELP PROVIDE MORE OVERNIGHT DELIVERY.

At the Postal Forum (May 25th) DeJoy said we were a “haphazard bureaucratic organization.” His plan is for “dramatic change” in how we perform our service. He is going after the Postal Service’s regulators, the PRC and Congress. DeJoy said his changes “must be done at a pace and with tenacity, that is rarely seen and rarely necessary in government or private industry.”

We provided prompt service to our communities in 2012, when we had a network where all mail processing centers had cancelling and mail processing equipment

to help provide more overnight delivery. We can go back to the 2012 Service Standards, and it can be done more affordably than the costs that are being incurred now with the PMG’s network modernization plan. Many of the mail processing plants that were consolidated after 2012 are still operating as hubs with space to bring back mail processing equipment. We are also short staffed and we need to hire more employees no matter what plan is in place.

- 2020 DeJoy took out machines before the elections, that were never returned, and now has plans to eliminate 200 (his words) “small and wasteful” annexes and “cost cutting” across the USPS delivery network that is responsible for reaching 165 million households six days a week.
- Service Standards have been degraded twice by DeJoy, causing more delays and a slowdown of mail services.
- Service losses from DeJoy raising prices for mail service, PO Boxes, attacks on the bulk mail, de-valuing the handling of the certified return receipt option, and the good services that postal workers have provided for years. Passport appointments are being limited, and the trust from our communities is deteriorating. Our real opportunity for expanding good services to communities like postal banking has been placed on hold.
- DeJoy is taking carriers further away from the communities they serve, and consolidating the mail and the work away from the communities. DeJoy is moving operations to large warehouses that put services in danger when there is a power outage or natural disaster at a warehouse location.

If you are interested, visit “Congress.gov” and type in: HRes.277, click on the co-sponsor link in blue, to see the list of representatives from both parties that have signed on. ■

Changes in MVS Leadership



Kenneth "Ken" Prinz, outgoing MVS Assistant Director



Garrett Langley, newly appointed MVS Assistant Director



Shana Parker, the new NBA for the MVS Division

Kenneth "Ken" Prinz, Assistant Director of the Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) Division at APWU national headquarters, has retired, effective July 1. Brother Prinz began working as a clerk for the Postal Service in 1974, but transferred into the MVS craft after approximately two years. Prinz was a member of the Philadelphia PA Area Local, where he began serving as a steward in 1986. He was elected as the Assistant Director of the MVS Division of his local in 1990, and would later serve as Director of the craft.

In 2010, Prinz was elected to the position of Eastern Region National Business Agent (NBA) for the Motor Vehicle Service Division. He was the region's NBA for 10 years until he was appointed as the Assistant Director of the MVS Division when the previous Assistant Director, Javier Piñeres, retired in 2020. Brother Prinz has spent his career defending the craft. He was the lead officer in an arbitration over the contracting out of vehicle maintenance facility (VMF) work, which the USPS settled for \$8 million dollars.

Garrett Langley, the former Philadelphia Region NBA, and member of the Lancaster Area Local, has since been appointed Assistant Director, MVS.

Shana Parker, former MVS Craft Director of the Philadelphia PA Area Local has been appointed to the NBA position formerly held by Langley.

"I want to congratulate brother Prinz on a long and distinguished career, and his many accomplishments as a member and officer in the Motor Vehicle Service Division. Ken's selfless attitude and teamwork will be greatly missed," said MVS Division Director, Michael Foster. "As we look to the future generations of MVS leadership we welcome brother Garrett Langley as the Assistant MVS Director. Garrett has proven himself as a fighter for the craft and willing to go above and beyond."

"We welcome sister Shana Parker of the Philadelphia Area Local to replace brother Langley as the MVS Eastern Region NBA. Shana has effectively led one of the larger MVS locals in the country and is eager to represent her region. I believe the future of the craft will be in competent hands with the new appointments, welcome aboard." ■

**" I BELIEVE THE FUTURE OF THE CRAFT
WILL BE IN COMPETENT HANDS WITH THE
NEW APPOINTMENTS."**



The Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act and Managing Local Funds!

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

The *Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act's* (LMRDA's) regulations are designed to protect the members and union funds. The financial reports provide transparency regarding the finances of the union; the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) reports maintain the union's nonprofit status; elections maintain democracy; and the constitution facilitates the administration of the union and its funds. The LMRDA grants the Department of Labor discretion to interpret the law and apply its principles. A requirement of 501(c)(5) organizations is to maintain compliance with the (LMRDA). Sec. 502(a) of the LMRDA states:

"The officers, shop stewards and representatives of the union hold a position of trust to the union and its members. It is the duty of each such person to hold its money and property solely for the benefit of the union and its members, in accordance with the union's constitution and bylaws."

The Secretary-Treasurer's Department provides virtual fiduciary training for local officers who are unable to attend fiduciary training at the Secretary-Treasurer workshops each year.

Bond coverage is required by (1) the Constitution, and (2) the LMRDA. Under the *Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA), locals are required to have a bond limit of liability no less than 10 percent of the local's liquid assets. It is strongly advised that locals obtain bond coverage at 100 percent of their liquid assets for any officer responsible for handling union funds. Again, to maintain compliance with the LMRDA Sec. 502(a) of the LMRDA states:

"Every officer, agent, shop steward, or other representative or employee of any labor organization (other than a labor organization whose property and annual financial receipts do not exceed \$5,000 in value), or of trust in which a labor organization is interested, who handles funds or property thereof shall be bonded to provide protection against loss by reason of acts of fraud or dishonesty on his part directly or through connivance with others."

Labor Organization Bond and Crime Policy Coverage

National APWU provides local affiliates with \$5,000 of coverage for each local at no cost to the local. The Labor Organization Bond (LOB) covers the loss of money,

securities, and other property which the insured shall sustain, to an amount not exceeding in the aggregate the amount stated in the bond, resulting directly from one or more fraudulent or dishonest acts committed by an employee acting alone or in collusion with others and protection for failure to faithfully discharge duties. The amount of bond coverage can be increased or decreased by requesting a bond change form from the Secretary-Treasurer's Department.



On May 28, Secretary Treasurer Elizabeth "Liz" Powell was presented with the President's Award by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists for her "...undying dedication to the struggle for people of color and working people everywhere. Congratulations, Secretary-Treasurer Powell.

The LOB was specifically written for unions to satisfy the requirements of the LMRDA, whereas the Crime Policy can be used for several types of entities. A bond is a guarantee to protect unions from financial loss arising from fraudulent or dishonest acts in the handling of funds or other property by officers and/or employees. Violations of the LMRDA bonding requirement may be punishable by fines up to \$10,000 and imprisonment up to one year, or both.

As cyber technology becomes more sophisticated, and at an alarming rate, it is important to be proactive in protecting local assets from these types of losses. Implementing Commercial Crime Policy coverage would provide forgery or alteration and computer and funds transfer fraud coverages for the international and the locals/affiliates listed on the LOB.

Please contact the Secretary-Treasurer's Department if you need assistance with determining the amount of bond coverage. ■



Three lucky winners of the *American Postal Worker* quiz will receive a \$50

coupon for the APWU store so that you can gear up and show your APWU union pride. To enter the quiz, email your answers to communications@apwu.org, together with your EIN by Aug. 4, 2023. Winners will be randomly selected among those who correctly answer the following:

The lucky winners from the May-June 2023 edition of the *American Postal Worker* were:

Desiree Pack

Steven Morri

Karen Jester-Witowsk

APWU July-August QUIZ

1. The American Postal Workers Union Post Office Women for Equal Rights (APWU POWER) is the national women's committee within the APWU. On what date was it founded?
2. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and through negotiation with the APWU, the Postal Service agreed to increase the maximum number of annual leave hours that career employees may carry over into the next leave year. For leave year 2024, what is the maximum number of hours that a career employee can carryover?
3. Nearly three out of four heat illness-related fatalities occur during the first week on the job. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, workers need to build tolerance to the heat. At what percentage of the shift's duration should you limit your work at full intensity in the heat?

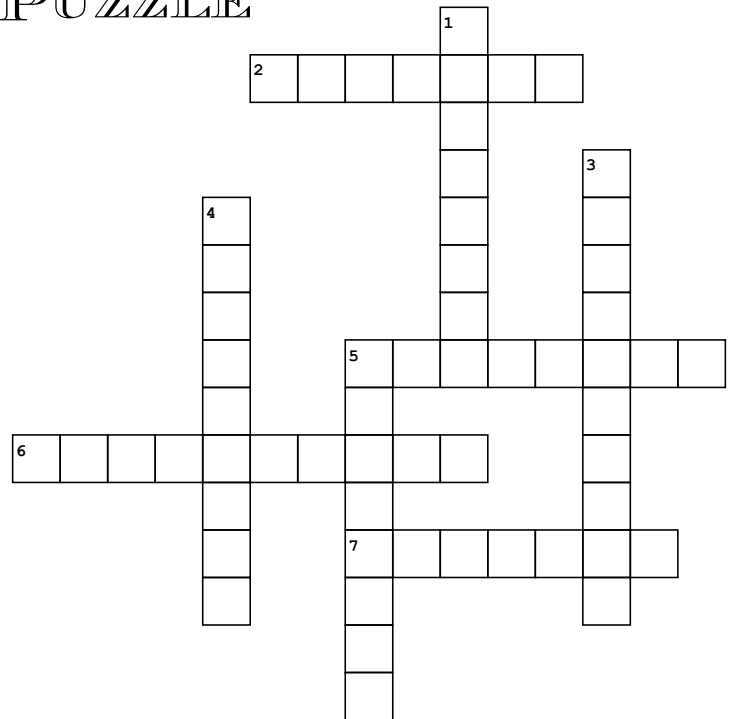
APWU CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Across

2. The "_____" Fair report calls on postal management to make necessary investments to provide postal financial services for the underbanked.
5. The extension of the "_____" MOU allows IT/AS sector employees to work from home.
6. The regulations of the Labor-Management Reporting and "_____" Act (LMRDA) are designed to protect the member's and union's funds.
7. The passage of House Resolution 277 would return mail delivery back to the 2012 "_____" Standards.

