

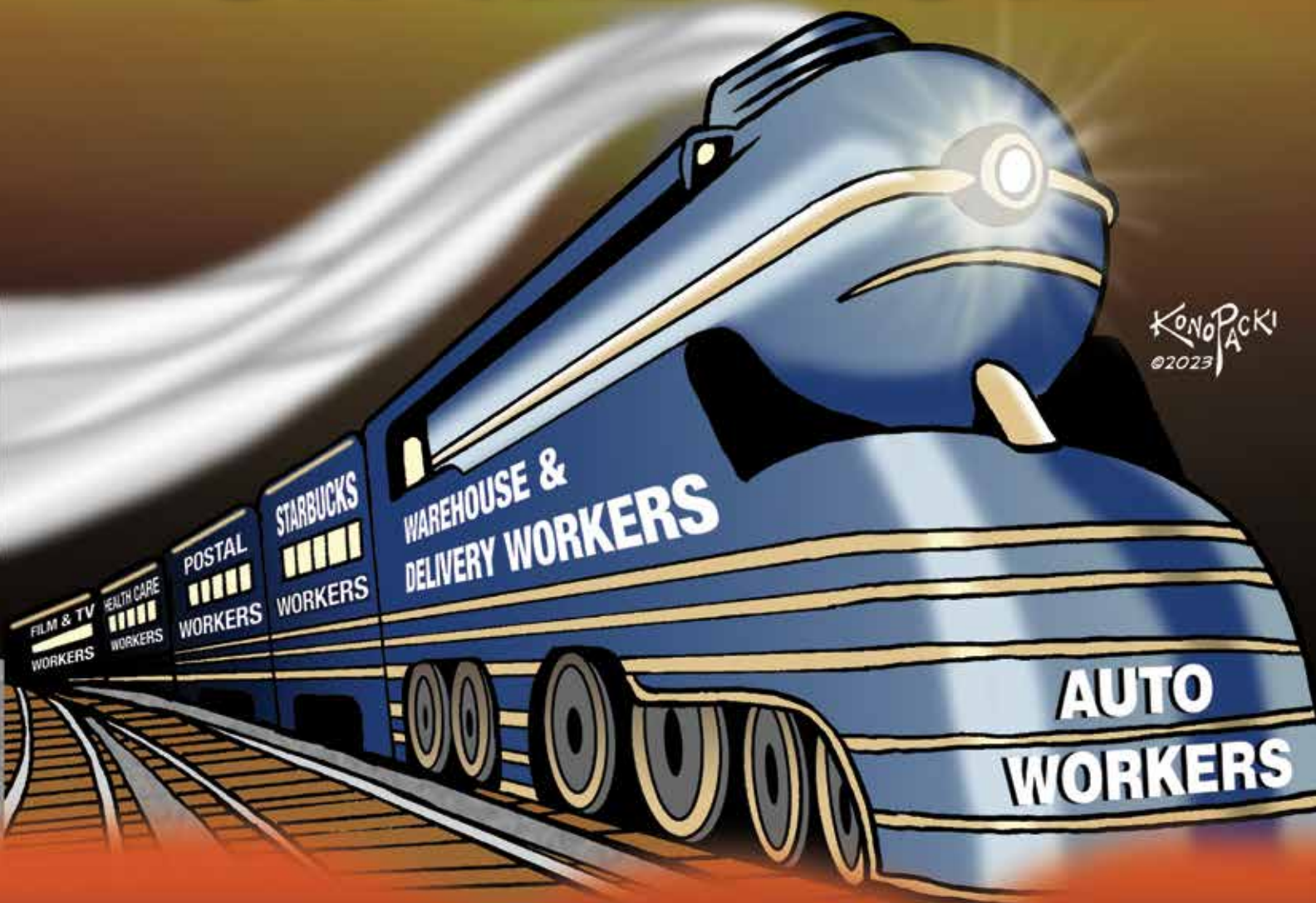
THE AMERICAN

# Postal Worker

APWU

November/December 2023

# WORKERS ON THE MOVE



**For good contracts, ending two tiers, and winning health and safety, shorter work weeks, and unions.**



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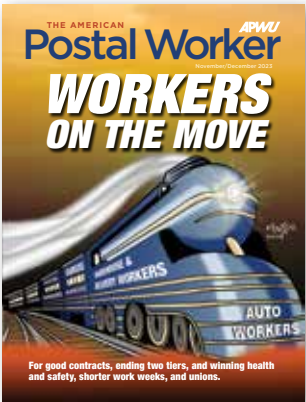


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While corporate profits and income inequality soar and rising inflation makes life harder, more and more workers in various industries are standing up and fighting back with an encouraging new militancy. Autoworkers, health care workers, actors, hospitality workers, and many more are rejuvenating the labor movement.