Down

1. If passed, the Social Security Fairness Act will repeal the "_____" Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset.
3. On Aug. 25, 2020, the APWU, labor allies, and community organizations held a National Day of Action to Save the "_____".
4. The battle to defend public "_____" in this country is related to our struggle to defend the public Postal Service.
5. The Battle of Rincon Hill on July 5, 1934 is otherwise known as Bloody "_____".



ANSWERS: Across: 2. banking; 5. telework; 6. disclosure; 7. service
Down: 1. windfall; 3. postoffice; 4. schooling; 5. Thursday

ARE YOU A LUCKY WINNER?

APWU members - Do you want another chance to **win a \$50 gift card** to use in the APWU store? Whether you want a shirt, a hoodie, or buttons to show your union pride; or a new copy of the contract to make sure you keep management at bay... check the list below. If you see your name printed, email us at: communications@apwu.org by Aug. 4, 2023 and we'll send you a promo code worth \$50 to use towards gear at apwustore.org

Terrell Shegog (MO)

Catrina Dodson (TN)

Larry Ward (IN)



Work on our Next Union Contract Begins

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR CHARLIE CASH

While we there are many things changing in our work lives due to the Postmaster General's 10-year plan, one thing has not changed: The importance of having a collective bargaining agreement (CBA or "contract"). The APWU negotiated a good 2021-2024 contract. Though, at least for me, it seems like we just ended our last contract negotiations - it is nearly time for negotiations to begin again.

The 2021-2024 contract brought us unprecedented changes in work rules. Items like automatic Postal Support Employee conversions after two years, the start of uniform and work clothing allowance rollovers, an improved Part-time Flexible (PTF) employee daily work-hour guarantee, and the 24 hour per pay period work and/or pay guarantee for PTF employees as well. Our contract continued our strong no-layoff provisions and left intact the 50-mile limitation on excessing that is proving more important today and moving forward. I can also not overstate the importance of the **full Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)** for all career employees under the National Agreement that has helped our wages keep up during this period of high inflation. Our CBA is strong and we intend to keep it strong.

IN THE COMING DAYS, WEEKS, AND MONTHS, THE CORE NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE, OFFICERS, ATTORNEYS, AND STAFF MEMBERS OF THE APWU WILL BE MEETING TO DISCUSS OUR PRIORITIES, EDUCATE OURSELVES, EXCHANGE DATA, DETERMINE WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WE NEED TO DEMAND THE POSTAL SERVICE PROVIDE THE APWU, AND DEVELOP STRONG CONTRACT DEMAND PROPOSALS.

The next contract negotiations are set to open in June of 2024. I know that seems like a long time from now, but for your negotiators, it is just around the corner. While we deal with the day-to-day issues of keeping the union moving forward, dealing with the challenging changes being made to the people's public Postal Service, and our grievance process, your core negotiating committee must also prepare for negotiations.

The Industrial Relations Department has begun our preparations. We constantly research trends in benefits and wages, track inflation, and of course, put together and review the *Labor Management Resolutions* to help set our negotiating priorities. We monitor the other postal unions as they go through negotiations. When they reach agreements or have them imposed through interest arbitration, we meticulously research their contracts and compare them to the APWU agreements to discern Postal Service strategy, and to form our strategy as well. Negotiation planning and preparation is always ongoing in the department.

We have begun to reach out to economists, and will begin to meet with subject matter experts to make sure that we have the best data and information possible when negotiations do start, so we put forth well thought-out proposals, that we can defend and support, if needed, in interest arbitration. You have been part of this research and preparation even if you were not aware. Of course, the national negotiation priorities are provided to us through the adopted *Labor Management Resolutions*, but thousands of members have assisted in our negotiations preparation by participating in both the informal and the professional scientific surveys conducted on the work environment at the Postal Service. That data is important to our contract negotiations as well.

In the coming days, weeks, and months, the core negotiating committee, officers, attorneys, and staff members of the APWU will be meeting to discuss our priorities, educate ourselves, exchange data, determine what additional information we need to demand the Postal Service provide the APWU, and develop strong contract demand proposals. There is much work to be done. But we are up for the challenge!

As we draw closer to June 2024, we will provide updates on when the contract negotiations opening day will be. We will be asking you all to participate in these negotiations in some way through a contract campaign and by standing united with the entire APWU while we once again battle for a good contract that continues to provided good wages, benefits, and working conditions for current APWU members, and those yet to come!

Solidarity! ■



Protect Yourself and Others, Prevent Heat Illness at Work

While many APWU represented employees work indoors, hazardous heat exposure can still occur at your offices. Extreme heat affects our health and can affect anyone, regardless of age or physical condition. This is especially true when there is a breakdown of an a/c unit, or where a unit requires maintenance.

Nearly three out of four heat illness related fatalities occur during the first week on the job. Remember to ease into your work! According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, workers need to build tolerance to the heat. Take your breaks, and follow the 20 percent rule: on the first day, work no more than 20 percent of the shift's duration at full intensity in the heat. Increase the duration of time at full intensity by no more than 20 percent a day until you are used to working in the heat. Don't forget to hydrate by drinking at least one cup of water every 20 minutes when it's hot out.

The following symptoms are signs of a **medical emergency**: Abnormal thinking or behavior, slurred speech, seizures, and a loss of consciousness. If you witness any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately. Cool the worker right away with water or ice, and stay with the worker until help arrives.

Watch out for other **signs of heat illness**, including: headache or nausea, weakness, dizziness, heavy sweating or hot/dry skin, or elevated body temperature. If you or a coworker experience any of these symptoms, try and move to a cooler area, drink water, and remove any unnecessary clothing. Seek medical care if needed, and when in doubt, call 911!

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has a heat index application that can be downloaded to access a heat calculator on your device. Remember that the heat app only provides the heat index (HI), not the WetBulb Globe Temperature, which is a measure of heat stress in direct sunlight. It does, however, provide a workload guidance.

If you believe heat issues at work are causing hazardous or unsafe conditions, fill out and submit a PS-Form

IF YOU BELIEVE HEAT ISSUES AT WORK ARE CAUSING HAZARDOUS OR UNSAFE CONDITIONS, FILL OUT AND SUBMIT A PS-FORM 1767 – “REPORT OF HAZARD, UNSAFE, CONDITION OR PRACTICE,” WHICH IS USED TO REPORT HAZARDS, UNSAFE CONDITIONS, WORK PRACTICE, AND HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENTS.

1767 – “Report of Hazard, Unsafe, Condition or Practice,” which is used to report hazards, unsafe conditions, work practice, and hostile work environments. Use the form to report anything that you think could jeopardize your health, such as: dirty conditions, pests, mold, or disturbed or broken building materials (tiles, insulation, etc.).

The form must be readily available and easily accessible to all workers on the workroom floor. You should not have to ask a supervisor for a form. The form can be submitted anonymously, but if it is, you will not receive back a copy of the form that includes management's actions to abate the problem.

The ELM in Section 824.6 has very clear explanations of how the form is to be used with both supervisor and employee responsibilities listed. The text of ELM 824.6 is in the link below.

Although a fillable PDF form is included on our website, we recommend that you use the four-copy NCR form provided by the USPS in your workplace so that you can get your copy returned to you. By doing so, you can see what abate actions were either completed or ignored. Also, having a copy helps your union representative if they need to file a grievance on a safety issue that has not been addressed.

If you have questions about the form, need help completing one, or can't find one in your office, contact your local union representative. For more information on reporting hazardous and unsafe conditions, visit the APWU website at: www.apwu.org/1767 or text “SAFETY” TO 91990 for a link. ■

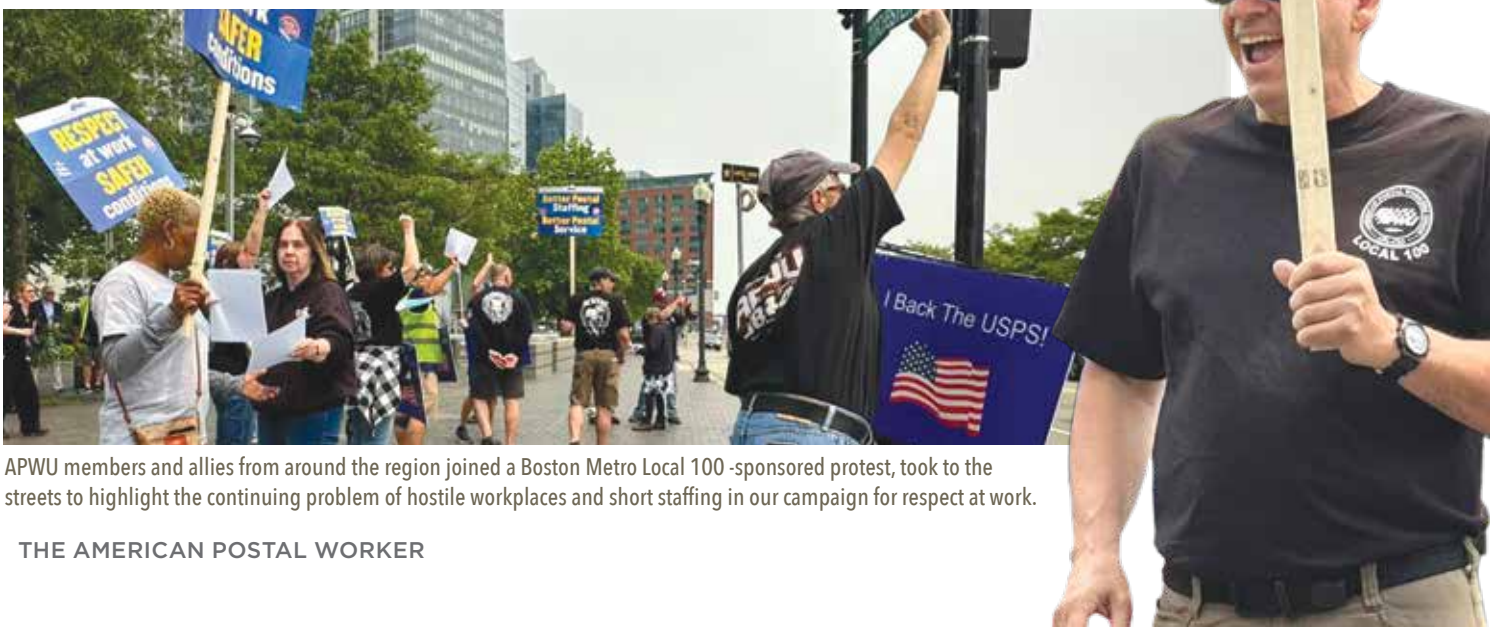
MEMBERS



At the Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee Tri-State Conference, delegates call their senators in support of Julie Su's nomination for Secretary of Labor.