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# Workers on the Move!

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

*“Without Our Brain and Muscle, Not a Single Wheel Can Turn.”*

**W**hile corporate profits and income inequality soar and galloping inflation makes life harder, more and more workers are “standing up and fighting back” with an encouraging new militancy.

The Teamsters waged a powerful contract campaign against immensely profitable UPS and, with a 96 percent strike authorization vote, won major gains. 75,000 Kaiser health care workers won better wages and staffing for patients after a successful three-day strike. 160,000 actors represented by SAG-AFTRA are on strike against the bosses’ use of artificial intelligence to undermine their work. Declaring “One Job Should Be Enough,” hotel workers are engaged in rolling strikes in Southern California and a major strike is looming in Las Vegas. Starbucks workers are unionizing store after store. 1,400 Bluebird school bus manufacturing workers unionized in the Deep South. Amazon workers are stirring against an immensely wealthy and anti-union company. A major union organizing drive is underway at Delta Airlines.

## Auto Workers Showing the Way

As this article is being written, auto workers of the “Big Three” (Ford, General Motors and Stellantis) are engaged in a historic strike to overcome years of give-backs and concessionary bargaining. In the 2008 recession, caused by Wall Street greed, that sunk the housing market and the economy, the auto companies were in deep financial trouble. The Obama administration led in bailing out the “Big Three.” Much of it was done on the backs of the workers who lost Cost-of-Living-Adjustments (COLAs) and retirement. New hires were placed into a divisive “two-tiered” wage system, earning 40 percent less than their co-workers. While workers lost 30 percent in purchasing power, the Big Three made \$250 billion in profits over the last ten years and top management enjoyed raises of 40 percent.

Enough was enough! The promise made to the auto workers was that if they sacrificed to save the “Big

Three,” they would be rewarded when the companies got back on their feet. That promise was broken as the Wall Street investors and \$25-million-a-year-compensated CEOs laughed all the way to the bank. The companies used their massive profits to enrich shareholders and the CEOs.

They are laughing no more. Led by a new and militant United Auto Workers (UAW) president Shawn Fain, workers are demanding sizable raises to make up for years of declining wages, restoration of COLA, eliminating the divisive two-tier structure, defined benefit retirement plans for all workers, a shorter work week with no loss of pay, and ensuring the needed transition to electric vehicles is not used to bypass unionized workers and standards.

Harkening back to the auto workers’ historic sit-down strikes of the 1930s that led to the creation of the UAW and helped spark a union organizing wave across the country, the unionized auto workers are standing up for all working-class people in our struggle to win dignity, safe and rewarding jobs, and more time to spend with our families.

As UAW President Shawn Fain framed their fight: “... we’ll keep fighting for justice for the working class while the Big Three keep price-gouging the American consumer, ripping off the American taxpayer, and shortchanging the American worker...It’s a battle of the working class against the rich, the haves versus the have-nots, the billionaire class versus everyone else.”

The APWU is a “solidarity” union, born out of our own historic Great Postal Strike of 1970. Many members joined rallies, picket lines, and signed petitions understanding that “an injury to one is an injury to all” and that “a rising tide lifts all boats.” By the time you read this article, I am optimistic that the power of the auto workers will have led to solid new union contracts.

Workers on the move winning union representation and strong contracts will strengthen postal workers including next year as we once again engage in negotiations for a new union contract. Solidarity Forever! ■



## UPDATE ON MANAGEMENT'S “NETWORK MODERNIZATION” PLANS

# APWU Takes Series of Actions

**W**hile still in its early stages, postal management is aggressively proceeding with their “network modernization” plans. Currently, three out of an estimated 60 future Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RPDCs) are at least partially up and running – Richmond, VA; Charlotte, NC; and Atlanta, GA – with at least nine more scheduled to open next year. There are approximately 24 Sorting and Delivery Centers (S&DCs) (large carrier/delivery units) open, with plans for dozens more in 2024, and hundreds more in the coming years. These network changes will eventually touch almost every local.

As management constructs new buildings, centralizes processing, and installs new automated package sortation machinery, they must do it in accordance with our union contract, and in such a way that limits the negative impact on current employees. The national APWU leadership is fully committed to enforcing the union contract and, toward that aim, has initiated a number of actions:

- The APWU filed a major national-level grievance challenging management’s action where they are not properly withholding jobs in accordance with the job security protections of Article 12. Article 12 demands that all residual vacancies in all crafts and installations within 50 miles are held as “landing spots” for any impacted career employees facing potential excessing. The APWU is seeking to expedite this grievance.
- The APWU filed an Unfair Labor Practice with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to enforce management’s legal obligation to bargain over the changes it is making to the network. The APWU has its legal department taking a hard look at potential court action in relation to any unlawful acts of management.
- A grievance was filed charging that changes to the postal handbook and manual PO-408, previously the “Area Mail Processing Guidelines,” and now the “Mail Processing Facility Review,” were unilaterally made by management and interfered with the union’s rights to information and input on facility consolidations.