MVS Director Michael Foster swore in new NBA Shana Parker and local officers at the Human Relations Educational Conference.



APWU members and allies from around the region joined a Boston Metro Local 100 -sponsored protest, took to the streets to highlight the continuing problem of hostile workplaces and short staffing in our campaign for respect at work.

IN ACTION



Arbitration Advocacy Training was held at the Maritime Institute and Conference Center May 15-21, 2023. Featured is Joyce B. Robinson, National Director Research and Education, APWU, AFL-CIO (Front Center), along with instructors and graduates.



Rallying for our public Postal Service



Hundreds of APWU activists joined an NPC rally on May 9, outside the USPS Headquarters in Washington, DC, to protest cuts and fight for better service.



Regional Resource Assistants were introduced at the Human Relations Educational Conference. They are ready to help with OWCP cases.

Arbitration Award on Clerk Craft Jobs MOU Results in \$67 Million Back Pay to APWU-Represented Employees



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

The Clerk Craft has finalized an implementation agreement with the Postal Service relating to the national-level award from Arbitrator Stephen Goldberg in Case #Q10C-4Q-C-15174956. Goldberg ruled that the Postal Service violated the Clerk Craft Jobs MOU by delaying the creation of certain jobs. He ordered a make-whole remedy for those employees who were eventually awarded the affected Training Technician and HR Clerk duty assignments.

Below is a summary of the agreement. To view the full agreement, visit apwu.org/clerk-division. The MOU is to be utilized solely to comply with the referenced award.

- Employees identified to receive make-whole remedy are bargaining unit employees represented by APWU.
- Pay rates applied to remedy based on 2018 pay scale for Level 6 HR Clerk, Level 7 Training Technician, Level 6 career clerk weighted average wage, and Level 6 career clerk entry step.
- Out-of-schedule premium pay is the difference between employee's work schedule, hours, and non-schedule days, prior to being awarded the position and work schedule, hours and non-scheduled days of new position. The total number of hours is capped at 40 hours per service week.
- Grade-level differences based on employee's grade level in former position and the grade level of new position.
- Former PTFs and PSEs converted and placed into residual vacancies identified in vacancy chain received additional compensation up to 40 hours per service week. The average number of hours is based on the eight weeks immediately preceding employee's conversion and multiplied by the appropriate number of weeks for relevant time period.
- Employees are only paid for first placement in vacancy chain.
- Employees with no grade change or out-of-schedule hours are considered made-whole and will not receive additional compensation.
- Monetary remedy up to allowable limit will be paid through GATS and included in future paycheck. Payments annotated on payroll journal as Code "40-36," which indicates a lump sum payment.
- Monetary remedies in excess of allowable limit paid by paper check sent to the mailing address on record for employee's current finance number.
- Payments to former employees paid by paper check - mailed to former employee's office of record. Employee's address of record will be printed on check. If former employee has not made arrangements to pick up the check from management at the office, check mailed to the former employee's address of record. The former employee may contact the manager or postmaster of their former office of record to pick up check or to have it mailed to former employee.
- If checks are returned to the Eagan, MN Disbursing Branch, they will mail it to address of record.
- Former employees now deceased - manual review of employee's beneficiary paperwork conducted to ensure all required paperwork is in order. Following review, check will be mailed to beneficiary on file.
- Checks returned as undeliverable - former employees should contact Accounting Help Desk at 1-866-974-2733, station manager, or postmaster, who should take appropriate action for reissuance or release of check.
- Entry of payments is a manual process and should be paid within three full pay periods from signing of agreement. Inquiries regarding non-receipt of a check should be directed to Accounting Help Desk at 1-866-974-2733 only after expiration of the three full pay periods.
- Normal withholdings deducted as appropriate from amount of payment.
- Amount of back pay based on data furnished by USPS and examined by APWU for due diligence, including date of bid placement and employee's non-schedule days and work hours before and after entering relevant duty assignments.
- Disputes regarding implementation of agreement referred to Administrative Dispute Resolution Process (ADRP) at headquarters level.

I would like to thank Clerk Division Assistant Director, Sam Lisenbe and Michael Barrett of the Buffalo Area Local for all their hard work in finalizing this implementation agreement. ■

Major Mail Processing Equipment Relocations Nationwide



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

Machine Relocation / Removal Teams

On May 9, 2023, the APWU was notified that the Postal Service intends to develop teams of volunteer maintenance craft employees to perform the removals and/or relocations of mail processing equipment, in conjunction with their 10 Year Plan. Maintenance Division resident officers immediately met with the Postal Service to discuss this project and relay our concerns. While we are pleased that this work will remain in-house, and not be subcontracted, other areas of concern remain.

THE MACHINE REMOVAL/RELOCATION TEAMS WILL CONSIST OF AT LEAST ONE MTSC EAS, NST, OR MTSC CONTRACTOR TEAM LEADER. THE NUMBER OF TEAM MEMBERS WILL VARY BASED ON LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

We learned that the Postal Service intends to solicit volunteers from Electronic Technician (ET), Mail Processing Equipment Mechanic (MPE), and Maintenance Mechanic (MM) employees with the goal of getting individuals to participate on the MPE machine removal/relocation teams. Participation will be strictly voluntary, and selection will be based on geographical location and training. Volunteers will be expected to work 10 hours a day and six days a week, maximum, and overtime will be paid in accordance with Article 8 of the National Agreement.

The volunteers will first be solicited from those facilities scheduled to have a machine removed and/or relocated by the local facility. If additional volunteers are needed, solicitation will be expanded to other facilities. Maintenance craft employees who are trained on the equipment being removed and/or relocated will be considered before those employees who have not been trained. However, employees not trained on the equipment will be considered if additional volunteers are needed. The removal and/or relocation of machines is set to begin in August 2023 in Atlanta, GA, followed by Charlotte, NC. It is anticipated that additional sites will be identified where the subject

machine's removal/relocation teams will be utilized. However, those sites have not yet been determined.

The machine removal/relocation teams will consist of at least one MTSC EAS, NST, or MTSC contractor team leader. The number of team members will vary based on local circumstances. Employees selected to be part of the MPE machine removal/relocation teams may be required to travel to other sites as needed based on the removal and/or relocation schedule. It is anticipated that each team will work up to three weeks depending on the machines to be removed and/or relocated. Projects lasting longer than three weeks will require rotation of teams every three weeks.

New FMO Ticketing System Pilot

The APWU was also notified that the Postal Service will be conducting a pilot using a new work order Field Maintenance Operation (FMO) Ticketing System in place of Electronic Maintenance Activity Reporting and Scheduling (eMARS) for the purpose of overseeing and assigning field maintenance work. The APWU is engaged in ongoing discussions and meetings regarding this ticketing system pilot program, and our concerns, including some of the unintended consequences that may arise (i.e. potential violations of articles 1.6 and 7).

Management reported that the FMO currently uses the eMARS to enter and track work orders assigned under the FMO and facilities utilize the Electronic Facility Maintenance System (eFMS). However, there is no communication between the two systems that tracks when escalation of a work order is required. Rather, reconciliation of completion and/or declinations for non-emergencies must be manually entered in both systems. This process results in limited visibility for Postal Service management to track the progress of maintenance requests. In an effort to improve the visibility of maintenance requests from submission to completion, the subject test will automate the submission of the PS Form 4805, *Maintenance Work Order Request*, from a hard copy paper form requiring manual entry to an electronic request ("Help Ticket") that is entered directly into a web-based platform by the requestor. ■

MVS Issues Resolved and Initiated



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Garrett Langley

Clearinghouse Consent Form

There have been recent inquiries about signing the consent form and the language of the form, for limited queries of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.

The APWU filed a dispute case number Q18V-4Q-C 20375622/HQTV20200376 in August 2020. The settlement, dated Nov. 23, 2020, lists the procedure and language that should be included on the form. The consent form and authorization are valid for two years from the date it is signed. That means that, if you are in a safety-sensitive position that requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), you must sign a new consent form every two years to drive a CDL vehicle.

The Postal Service must have a signed consent form to conduct one annual limited query of the Clearinghouse to determine whether drug or alcohol violation information exists in each of the two years, as required by law.

The Step 4 settlement, which has the consent form verbatim language, is on the APWU website under the Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) section.

Driving Safety Instructor Step 4 Filed

The APWU initiated a National Dispute, case number HQTV20230251, claiming that the Postal Service violated the National Agreement by subcontracting bargaining unit work to Sage Driving Schools and others, and failing to provide Driving Safety Instructors (DSIs) the training and materials required to certify employees to obtain appropriate state CDLs since Feb. 7, 2022. The USPS has arbitrarily shifted the focus of the DSIs to carriers and has abandoned plans and goals for Postal Vehicle Service (PVS).

The Joint Contract Interpretation Manual and Memorandum of Understanding: Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Training for Automotive Mechanics and Technicians requires that training will be provided by a CDL certified DSI or Ad Hoc DSI. The USPS will allow employees for these positions to utilize USPS equipment to take the CDL Road Test.