- The APWU filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge with the NLRB due to management not sufficiently responding to union information requests associated with the network changes. In response the Postal Service has begun providing some of the requested information.
- The five APWU Regional Coordinators are holding regional-level meetings with management, in accordance with the union contract, to address potential impacts. They have successfully reduced or eliminated many impacts on the current workforce. In addition, the APWU has prevailed in a significant regional area grievance, forcing management to reverse impacts and excessing in Utica, NY.
- The APWU has challenged management’s assigning most of the work in the new High Output Parcel Sorters (HOPS) to the Mailhandlers.
- The Clerk craft has expanded training for local and state union representatives on Article 12 (which deals with centralization of mail, consolidations of operations, and potential excessing) and on jurisdictional issues about assigning work to the Clerk craft or the Mailhandlers.
- The national union conducted a series of informational meetings that updated national, state, and local leaders on network changes, and will continue to do so.
- As previously reported, the APWU negotiated an important memorandum protecting existing retail and box section operations when letter carriers are moved to larger facilities with the S&DC plans.

“Changes in the mail mix, mail processing and the march of automation and technology are not new for the APWU,” said President Mark Dimondstein. “We have met these challenges over many decades and will continue to meet them today. The APWU leadership is fully united in our efforts to protect our jobs, serve the people, and keep the members fully informed as these network plans unfold.” ■

# Season's Greetings!

The officers and staff of the American Postal Workers Union wish you and your family a joyous and healthy holiday season, and a happy New Year.

## Enjoy the New APWU Podcast – New Episodes Available

Episodes are available of the new APWU podcast "Communicating with You, The Member - APWU Podcast from the President."

The APWU podcast gives you the latest news and updates about our union's fights for postal workers and the roles we play in delivering vital public services.

You can download the podcast on all streaming services, including: YouTube, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts regularly.

Find the feed at [apwu.org/podcast](http://apwu.org/podcast).



# Next Union Negotiated Raise Will Be in Paychecks Dated **December 8, 2023**

**A** PWU-represented career postal employees will receive a union-won general wage increase (GWI) equal to 1.3 percent of base pay, effective Nov. 18. Non-career APWU-represented employees will receive an additional 1 percent or a 2.3 percent GWI, as they do not receive COLA.

The raise will appear in paychecks dated Dec. 8, 2023. This latest wage increase caps off two years of strong raises secured in the 2021-2024 contract and follows record-breaking cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for career employees, which totaled \$2.39 per hour, or \$4,971 annually. COLAs are added to the base pay schedule, so PSEs will recoup these increases when they convert to career status.

“These negotiated increases can only happen because of the strength of our collective endeavor,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “We are already preparing for the opening of negotiations on our next union contract in July 2024, and the

activism and organizing of our members will play a crucial role in delivering an even stronger collective bargaining agreement.” ■



## APWU Supports the Social Security Fairness Act with Rally, Call Congress Day of Action

**O**n Sept. 13, 2023, APWU national officers, members, and retirees attended a rally during the National WEP/GPO Repeal Task Force Advocacy Summit on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The rally was held in support of the *Social Security Fairness Act* (H.R. 82, S.597), which calls for the repeal of Reagan-era rules that cut the income of thousands of postal retirees and millions of other civil service retirees.

Additionally, the APWU held a Call Congress Day of Action on Sept. 27. More than 2,250 APWU members and allies in 49 states participated in a day of collec-

tive action by calling their U.S. representatives. They voiced support for the Act and urged their lawmakers to co-sponsor the bill that would repeal these unfair provisions of Social Security law.

If passed, the bipartisan legislation would repeal two unfair rules that reduce the earned Social Security benefits of some postal retirees under Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS): the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The WEP and the GPO are two separate provisions of more than 40-year-old laws that reduce or eliminate the regular Social Security benefits of workers and their eligible family members under the CSRS who also qualify for

Social Security through secondary employment.

“Now is the time for Congress to repeal the WEP and GPO,” said APWU Retirees Director Nancy Olumekor. “These injustices have been around for almost 40 years depriving many public servants – federal, state, and local workers – of their full Social Security benefits.”

“For too long, the WEP and GPO have been making cuts to seniors’ Social Security money,” said APWU Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard. “Tragically, many do not learn about it until they see their first Social Security check, and they feel the effects of the cut when balancing the costs of buying food, paying house notes, and living expenses.” ■



# APWU Members Gather in Las Vegas



Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth "Liz" Powell addressed delegates at the Secretary-Treasurer's training

A large contingent of young members prepare for the future at the Young Members Conference

On Thursday, Sept. 28, APWU members from across the country began arriving at the Horseshoe Hotel in Las Vegas for the 2023 All-Craft Conference and workshops. This year marked the first in-person All-Craft Conference since 2019 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The week included general sessions for each division, training and workshops, including Secretary Treasurer's Training, the first ever Young Members Conference, and Legislative, Retirees, and Auxiliary conferences. It also featured a Veterans' Affairs gathering and a meeting on climate justice.

As the many members learned, debated, and exchanged experiences, APWU President Mark Dimondstein urged them to return to their locals and put that knowledge into practice. "In this case, what happens in Vegas, goes home to your locals," he said.

## Secretary Treasurer's Training

The Secretary Treasurer's training was the first of the sessions. The three-day event began on Friday, Sept. 29 with a presentation from vendors, followed by trainings on locals' Dues Check Off (DCO) procedures, inputting 1187 Authorization for Deduction of Dues, maintaining and sorting Excel DCO files, and

running audits every pay period. Attendees split into two breakout groups for training sessions on Fiduciary Responsibility and QuickBooks for the remainder of the event.

## Young Members Committee Held Its Inaugural Conference

The Young Members Committee, which was established in 2016, held its first Young Members Conference on Friday and Saturday, Sept. 29-30. Attendees received a refresher on the mission of the Committee by Angela McDonald (alternate, Miami Area Local), followed by the purpose of the Conference by Courtney Agee (Birmingham Area Local). The afternoon session brought a panel of young workers together who discussed the challenges they faced while trying to organize in the workplace, and how confidence is the key to the APWU's future.

Young members discussed the struggles of the past, APWU victories, and solutions going forward for the future of the union. They also held breakout discussions to debate ways to strengthen the APWU and young members from each table relayed their answers to the collective body, fostering a sense of solidarity throughout the room.



# s for 2023 All-Craft Conference

The climate justice meeting discussed how postal workers can get active to protect our future



The "Building Grassroots Strength" legislative action panel



President Dimondstein addressed each of the Craft Conferences

Maintenance Director Idowu Balogun addressed the Division's general session

Retirees Director Nancy Olumekor addressed delegates



"The Young Members Conference is a valuable opportunity for young members to connect with each other, learn from experienced leaders, and make a positive impact on their union," Agee said.

Later that afternoon, Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard and her staff gave a presentation on voting rights, working-class politics, and the importance of fighting for justice.

To conclude the inaugural conference, young members learned about Hustle, a peer-to-peer texting platform. At the "Party with a Purpose" themed social event, delegates were able to text more than 42,000 fellow members urging them to check their voter registration status and register to vote.

## Building Grassroots Power: The Legislative & Political Conference

The Legislative and Political Conference began on Sunday, Oct. 1. It included workshops, regional breakouts, and the Department's general session.