Postal Support Employee (PSE) Compliment

We have agreed to settle National Disputes that were filed when the Postal Service exceeded the PSE compliment cap of 10 percent in the MVS craft in 2012. The PSE district cap was exceeded by 43 PSEs in May 2012 and 132 in October 2012.

The conversion-to-career-status-date of 43 former PSEs will change to May 2012, and to October 2012 for 132 former PSEs. The number of conversions will be the number that each district was over the cap for each month, and their standing-on-the-rolls. The conversion-to-career-date change will adjust the employees' PS Form 50 history. The application of this remedy will be implemented at the National level, and the affected employees will be made whole.

Medical Release for Drug & Alcohol Testing

We have received reports from the field that random drug and alcohol testing facilities were requiring employees, who hold a CDL as a requirement of their position, to sign a medical release to obtain their personal health records. If the employee refused to sign the release, they were not allowed to take the DOT drug & alcohol test, which is considered a refusal (positive) test.

The union filed a National Dispute in February 2023, and the parties agreed to resolve the case based on the following understanding: Current DOT regulations do not require an employee to sign a medical release for drug or alcohol testing. The DOT rule 49CFR Part 40 Section 40.27 states: **May an employer require an employee to sign a consent or release in connection with the DOT drug and alcohol testing program?**

NO, as an employer, you must not require an employee to sign a consent, release, waiver of liability, or indemnification agreement with respect to any part of the drug or alcohol testing process covered by this part.

Copies of these Step 4 settlements can be found on the APWU website.

Have a happy and safe summer: ■

IT/AS Telework Continues, Remote Work Begins



Director Arrion Brown

We have great news to share with the Support Services Division, Information Technology and Accounting Service (IT/AS) sector!

The union has reached an agreement with management on three MOUs regarding work from home. We have agreed to extend the Accounting Service Center and Information Technology Telework MOUs. We have also reached an agreement on a full remote work MOU for several positions in Information Technology.

A key to the success of the MOUs was the valuable input we received from the membership. Our negotiating strategy included presenting management with statements from workers about their thoughts on telework. We received over 70 statements from our members in which they shared overwhelming positive opinions on the telework programs! Our members have valued the telework pilot program's ability to make them feel more focused and productive while doing their jobs, the savings on gas and other transportation costs, and not having to commute back and forth to work, which has added quality personal and family time to their lives.

A management official said that they had taken the time to read every statement from our members. Thank you to all who submitted statements for our telework negotiations. Your words made a difference.

For the IT/AS Center telework agreements, we were able to successfully negotiate IT/AS seniority into the schedule selection and award process. Under the previous MOUs, seniority was not specifically defined. This allowed management to determine what seniority they could use when they determined schedules. This was not the intent of the union at the time that the previous MOUs were signed. The union's position has always been that Article 37 defines how seniority is decided for IT/AS. Management should not have the option to decide what seniority to use to determine schedules. This was a success that brings uniformity to the schedule selection process, and gives respect to our existing Article 37 seniority language.

One area where we were not successful in changing the MOUs was removing the union's inability to file griev-

ances against management's decisions under the telework program. Management still refuses to allow the union to challenge their telework decisions under their belief that pilot program decisions should be exempt from the union enforcing your rights as workers. While the Support Services Division leadership does not agree with that position, we encountered two obstacles that did not allow us to make a change to this policy during these negotiations.

A MANAGEMENT OFFICIAL SAID THAT THEY HAD TAKEN THE TIME TO READ EVERY STATEMENT FROM OUR MEMBERS. THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUBMITTED STATEMENTS FOR OUR TELEWORK NEGOTIATIONS. YOUR WORDS MADE A DIFFERENCE.

The first obstacle was the legacy of not allowing pilot program decisions to be subject to the grievance process. This legacy dates back to the four, ten-hour day, schedule pilot program and continued under the initial telework pilots. It is difficult to overcome a legacy such as this, but not impossible.

The other obstacle was our lack of issues raised during the telework program that could be subject to the grievance process. This was a hollow argument from management that we will fight to overcome in the next round of telework negotiations next year. This is also where our membership will need to become involved by bringing problems that we feel should be grieved to the attention of local leadership, although we cannot grieve them at the time. We can take those issues back to the table as examples of why the grievance process is needed for the telework MOUs.

We are very proud to have been able to reach a deal with management on these MOUs. We look forward to improving the telework MOUs in the future with the involvement of our membership. ■



AJ Jones, Eastern Regional Coordinator

Activate, Participate, and Engage

Greetings Brothers and Sisters, I hope you and your families are well and enjoying a safe summer. The union is up against some of the most challenging times we have seen in years. This is a call to action for all members of the APWU to activate, participate, and engage.

Who is Running the Local?

Our retirees are an important part of the APWU and have always been there supporting our union. However, solely relying on our gracious retirees to run our local union is a greater challenge than they should have to endure. Their knowledge, skills, and experience are such a benefit to our union's growth, and that is invaluable. I often hear about a local president who has decided to retire from the USPS and remain as the local president. This is a plus to those locals who gain such a benefit. In other cases, folks decide not to seek re-election as president. Many say, "I will stick around and help out." This is great and crucial to mentoring new officers and maintaining the history of our great union. Unfortunately, this often ends with them running the local due to a lack of interest from the rank-and-file members.

**I WOULD LIKE TO WISH SHARYN STONE
THE OUTGOING CENTRAL REGION
COORDINATOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY
RETIREMENT AND WELCOME AMY
PUHALSKI, THE NEWLY APPOINTED
CENTRAL REGION COORDINATOR, TO
THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD.**

This is a slippery slope and risky situation for a local and its members. Once an officer decides it's time to take a supportive role, as opposed to a leadership role, we must respect their decision. One day, that retiree will decide it's time to move on, at which point, others must step up and take the lead.

A structured plan must be in place for this to happen so a local remains vibrant. This is not an easy task, but putting off the inevitable is like leaving a Band-Aid

on a wound that was never cleaned. It's time to rip off that Band-Aid, treat the wound, and allow for healing to provide for a better future. Now is the time to find creative ways to get members directly involved in our union. Being a member is great, but we need to engage our members if we want to prosper.

Changing Times

Often times when change happens the first reaction is fear. Fear of the unknown is what we are really afraid of. The Postal Service is moving quickly with their plans under the 10-year plan. How will we figure it all out? What does all of this mean to us? Will I be able to keep my job? What if I have to move and work in a different office? These are some concerns I hear from folks.

One initiative is the implementation of Sorting and Delivery Centers, otherwise referred to as S&DCs. The USPS began placing carriers into buildings which in some cases were previously known as Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs) impacted under the Area Mail Processing (AMP) initiative. They will move carriers into these buildings and put package sorting equipment in place. This may result in an Article 12 event in the office that lost carriers. So far, things are not going as planned. I know, you're not surprised, neither am I. Keep track of your jobs and file grievances on all violations.

Other initiatives include the implementation of Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RP&DCs) and Local Processing Centers (LPCs).

I would like to wish Sharyn Stone the outgoing Central Region Coordinator a happy and healthy retirement and welcome Amy Puhalski, the newly appointed Central Region Coordinator, to the National Executive Board.

I, along with my colleague coordinators, Central Region Coordinator, Amy Puhalski, Western Region Coordinator, Omar Gonzales, Southern Region Coordinator, Yared Wonde, and Northeast Region Coordinator, Tiffany Foster, stand strong and here to help in any way we can.

In Solidarity,

AJ Jones ■



Judy Beard, Director

Our Current Fights and Ways to Stay Engaged

As we head into the August recess on Capitol Hill, we should reflect on the progress we have made on advancing our legislative priorities this Congress. We are currently working to gain congressional support to bring fairness and expansion to Social Security, to allow PSEs to buy back time toward their retirement, to create parity between Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) retiree Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs), to strengthen the right to organize, to extend vote-by-mail, to improve USPS Service Standards, and to protect the USPS from privatization.

Our Legislative Priorities

Potential Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) Reform

I have received a number of questions from members regarding a potential reform to how CSRS benefits are funded. The CSRS funding reforms being discussed, sometimes referred to as the “Segal Study,” would not impact our earned benefits. However, if these reforms were adopted, they would save the USPS billions of dollars by more accurately allocating pension costs between the USPS and other federal agencies/accounts that pay into the fund. We believe this reform could be undertaken without congressional action, but through the authority of the presidential executive order.

Attend Our Legislative Conference in Las Vegas

A day prior to the start of the All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas, mandated by a national convention resolution, the Legislative Department will be hosting the 2023 Legislative Conference entitled “Building Grassroots Power.” Information on the workshops is listed below:

1. *Legislative Advocacy & Lobbying:* In this workshop, attendees will learn effective lobbying techniques to build support for APWU’s legislative priorities on the “Hill.” They will learn how to secure the meeting, how to prepare, and how to effectively educate lawmakers and their staff on our issues. APWU members will also learn how to build and maintain a productive relationship with their members of Congress.
2. *Knowledge is Power: Understanding Basic Operations of USPS:* It is important that APWU members

expand their understanding of the basic operations of the Postal Service. They will leave the workshop with a solid foundational knowledge of Postal Service finances and operations that will help them in their advocacy.

3. *Reshaping Democracy at the State and Local Level:* Workshop attendees will find strategies to advance our core issues at the state and local level through referendums, initiatives, and propositions. They will explore ways to help get out the vote, increase awareness, and create relationships with their state and local representatives.
4. *The Building Blocks of COPA:* This workshop will take a deep dive into our Committee on Political Action (COPA) program and its importance in building support for the APWU’s legislative priorities. We will examine how best to convey the importance of the program to the APWU membership in order to garner contributions. This workshop is ideal for COPA Captains and those who are interested in helping build our program.
5. *Strategic Communication for Action:* The APWU communications team will train attendees on how to communicate for social change. They will learn how to craft a message, communicate with the media/membership, and how to involve their member of Congress or state representatives to draw media attention. The goal is for APWU members to come away with practical lessons on how to communicate effectively as a trade unionist.
6. *The History of the Labor Movement:* In this workshop, attendees will receive a historical overview of the American labor movement. They will look at the economic, political, and workplace issues facing working people, why and how workers join unions, how unions are structured and function, and how unions and management bargain a contract. Attendees will explore the role of labor unions in American society by discussing their part in initiating actions on social issues that impact the U.S. working class, the economy, public policy, and politics.

Visit apwu.org/events/2023-legislative-political-conference to register now. ■



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

Just What is APWU POWER?

The American Postal Workers Union Post Office Women for Equal Rights (APWU POWER), the women's committee within the APWU, was founded in St. Louis, MO on April 28, 1979 and was incorporated into the APWU's National Constitution in Detroit, Michigan in August 1980. APWU POWER's Steering Committee consists of five APWU POWER coordinators, one from each region, who are elected at a Biennial National Convention and assist POWER committees at the local and state levels.

Why is APWU POWER Still Necessary?

The United States Post Office Statistics and Demographics reports that 51 percent of U.S. Post Office employees are women. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force participation rate for women was 56.8 percent in 2022. West Virginia had the lowest labor force participation rate for women, at 49.5 percent. An additional three states were under 52 percent: New Mexico (50.5 percent), Mississippi (51.1 percent), and Alabama (51.3 percent).

Although women pay a large percentage of dues to the APWU, they hold fewer elected offices at the local, state, and national levels. APWU POWER assists women in obtaining the knowledge and skills needed to level the playing field and has opened doors of opportunities for women from across the country, through educational seminars, workshops, and regional conferences. As a result, POWER sisters have become actively involved in our local and state unions, and in the political process.

What about Community Involvement?

APWU POWER's involvement in community activities includes:

- Adopting postal union families left homeless due to natural disasters;
- Making annual monetary contributions to domestic violence agencies;
- Contributing Christmas gift bags to the female troops, unable to travel home for the holidays;
- Providing coats and clothing to the homeless;
- Donating books, toiletries, etc. to schools, homeless shelters, and senior citizens' homes; and
- Giving monies to the Postal Employees Relief Fund to aid postal families who are victims of natural disasters.

What is APWU POWER's "Sisters Helping Sisters" Fund?

APWU POWER's "Sisters Helping Sisters Fund," was established in 2005, following Hurricane Katrina, to help women and children who were left homeless due to the disaster. It was expanded in 2006 to give hope and encouragement to women and children in homeless shelters, fleeing domestic violence. The program is funded from donations received from postal workers. Since its inception, the fund has donated over \$74,500 to families, charities, and domestic violence agencies, including \$25,000 to the Postal Relief.

Contribute to the "Sisters Helping Sisters" Fund

If you would like to contribute to the "**Sisters Helping Sisters" Fund, make a check or money order payable to Sisters Helping Sisters.** Mail to: APWU POWER, 1300 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Attend APWU POWER 21st Biennial National Convention

APWU POWER's 21st Biennial National Convention **will be held by Zoom on Friday, Aug. 4, and Saturday Aug. 5, 2023.** The convention will last only two (2) days, instead of the normal three (3) days. ***It will begin at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on both days and will conclude no later than 6:00 p.m.***

Register Online: Delegates must register themselves online at www.apwu.org, click on APWU POWER 21st Biennial National Convention. Registration will be free for APWU members and retiree members paying dues.

To obtain additional information about APWU POWER, contact the Research and Education Department at jrobinson@apwu.org or the APWU POWER coordinator in your region:

Yvonne "Pat" Dotson, Central Region,
yvonedotsonapwu@gmail.com

Sherry C. McKnight, Eastern Region,
Mcknight_sherry@yahoo.com

Tomineka "Shanell" Padmore, Northeast Region,
Tshanell618@gmail.com

Nadine Claude-Lewis, Southern Region,
nclaudelewis@yahoo.com

Michelle Pitre, Western Region,
mpitreccdirector@gmail.com ■



Daleo Freeman, Director

The Work of the Human Relations Department

The work and goals of the Human Relations Department embody the principles of our APWU Constitution: “We believe all members of labor have the right to economic, political and social justice.”

Through our programs, we strive to equip all members in an equitable manner under the APWU Constitution's guidance that all workers “are created equal with the right to determine their own destiny and to participate in the forces and events that affect them.”

Workers' needs extend beyond employment with the U.S. Postal Service, and our department responds to those needs by providing assistance with improving economic and social conditions. We offer assistance in emergencies and hope to the disheartened.

The Human Relations Department provides education, protection, and development in the areas of: the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), veterans' rights, civil rights, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), civic/community service, and the Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF).

Our programs focus on increasing opportunities for each member to fulfill their desires for a better life and a better world. Please contact our department at: (202) 842-4270 for help, questions and suggestions as together we continue the struggle for justice.

Injury Compensation

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) provides wage loss compensation and medical benefits to postal and federal employees who face a job-related injury and/or occupational disease. The program is administered by the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP).

The Human Relations Department provides educational materials, training, and advice to local and state officers, and the membership at large. Regional Resource Assistants (RRAs) can assist with injury compensation education and training.

Civil Rights and Engagement

The APWU believes in a society where all members are treated equally, with respect and dignity. The struggle for equal rights, equal opportunity, and justice extends beyond the workplace into our neighborhoods and communities where we all live.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to every postal employee and their family members. The EAP is voluntary and provides free, short-term counseling, referral and assessment, coaching, and an overall approach to a variety of needs related to the disease of alcoholism and/or drug abuse, as well as family and personal problems, and mental health. We strive to eliminate any stigma around reaching out to the EAP for help.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) offers an avenue for employees who feel that they have been discriminated against. While the APWU does not directly represent members in the EEOC process, the Human Relations Department provides information and education regarding EEOC rights and procedures.

Veterans' Rights

U.S. Postal Service military veterans have many rights and benefits, including: leave accrual, Wounded Warriors Leave, employment and reemployment rights, Merit System Protection Board (MSPB) rights, and retirement credit for military service. The APWU Veterans Network was launched to provide opportunities to connect with other APWU veterans, and to stay informed on important issues.

Postal Employees Relief Fund (PERF)

The PERF provides financial assistance for APWU members as well as other postal employees and retirees whose homes and property have been substantially damaged by home fires and national disasters, such as floods and storms.

Human Relations Program Benefit Locals and States

One goal of our department is to extend our programs so that local and state organizations can use them to help their members. We strongly recommend that locals and states establish committees to carry out our programs at their regional levels.

Local committees can work towards solutions for problems in the civic, community, civil rights, equal opportunity, and veterans' rights arenas. They can educate members about benefits, such as the EAP, injury compensation, veterans' rights and benefits, assistance with the PERF, and to motivate members to action in our communities. ■



Nancy Olumekor, Director

Still Marching and Fighting for Jobs, Justice, and Freedom

This summer marks several anniversaries for APWU retirees as union and community activists. The U. S. Postal System was created on July 26, 1775. In August 1935, Social Security was created, then in July 1965 Medicare became law. In August 1963, hundreds of thousands of people participated in the People's March for Jobs and Freedom. In August 1970, the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 became law, which established the USPS. On July 1, 1971, the APWU was founded from the merger of five unions. On the surface, postal workers and annuitants may consider these anniversaries as victories and gains.

CONGRESS MAY BE ON THEIR SUMMER RECESS, BUT THERE IS NO RECESS OR RELAXATION FOR FEDERAL RETIREES, AS WELL AS MANY STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, WHEN THEY ARE DENIED THE FULL BENEFITS THAT ARE DUE FROM SOCIAL SECURITY.

We are still marching and fighting for jobs, justice, and freedom. The Postal Service is under attack from within. The hostile work environment imposed by management and DeJoy's 10-year plan threatens to destroy what many Americans still view favorably as one of the top federal agencies. Retirees are not receiving their full benefits under Social Security, Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs), and Medicare. Healthcare is still not for all.

Millions of federal retirees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), state and local public employee retirees are not reaping their full Social Security benefits that they paid for while working. They worked additional jobs which qualified them to receive Social Security benefits. Social Security was deducted from their paychecks for 10 years or 40 quarters.

Now, as annuitants, their Social Security benefits are cut-taxed by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) enacted in 1983, and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) enacted in 1977. These laws penalized those an-

nuitants who also qualified for pensions that don't pay into Social Security, such as a federal, state, or local public employees.

These retirees are still waiting for Congress to repeal the WEP and the GPO.

Congress may be on their summer recess but there is no recess or relaxation for federal retirees, as well as many state and local public employees, when they are denied the full benefits that are due from Social Security.

Congress needs to act now to pass the *Social Security Fairness Act* H.R. 82 and S.597 which will repeal the WEP and GPO. Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuitants are being denied fair and equitable treatment when their COLA is less than the increase given to CSRS annuitants. Congress also needs to pass the *Equal COLA Act*; H.R. 866 will eliminate that disparity and also compute the Consumer Price Index (CPI) based on CPI-E for elderly instead of CPI-W for workers. Call your congressional representatives and your senators, ask them to co-sponsor and vote for these Acts. Keep the pressure on Congress by encouraging our family, friends, and acquaintances to also contact Congress at: 202-224-3121, send letters, postcards and emails.

The APWU Retirees Department is mourning the recent death of two long time APWU activists, Alton "Al" Fouche on April 25, 2023 and John Richards on May 27, 2023.

Brother Al Fouche served the APWU membership in numerous positions. At the national level, he served as National Maintenance Representative before and after the APWU merger of 1971. Al retired from the USPS in 1990 after 33 years. As a retiree, Brother Fouche was president of the Detroit Area Local Retiree Chapter and trustee of the Michigan Postal Workers Union State Retiree Chapter until July 2021.