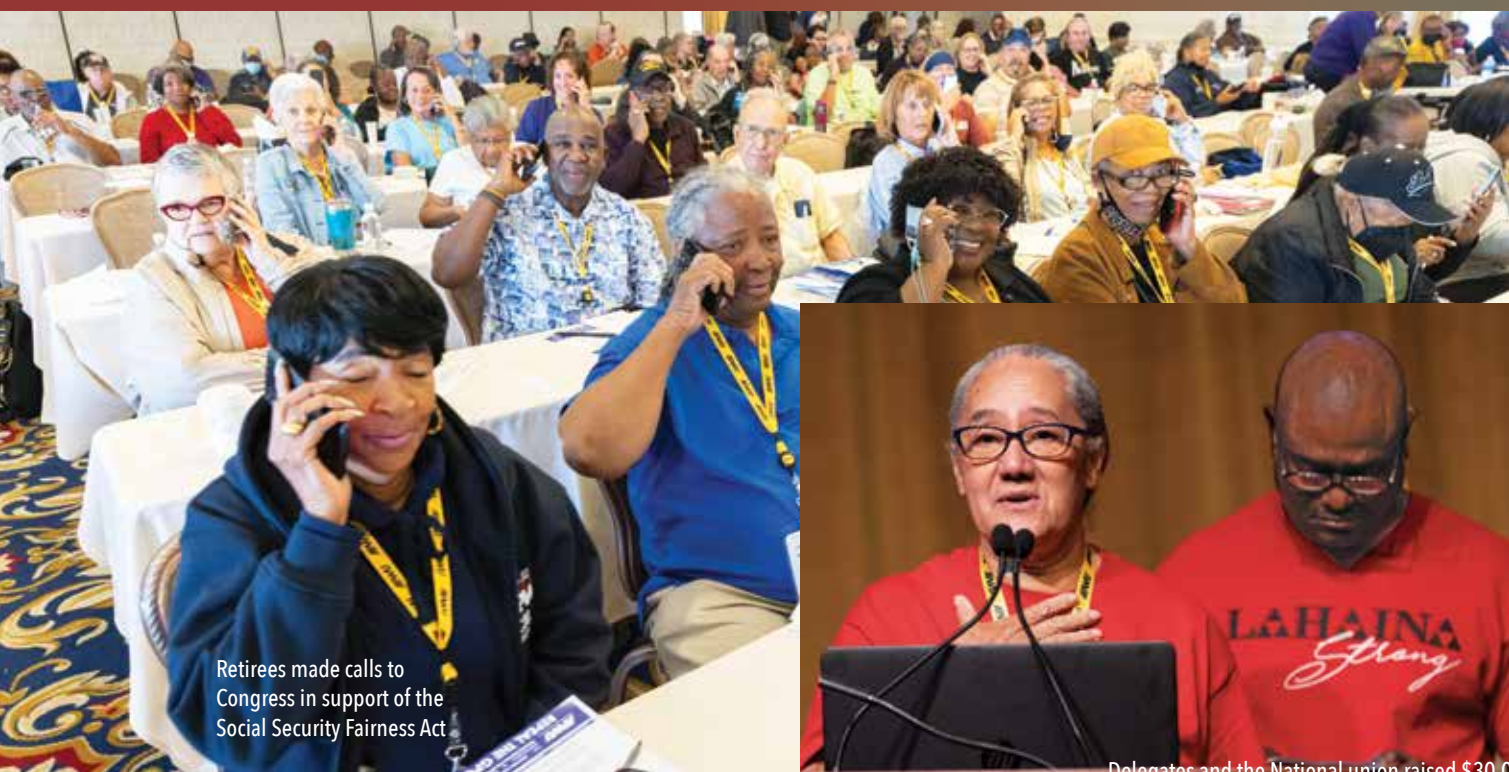
Delegates attended workshops on a variety of topics, such as legislative advocacy and lobbying, understanding Postal Service operations, such as the Postal Regulatory Commission and the Board of Governors, the

building blocks of the Committee on Political Action (COPA), reshaping democracy at the state and local level, the history of the labor movement, and strategic communication for action. In the afternoon, delegates split up into regional breakouts to meet with their regional coordinators on issues affecting their region.

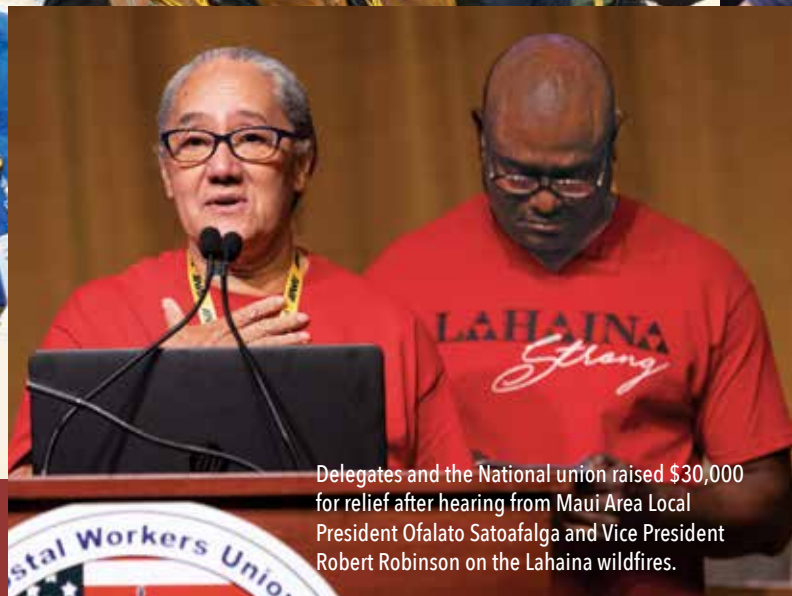
Guest speaker, author and executive director of the Labor Institute, Les Leopold, spoke about what the United Auto Worker strike tells us about the economy and the APWU's fight. "You have a union, you have a strong union, you have a visionary union," said Leopold. He ended his address by urging APWU members to use our collective strength to help end corporate greed.

Later, delegates asked questions in a panel session entitled "Building Grassroots Strength." Guest panelists were: Barbara Smith Warner, Executive Director of the National Vote at Home Institute; Sondra Cosgrove, Executive Director and Chair of the Board for Vote Nevada; Paul Catha, Political Director of the Culinary Workers Union Local 226; Quentin-Michael Savvoir, Branch President of the NAACP Las Vegas; Augustus Wood, Assistant Professor at the School of Labor and Employment Relations, University of Nevada. ➤





Retirees made calls to Congress in support of the Social Security Fairness Act



Delegates and the National union raised \$30,000 for relief after hearing from Maui Area Local President Ofalato Satoafalga and Vice President Robert Robinson on the Lahaina wildfires.

## All-Craft Conference

The four divisions and the Retirees Department held their general sessions on a staggered schedule beginning Monday, Oct. 2.

## Support Services Division

Support Services Division Director Arrion Brown began the Department's general session on Monday, Oct. 2, which provided three days of informative and productive training. Training sessions were taught on building the labor movement through the Support Services Division, grievance writing and preparation, properly completing *Family and Medical Leave Act* paperwork, and back pay training. The classes were well received; the attendees left the conference better informed, with the intent to share the information and better equipped to represent the members of their respective locals.

## Maintenance Division

The Maintenance Division also held its general session on Monday, Oct. 2. The Division officers presented their reports and discussed the current priorities of the Maintenance Division. The number one priority, Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun said, was finalizing a settlement on the Maintenance Ca-

pable versus Non-Maintenance Capable dispute, which he hopes is near.

Other notable issues and disputes the officers are working on include the Part-time Regular Cap violations, the Small Delivery Unit Sorter (SDUS) Clerk Maintenance Operator dispute, Promotion Cancellation, Maintenance Management Orders (MMOs), and APWU concerns regarding the Shared Community Toolbox initiative.

Maintenance officers also discussed pending sub-contracting cases, Article 19 notifications, and a Maintenance Division Resolution submitted by the Albuquerque, NM Local 380 regarding the payment of grievances to separated or retired employees.

## Motor Vehicle Service Division

On Tuesday, Oct. 3 the Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) Division held its general session. MVS Director Michael Foster gave his report. He spoke about the Postal Vehicle Operator position expansions in Athens, GA and Richmond, VA, and the growth of the MVS craft, which has seen a 31 percent increase in complement numbers since 2011.

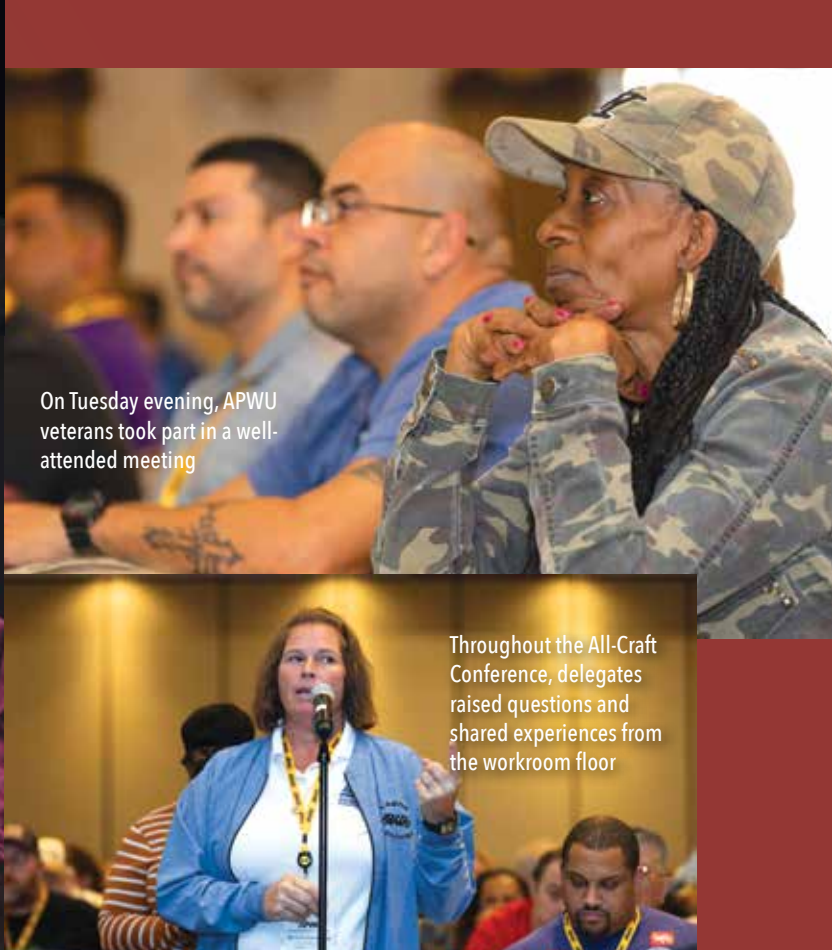




Support Services  
Director  
Arrian Brown

MVS Director Michael Foster  
answered members' questions

Director Lamont  
Brooks reported to  
the Clerk Division  
Conference



On Tuesday evening, APWU  
veterans took part in a well-  
attended meeting

Throughout the All-Craft  
Conference, delegates  
raised questions and  
shared experiences from  
the workroom floor

Foster also discussed management's 10-Year "Delivering for America" plan, national arbitration decisions, Vehicle Maintenance Facility issues, settlements, Step 4 disputes, and National Labor Relations Board charges filed. "This is going to be a long and arduous journey," exclaimed Director Foster. "It's going to take each and every one of us here to take this information back and to utilize it to the best of our ability to protect our craft and our work."