John Richards served the APWU membership in numerous positions at the local and national levels. As a retiree Brother Richards remained very active as president of the Pittsburgh Area Retiree Chapter since 2007. John served as the APWU Eastern Region Retiree Delegate to the National Convention from 2007 until 2022, when he decided not to run for re-election. ■



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

APWU Health Plan Team Volunteers for Sick Children

I would like to commend the APWU Health Plan team for their outstanding volunteer work at the Ronald McDonald House in Baltimore, MD. On May 27, the volunteers spent the day baking for families who are staying at the house. Their hard work and dedication make a real difference in the lives of these families.

The Ronald McDonald House provides a home away from home for families with children who are receiving medical treatment at nearby hospitals. Our volunteers helped to make the house a more comfortable and welcoming place for these families.

Every year the APWU Health Plan staff participates in many charitable community events. Some examples

include the Greater Baltimore Heart Walk, Step Out and Walk to Stop Diabetes, the Washington DC Diabetes Walk, and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. In addition, the APWU Health Plan staff hosts many charitable activities, including donations to the Light House Shelter and the Baltimore VA Medical Center, a toy drive for Toys for Tots, and food drives for the Maryland Food Bank.

I am grateful for the commitment of the APWU Health Plan employees to helping others. The volunteer work at the Ronald McDonald House is another exemplary example of their dedication to making a difference in the community. ■



Railway Solidarity in the Face of Life and Death Issues

Fritz Edler worked for more than 40 years on the country's railroads. He's a member of The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and serves as Special Representative of Railroad Workers United (RWU). Fritz sat down with the American Postal Worker in June 2023; this interview has been edited for clarity and length.

What is Railroad Workers United?

RWU is a cross-craft solidarity organization, advocating on behalf of railroaders in the 13 craft unions in North American railroading, and many non-union railroaders, too. We also advocate not just for the needs of all railroaders, but also for the communities we serve in as well.

What are the main issues facing railroaders today?

There are always problems in contract enforcement and ensuring safe working conditions on the rails, as the employers are able to pit the various craft unions against each other.

A big challenge facing the entire industry is what we call the "cult of the operating ratio." Driven by the hedge funds that increasingly own the railroads, our employers have abandoned every traditional measure of what makes a successful railroad in order to squeeze every penny of profit out of what we do.

This has led [to] short-staffing across the industry, longer trains than we've ever seen before, being worked by skeleton crews, many of whom are forced to come to work without adequate rest. It creates a dangerous situation and leads to incidents like we recently saw with the derailment in East Palestine, OH.

The possibility of nationwide rail strike last year brought a lot of these issues into the popular consciousness. What was the big concern for railroaders in the latest contract struggle?

The most important issue for us was really about sick leave. We have railroaders that are forced to work without adequate time off, and because of the short-staffing issues, the carriers have literally made sick leave a matter of life and death. People have died because of it. When a worker can't take a day off because he's sick, or has a sick child, or another family issue to attend to, you end up with tired and overworked people running trains and it creates a very dangerous situation.

Postal workers are proud public servants. The RWU has called for public ownership of the railroads, that they be operated as a public service like the USPS. Why?

Those of us who have worked on Amtrak always had a similar mindset, that we're providing a vital and important public service to the country. But the rest of the industry has been privatized and run for profit for decades, except for two periods – during World War I and a short nationalization in the early 1970s in the face of bankruptcies across the industry.

Since then, the financialization of the industry has led to serious decline in rail service, including the many safety and staffing issues we're seeing across the country. We think it's time to have a conversation about public ownership because the issues on the rails aren't just about railroaders but about the communities we serve and what's at stake for everyone who relies on a functioning rail industry.

We think postal workers, teachers, nurses and other workers in the public sector understand these issues and we're eager to build ties among other unionized workers like you.

What can our members or other supportive union members do to support railroaders and the RWU?

We'd like to learn more from your struggles and your history in the public sector, but also for you to understand what's confronting railroaders and our industry. We know our fights can't be just an RWU thing and we'll be a lot more powerful working on issues together.

You can find out more about the RWU at:
railroadworkersunited.org

East Palestine, OH Train Derailment Thrusts Rail Safety into National Spotlight

A devastating train derailment in a small eastern Ohio town has raised national questions about the safety and the future of the country's rail infrastructure.

On Feb. 3, 2023, the Norfolk Southern train 32N derailed in East Palestine, OH, 50 miles northwest of Pittsburgh, and just across the Ohio line. Thirty-eight of the train's 150 cars derailed. Five of those cars contained the toxic and flammable gas vinyl chloride. While the specially-designed cars holding the vinyl chloride initially contained the toxic material, Norfolk Southern eventually decided it was safest to burn the contents of the containers, leading to a massive tower of toxic black smoke that consumed the area and captured the attention of the country.

While some were quick to call the East Palestine derailment an "accident," rail workers and other activists have pointed out that disasters of the 32N derailment were years in the making, and a symptom of a broken industry being driven into the ground by corporate greed.

Leading up to the derailment were years of neglect from rail carriers. They failed to invest in proper safety procedures, created overwhelming short staffing on the rails, and increasingly have had longer and heavier trains running through communities across the country. Each of these conditions was caused by an industry that has been increasingly financialized – owned by big Wall Street corporations and private equity funds – and that has prioritized generating profit over improving service and ensuring safety on the rails.

Train derailments have increased as the industry has squeezed staffing and used its political power to loosen other regulations. Derailments are up 13 percent since 2013; there are more than 1,000 derailments every year in the United States, including nearly 450 last year on trains carrying hazardous materials.

In addition to ongoing safety concerns, the corporate greed driving the industry was on full display in recent months, as evidenced through the hard bargaining exhibited by rail employers in the collective bargaining negotiations late last year. Rail workers' main priority in bargaining was winning paid sick leave. For years, rail workers have faced short staffing and increasingly stressful jobs, all without any paid sick days. This has led to rail workers being forced to work while sick or tired, and be unavailable to care for sick loved ones. Many rail workers indicated they were ready to strike last year to win paid sick time, before Congress and the Biden administration imposed a tentative agreement on the industry that did not include the sought-after paid leave.

In response to the East Palestine disaster, the general worsening conditions on the rails, and the contentious contract battle of last year, there has been an increased interest in recent months in considering nationalization of the industry.

"Since the North American private rail industry has shown itself incapable of doing the job, it is time for this invaluable transportation infrastructure—like the other transport modes—to be brought under public ownership," the Railroad Workers United said in a statement.

APWU President Mark Dimondstein released a statement regarding the rail industry following the Congressional action to impose a new collective bargaining agreement. He concluded by saying if Congress was genuinely concerned about the national interest, Congress should seriously consider nationalizing the railroads and running the essential rail network of our country as a national public treasure similar to the public Postal Service – and afford full collective bargaining rights for the workers. ■





REI Workers Continue to Organize Across the Country

Workers at REI locations across the country are continuing their push towards unionization, as the retail co-operative's management attempted to unilaterally cut union members' wages in its SoHo location in New York City.

In Boston, MA, workers voted 44-23 to unionize with the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), while in Chicago, IL workers from the North Side store voted to unionize with the UFCW affiliated, Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU), which will represent 65 workers.

On May 25 REI workers in Durham, NC voted 20-12 in favor of joining the UFCW, after petitioning to form a union in April. REI had responded to the union campaign by placing an organizer on administrative leave, which prompted a one-day strike on May 4. On May 30, workers in Eugene, OR were left awaiting the outcome of contested ballots to decide the election for representation by UFCW, while in June, Bellingham, WA REI workers voted in an overwhelming majority of 40-12 to join the UFCW.

In New York City's SoHo store, the company's newly hired union-busting legal counsel announced that the company was cutting union workers pay, even while they bargain a first contract. "Workers have been bargaining with REI for almost a year, accomplishing a great deal. But, just as workers were getting down to pay and other economics, the company pulled the rug out from under them. It is inexcusable. But, workers at REI have faced aggressive union busting from the very start," said RWDSU President, Stuart Appelbaum.

Minnesota Lawmakers Pass Major Worker Protections Bill

Lawmakers in Minnesota passed a significant worker protection bill on May 16 that will affect many workers in the North Star State. The provisions of the labor bill (SF3035) guarantee paid sick leave for all, ban non-compete agreements, and boost funding for safety inspections in the workplace. They also include specific protections for workers in various industries, including nursing homes, construction sites, hospitals, and schools.

The bill also contains protections for warehouse workers who face unrealistic quotas in companies such as Amazon.

The bill bans so-called "captive audience" meetings that require workers to attend anti-union presentations. "This unprecedented legislation will fundamentally improve conditions for working people in every job sector and in every corner of our state," said Minnesota AFL-CIO President Bernie Burnham. "Minnesota has a long history of putting working people first, and after Governor Walz signs this legislation, we will truly be the best state for working people." Walz signed the omnibus jobs, economic development, and labor funding bill into law on May 24. ■

News Guild Workers Celebrate New Contract with the New York Times

More than 1,000 members of the News Guild of New York (TNG-CWA) celebrated a win on June 6, after voting 99 percent in favor of ratifying a new five-year contract with the *New York Times*. The newsroom workers had gone over two years without a contract while in negotiations. Their contract struggle included a 24-hour strike in December 2022. In the new contract, workers have secured their first raises since 2020, hybrid work options, a ban on non-disclosure agreements in settlement claims of harassment and discrimination, parental leave, as well as new investments in local news. ■

UPS Workers Vote to Authorize Nationwide Strike

On June 16, The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which represents around 330,000 workers at United Parcel Service (UPS) announced an overwhelming 97 percent vote in favor of strike action.

The vote came as the two sides approached the end of a three-month bargaining process for the largest single private sector union contract in the USA. The workers are aiming to raise wages and improve safety. An early win came as the company agreed to install air conditioning in the company's vehicle fleet.

Bargaining for the contract will continue through July 31 with a strike likely if the company does not agree to workers call for better wages and working conditions. "Raising wages and improving conditions for workers across our industry is a shared goal of all our unions," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. "Gains for UPS workers will benefit the whole of the working class and improve our bargaining power with postal management. We express our solidarity to our Teamster brothers and sisters at UPS." ■



Bus Manufacturers Vote to Join Steelworkers Union

More than 1,400 school bus manufacturers at the Blue Bird Corporation in Fort Valley, GA have voted to join the United Steelworkers Union (USW) after a grueling three-year fight. On May 12, the mostly African-American workers voted by a margin of 697-435 to join the USW.

"It's been a long time since a manufacturing site with fourteen hundred people has been organized, let alone organized in the South, let alone organized with predominantly African American workers, and let alone in the auto industry," said USW organizing Director Maria Somma. "It's not a single important win. It's an example of what's possible – workers wanting to organize and us being able to take advantage of a time and a policy that allowed them to clear a path to do so." ■



Workers at Sega of America Level-up to Form a Union

Workers at Sega of America have announced plans to form a union called the Allied Employees Guild Improving Sega (AEGIS), and are working with the Communications Workers of America. More than 140 workers in a broad range of fields, from marketing to product testing and development, say they have a supermajority in favor of unionizing, and are confident the campaign will succeed. "We are united in our belief that by banding together, we can secure a future where we are empowered to advocate for ourselves, and for our colleagues," said AEGIS in a statement about the campaign.



John P. Richards, 1937 – 2023



John P. Richards, former APWU national Industrial Relations Director, passed away on May 27, 2023.

Brother Richards was born in the South Side of Pittsburgh, PA and raised in a union steelworker family. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force after graduating

from South High School in Pittsburgh at the age of 17, and served for four years..

After leaving the military, Richards got a job as a clerk with the Postal Service in 1958 and by 1959 was already involved with his local union, the Pittsburgh Area Local of the National Postal Union (NPU). He represented workers from all postal crafts as a business agent.

Richards was a striker in the Great Postal Strike of 1970. He mobilized members leading up to the strike, and organized the picket line in front of his Post Office.

In 1974, several years after the merger of the craft unions, Richards was elected President of the Pittsburgh Metro Area Local (PMAL) of the APWU, and served in this

position until 1994. The following year, he helped create the National Presidents Conference, and chaired its first conference. He served as National Industrial Relations Director between 1980-1983, elected as part of the "Billers, Burrus, Richards" ticket.

After Richards retired, he was elected the first president of the Pittsburgh Area Retiree Chapter. The local chapter formed in 2006, and chartered the following year, for the purpose of supporting and influencing retiree interests within the APWU, such as the COPA campaign, and supporting the legislative priorities and candidates with shared goals and beliefs.

Richards was also the Retiree National Convention Delegate, Eastern Region, and was the long-time editor of the Retiree Record, a Postal Press Association affiliated news bulletin for retired members. In Southwest Pennsylvania he was one of the leading organizers of the *Stop Staples* campaign.

"Brother John Richards displayed a long and deep commitment to all workers and his leadership bequeathed to us a powerful legacy - a better life for all postal workers," shared President Mark Dimondstein. He is survived by his APWU activist wife, Charlotte, his daughter, grandchildren, and his great granddaughter. Richards spent his life and career serving others, and in his own words stated that "the union is life." ■

Alton "Al" Fouche, 1933 – 2023



Alton "Al" Fouche, former National Maintenance Representative, Central Region, passed away on April 25, 2023.

Brother Fouche was born in Benton, MS, and was one of six children. He attended St. Francis Catholic School in Yazoo City, until his family moved

to Michigan, where he completed high school. After graduating high school, Fouche attended trade school and then served in the U.S. Army for several years before receiving an honorable discharge. Fouche went back to school and graduated from the Detroit Institute of Technology.

Fouche began his career as one of the first Black Electronic Technicians in the Postal Service in 1957. He was an active member of his union, and was elected President of his local of the National Association of Post

Office and General Services Maintenance Employees in 1969.

Brother Fouche took part in the Great Postal Strike of 1970. He remained in constant contact with organizers in New York City to coordinate strike actions with his members. During the strike, Fouche walked up and down the picket line at the Main Post Office in Detroit from "sun up to sun down."

After the foundation of the APWU, Fouche held several different positions within the Detroit District Area Local of the APWU. He began as Maintenance Craft Director, and then served as the Secretary-Treasurer and Executive Vice President of the Detroit local.

At the national level, Fouche was a National Maintenance Representative, both before and after the merger and formation of the APWU in 1971. After retirement, he remained active with the APWU as president of the Detroit Retiree Chapter and Trustee for the Michigan Postal Workers Union until July 2021, when he retired from both positions.

Brother Fouche is survived by his wife Betty, their five children, seven grandchildren, and three great grandchildren, his two sisters and his brother. ■



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.

"Solidarity...I see and hear this a lot from our business agents and also when I read other APWU locals' newsletters. I really sat back and pondered on that word and what it means, and family, we really need to set forth to apply this for real in our local. It takes all of us, not just one, but all of us to be just that. There are a lot of things happening in the workplace, from jobs being reverted, from management to mail handlers doing clerk work. Let's all step up and say something to preserve our jobs. The union is here to work WITH you and FOR you by protecting the contract and to help ensure management is adhering to it. We are a diverse group of people working in one place achieving the same goal, coming to work to take care of our families and to get the mail out to billions of people across the world."

– Aundrea Stanley,
Las Vegas Area Local Editor
Shoptalk

"I also hear that, at the stations and branches, management has been working the mail on the heavy days of mail volume. I am sure they say they are just trying to help you to get the mail out and prevent you from having to stay over. My question to you is 'are you keeping track of how long they are working and when they are doing this, and are you grieving this or telling your steward?' Management created the reason you don't have help because they control how many people work at the station and when they work there. That work is your work and you should be the one getting paid for doing it. If management works, you get paid for it. Free money. Grieve it. Get it."

– Bud Toft
Heart of Illinois (Peoria) Area Local President,
Heartbeat

"We are clearly at a time when we must fight to keep our jobs and income protected. The current climate within the USPS appears to be more about cutting services and jobs, and taking a completely different direction on mail delivery altogether. And, not in the best interest of the customer, the worker, or in my opinion, the country overall. We sure don't need another private delivery service that is not a 'secure service' and could simply charge whatever they want for our letter and parcel mail. We have the most valuable intricate system of delivery in the world and all large corporations would love to have it! Not for the good of community but for the 'almighty dollar' and the power they gain with it.

We need to protect the sanctity of the U.S. Mail and the security it has stood for over many generations. There is so much misinformation being purposely distributed to convince us we don't need our post offices. Protect your job, future, and the right to send and receive mail by learning what you need to know from your union! Education is your power and your security!

One huge takeaway...without the unions we would return to a world none of us ever want to see again in this country. Sincere thanks to those who continue to work diligently on my behalf every day."

– Shelly Ward
Fulltime Regular Clerk
Chelan WA, *Evergreen State Postal Worker*



Grand Alliance Ally Makes the Case for Postal Banking

A new report is out making the case for postal banking and calling on postal management to make the investments necessary to provide quality postal financial services available to the millions of unbanked and underbanked people in the country. The report is called *Banking Fair: The promise and urgency of doing postal banking right*, and was released in late May by Take On Wall Street, a longtime Grand Alliance member and partner in the Campaign for Postal Banking, and the Save the Post Office Coalition.

The *Banking Fair* report begins by noting that there are still 10 million adults in the country who have no bank account of any kind. They often fall victim to predatory fringe financial service providers, who charge unconscionable fees for simple services that most of us take for granted. The good news, the report argues, is that the Postal Service is well-suited to reach this underserved and vulnerable population, thanks especially to its presence in every community, and the trust that postal workers enjoy from the public.

“We need a public option for banking that is focused on providing a basic service to people who need it as opposed to satisfying wealthy shareholders, and USPS is perfectly positioned to provide that public option,” said Annie Norman, Save the Post Office Coalition Campaigner at Take On Wall Street.

The report argues that while the paycheck cashing proof-of-concept tests began in late 2021 were good progress for advocates of postal banking, the pilots were ultimately a missed opportunity. The report argues that this is principally because of postal management’s refusal to offer a service that actually meets the needs of the unbanked and underbanked. The paycheck cashing service was only made available at four locations nationwide. While this was obviously a result of its initial test phase, the report claims it was much too limited in scope to genuinely gauge public interest. The \$500 maximum for checks cashed was far too low. Finally, the \$5.95 service fee was not competitive with products offered by fringe financial service pro-

viders or even retailers like Walmart, where a check of up to \$1,000 can be cashed for just a \$4 fee. Together, these factors all contributed to preventing the initial roll-out from gaining traction with underserved people.

While the public still trusts the Postal Service, offering a service substantially less robust and more expensive than what’s available in the private sector was not a recipe for success. The report concludes, “For postal banking to be a viable option for the millions of people who are unbanked, the U.S. Post Office must work diligently to create services that address peoples’ primary financial service needs, are at accessible locations, and are also low-cost relative to third-party servicers.”

Despite the shortcomings of this initial test, the *Banking Fair* report is still confident that expanding and improving financial services at the USPS is a goal worth pursuing. “Postal banking, done right, is key to the Post Office’s future. These new sources of revenue and foot traffic would help secure the USPS’s financial future, and ensure the provision of fair and equitable services for all of us,” the report says.

In addition to advocating for improved and expanded postal financial services, the report highlights some of the recommendations found in A Grand Alliance’s *People’s Postal Agenda*, published in 2021. These include leveraging the postal network to accelerate the clean energy transition, helping spread broadband to underserved and rural areas, and expanding our democratic rights through universally-available vote-by-mail.

The *Banking Fair* report can be accessed in full at: takeonwallst.com. ■

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

New Reports Highlight Danger of School Privatization

Two recently-released research briefs have underscored that the privatization of America's public schools has had a negative impact on students, communities, and on public finances. The reports were issued by In the Public Interest (ITPI), a Grand Alliance member and a national nonprofit research and policy organization, and Public Funds Public Schools (PFPS), a campaign headed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Education Law Center.