### Clerk Division

The Clerk Division general session closed out the 2023 Conference on Wednesday, Oct. 4. Prior to the officer reports, Maui Area Local President Ofaloto Satoafaiga and Vice President Robert Robinson addressed the delegates regarding the devastating wildfires in Lahaina on the island of Maui, HI. Delegates passed a resolution to collect donations for relief. A staggering \$30,000 was collected, which included a 50 percent match from the national APWU.

The Clerk Division officer reports updated members on recent Memorandums of Understanding and provided updates on recent Step 4 activity and national disputes. The main focus of the Clerk general session was the ongoing initiative to protect current clerk work and to create new work and jobs for the craft "to

keep the post office alive and viable," according to Clerk Division Director Lamont Brooks. He provided a few examples of how to expand the craft, such as: providing notary services, issuing fishing licenses, property permits, and transportation passes, as well as registering the public to vote.

"On behalf of the Clerk Division, I hope participants enjoyed the 2023 All-Craft and returned home safely. I want to thank you for all you do, because you're the ones that make it all possible," said Clerk Division Director Lamont Brooks.

### Retirees Conference

The Retirees Conference held its general session on Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 3-4.

Delegates discussed legislative priorities and made calls to pass H.R. 82, the *Social Security Fairness Act*. President Dimondstein and Secretary-Treasurer Powell later presented the charter to the new Magic City Retiree Chapter #2 from the Birmingham, AL Area Local.

The session concluded with a presentation and a questions and answers session from the APWU Health Plan, by Health Plan Director Sarah Rodriguez. ■





# Bringing Faith and Hope to Our Union

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

**T**he Young Members Conference, the All-Craft Conference, and Auxiliary and Retirees Conference brought faith and hope to our union!

Young members brought back many memories of what it was like to start out with eyes wide open to what APWU could mean to workers. We didn't have a Young Members Committee back in the 70's, 80's, or 90's, but it sure would have been great. The only way you really had opportunities was if someone informally mentored you or you got a few peers to work together sharing what we were learning. We learned as we grew. We dealt with unscrupulous managers back then, and now. There was just no way we were going to give up on our members, leaving them with no representation. It's a battle zone and we became the workers' guardians.

Looking back, we could have done better. We needed to give our coworkers the strength to stand with us on the workroom floor, as well as educate them on how to become active with us in everything we do. We are mighty powerful standing together as coworkers, retirees, families, and as a part of our communities.

Thank you, young members, for taking the leap to stand with us and your willingness to help get our members on the workroom floor to understand the importance of getting involved in our movement. You are so capable!

The All-Craft Conference brought new ways to look at our need for solidarity, mentoring, and educating. The new APWU Leadership Institute brings a pathway to help inspire and educate new APWU Leaders; the Legislative Panel, the Veterans' Discussion and Climate Justice Roundtable let us know that we have much work to do. The Postmaster General's 10-Year Plan will not end without a strong union that protects and educates everyone, including our communities. "Our services" must be protected and expanded!

Retirees and our Auxiliary need and want to reach out to locals and states to help mentor and help do the extra work that officers cannot find the time to do. We need everyone. The holidays are upon us, our most

pressured times. May you be safe and blessed with strength and the love for each other, and to be union strong against those who choose to destroy our country's public Postal Service.

*In Union Solidarity!* ■





Unions from around the world gathered in Philadelphia, PA

## APWU Leaders Attend 6th UNI Global World Congress in Philadelphia

**O**n Aug. 27, representatives of the APWU travelled to Philadelphia, PA for the 6th UNI Global World Congress.

UNI Global Union is an international union federation. It represents 20 million service sector workers in 150 countries in a broad range of industries, including postal and logistics. APWU has long been affiliated to, and active in, the work of UNI and its predecessors.

Before Congress, more than 30 postal unions gathered to discuss our industry, to share strategies to defend and strengthen public postal services, and to develop global campaigns to organize the unorganized.

Unions in our sector around the globe face similar challenges to those we face in the U.S. Worldwide, postal services are adapting to increasing package and declining letter mail volume. Automation, outsourcing, and cutting retail services are common from management; many unions in our sector are fighting for expanded services to ensure that quality work exists for our members.