The ITPI report, *Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact*, found that charter schools have led to widespread waste and drain significant resources away from traditional public schools. A charter school is a school that is funded with public dollars, but operates independently of the established public school system, offering different curricula or other features meant to attract students. While they receive public funding, charter schools are often operated by private companies, some of which are unabashedly for-profit corporations.

The effect of this is to impoverish the rest of the school system. *Charter Schools and Fiscal Impact* found that, because traditional school funding relies on per-pupil funding models, when students leave to enroll in a charter school, those left behind end up in schools with less funding than they otherwise would have. And because the overhead for running schools, such as utility bills, paraprofessionals, custodians, and the like, aren't proportionately reduced when a few students leave, the school districts are left with higher per-pupil costs.

The ITPI report unearthed a later-deleted blog post from the conservative think tank ExcellinEd that is dedicated to weakening public schools, which offered a candid explanation of why they are enthusiastic supporters of charter schools. "Charters are competitors. They steal customers, deplete revenues and increase costs. When charters siphon off kids, they not only take the money that comes with them, they often cause nearby schools to operate under capacity. This increases inefficiencies and per-student costs because all that empty space still must be maintained. As charters continue to expand, they will

force districts to make more and more tough choices on personnel, closing schools and redrawing attendance boundaries, both political poisons."

The report from the PFPS looks at the effects of voucher programs to pay for private schooling. School vouchers are publicly-funded "coupons" used to subsidize the tuition costs of private education. Like charter schools, their real impact is to siphon public funds away from publicly-funded and publicly-administered schools.

The PFPS report *The Fiscal Consequences of Private School Vouchers* followed voucher programs in seven states: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin. It found that as the states' voucher programs expanded, the proportion of states' funds allocated to public K-12 education decreased, even with enrollment increases in five of the seven states.

PFPS found that as "many of the nation's public schools remain chronically underfunded...states can ill afford to siphon scarce resources away from public education to private providers."

The battle to defend public schooling in this country is related to our struggle to defend the public Postal Service as well. Both are fronts in a long campaign to weaken and undermine universal public programs. Postal workers and our allies should join with teachers unions and other public school advocates to ensure that proper funding, staffing, and resources are available to public school systems across the country.

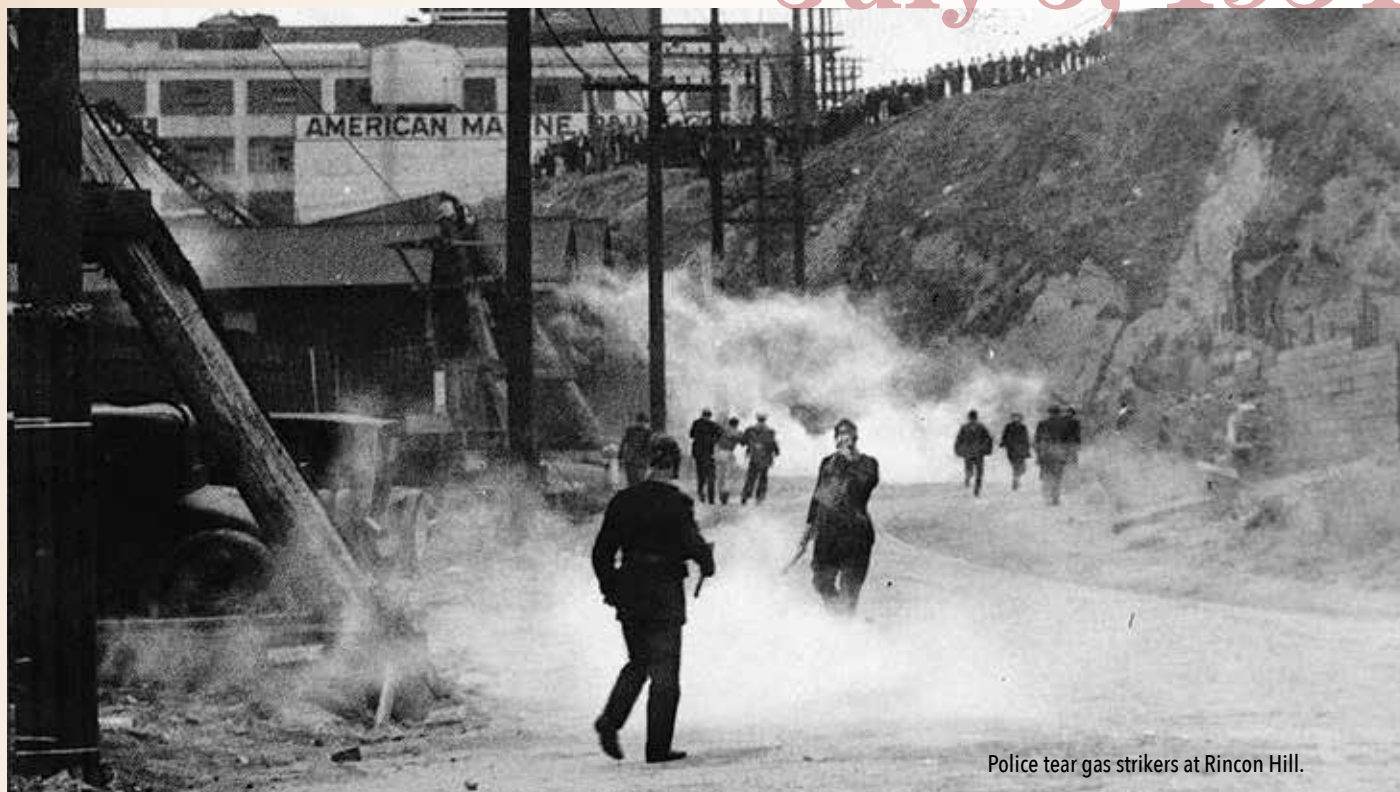
For more information on these and other battles to protect public services, visit inthepublicinterest.org. ■

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

Looking Back on Labor History

War on the Waterfront

July 5, 1934



Police tear gas strikers at Rincon Hill.

July 5, 1934 – Striking dock workers in San Francisco, CA faced off with strike breakers and police at the Battle of Rincon Hill on “Bloody Thursday.” After two-months of strikes and minor skirmishes, the Battle of Rincon Hill marked the culmination of months-long hostilities between dock workers, bosses, and the police, dubbed the War on the Waterfront.

The strikes, led by Harry Bridges, began on May 9, 1934 and protested the rampant corruption among bosses taking kickbacks and bribes, while workers endured unsafe conditions for brutally long hours and low pay.

Bridges joined the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) a year prior and quickly rose to a leadership position. Bridges was the chairman of the ILA’s San Francisco strike committee, and made an agreement with leaders of other dock unions that none of them would take unilateral action to end the strike.

By May 9, ports along the West Coast had shut down with more than 16,000 longshoremen on strike. Picketers in the Embarcadero neighborhood were tear gassed and beaten by police due to anti-picketing laws. On May 30, hundreds of police attacked protestors during National

Youth Day actions and injured 65 young boys and girls, while hospitalizing 19 more.

Strikebreakers arrived on the piers on July 3. By July 5, they began unloading ships on Pier 38. As strikers attempted to stop work, police attacked the strikers, armed with teargas, riot guns, and revolvers. The 2,000 strikers retreated to the ILA headquarters under fire.

By 1 p.m. thousands of police stormed the ILA headquarters and two strikers were shot dead in the back. California Governor Frank Merriam ordered National Guardsman into the city, attempting to break the strike.

Workers held a funeral procession two days later for the men killed by police. The publicity galvanized support for dockworkers, and 63 unions voted in favor of a city-wide general strike, which began a week later on July 16. After three days, the city’s General Strike Committee voted in favor of sending the dispute to arbitration.

In arbitration, workers covered by a west coast contract, won a six-hour day, pay raises, and a hiring hall run by the union. Securing the demands shifted power away from the corrupt bosses back into the hands of the workers.

Save the Post Office National Day of Action

August 25, 2020 – The APWU, labor allies, and community organizations, held a National Day of Action to *Save the Post Office*, stop harmful service cuts and mail delays, and demand that congress provide covid-related emergency funding for the USPS.

Tens of thousands of members, allies, and the public rallied outside postal facilities, wore union gear, signed petitions, and made calls to Congress in support of the campaign and the much-needed emergency funding in the face of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. Actor and social justice activist Danny Glover released a radio public service announcement in support of the campaign.

Throughout the pandemic and the 2020 election, postal workers played a vital role the country's economic and public health, meeting the surge in demand for package deliveries and mail-in votes. However, while many corporations received billions of dollars in funding, the Postal Service got nothing in the opening months of the pandemic.

The *Save the Post Office* campaign demanded much-needed support for the Postal Service and overdue reforms. By mobilizing postal workers and the public at an unprecedented level, it kept the fight to protect the USPS in the national headlines for months.

Although success was not immediate, the campaign eventually proved to be one of the most effective labor

and community campaigns of its time, securing a labor-management committee to ensure speedy and efficient delivery of election mail; a \$10 billion emergency loan to the Postal Service, that was later converted into a grant, and, eventually, passage of the U.S. Postal Service Reform Act, which freed the USPS from the Congressionally-imposed prefunding mandate, which had strangled postal finances.



Postal workers & allies rally in Chicago on Aug. 25, 2020

August 2, 1999

Newport News Shipyard Strike

August 2, 1999 – Striking shipbuilders from the United Steelworkers of America (USW) returned to work after a 17-week strike in Newport News, VA.

USW members, who made up half of the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company's 18,000 employees, began their strike on April 5, in demand of higher pay, improved pension benefits, and equality for its workers.

The company's bottom line had rebounded after months of declining orders and workers sought their share of the company's prosperity through improvements to their pay and benefits. After 17-weeks of strike actions, the workers secured a 58-month contract with guaranteed promotions, 23 percent pay raises, and a 78 percent increase in pension benefits.

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