Meanwhile, the rapidly expanding package delivery market is still relatively unorganized, although in recent years, unions have made inroads. UNI has played an important role in securing union-rights agreements with two of the largest multinational package and logistics companies in the world. Additionally, UNI is leading organizing campaigns around the world that have brought tens of thousands of workers into our union family, particularly among DHL workers in Africa.

Members of the UNI World Congress debated and voted on a number of motions, setting the agenda for the next four years. The work-plan includes investing more in organizing, campaigning for union rights agreements in multinational companies, developing strategies to confront changing technologies, and winning shorter work weeks and improved conditions for workers. The Congress was preceded by the UNI World Women's

Conference, where our sisters tackled the challenges facing women workers around the world.

“Our presence in the UNI work underscores that there is much more that unites working class people around the world than what divides us,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “No matter our country, our industry, or our employer, the working class has to stand up to bad bosses and those in governments and reactionary movements who are intent on destroying our labor movement and the democratic rights of working-class people. We leave this Congress inspired by the many successes of our union family around the world and united in a global labor movement ready to organize the unorganized and advance the cause of working people everywhere.” ■



### Global Union Leaders Call on BNY Mellon to Answer for \$2 Billion Loss of Brazilian Postal Workers Pension Funds

On Sept. 1, 2023, APWU members, including NY Metro Area Local President Jonathan Smith and NE Regional Coordinator Tiffany Foster, joined Brazilian postal workers and labor union leaders from around the world to rally against BNY Mellon. The Wall Street corporation lost \$2 billion of Brazilian postal workers' money due to bad pension fund investments.

Protestors called on BNY Mellon to answer for the \$2 billion loss of Brazilian postal workers' pension funds. The workers are fighting staggering 40 percent cuts to their retirement benefits. They are seeking reparations and justice for the bad investments that put their retirements at risk.

The rally was organized by UNI Américas, the APWU, NALC, and other unions. It brought union leaders together with the support of our sisters and brothers from FINDECT, the Brazilian-based Interstate Federation of Postal Workers' Unions, and FENTECT, the National Federation of Workers in Postal and Telegraph Companies. ■





# Fulfilling a Treasurer's Responsibilities

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

**T**here are several important responsibilities that local and state treasurers will need to familiarize themselves with and fulfill. Whether you are newly elected, appointed, or have maintained the treasurer's position for a length of time, maintaining fiduciary responsibilities is of the utmost importance. After ensuring local and state finances are being maintained with appropriate "checks and balances" and financial controls are in place, a treasurer should verify that the local or state follows all legal requirements.

## Department of Labor Legal Requirements

1. Local and State affiliates are required to have a constitution and bylaws and a copy must be electronically filed with the annual LM report to the Department of Labor.
2. Local and state affiliates are required to have a fidelity bond covering 10 percent of the local or state's liquid assets. **(We strongly recommend local and state affiliates bond 100 percent of the liquid assets.)**
3. Local elections are required to be held every three years and state affiliates every four years. **(The constitution may require elections be held more frequently.)**
4. The Department of Labor requires an LM report **(LM 2, LM 3, or LM 4)** to be filed annually.
5. Treasurers are required to maintain financial records for the last five years.
6. They must also maintain executive board and general membership meeting minutes.

## Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

In addition to local or state payroll requirements:

1. I-9 (for all employees).
  - Filing W-2, W-3, and W-4s.
  - Electronically filing form 940 (Payroll Taxes Deposited).
  - Collect and deposit state and municipal or county taxes.

- Electronically filing form 940 (federal unemployment tax deposited).
  - 1099 issued for non-employee compensation.
  - W-9 (Tax ID for independent contractors).
2. The IRS requires an annual 990 Report (990, 990-EZ, 990-N) electronically filed with the IRS.

## Other Legal Requirements

To ensure local or state affiliates are complying with Article 16, section 4 of the constitution and bylaws of the APWU as amended, a copy of the following is required to be forward to the Secretary-Treasurer's department:

- A copy of your local or state constitution.
- A copy of your local or state signed annual LM report that was filed with the Department of Labor.
- Written verification that your local or state filed an annual 990 report with the IRS.
- A listing of local or state officers and verification that the local or state has held elections in accordance with the union's constitution.

Treasurers should contact Annette August-Taylor, Executive Assistant to the Secretary-Treasurer at 202-842-8538 or [aaugust@apwu.org](mailto:aaugust@apwu.org) if you are not sure whether your local or state is complying. During 2023, the Secretary-Treasurer's department provided in-person Secretary-Treasurer's training opportunities in April, June and September for presidents and treasurers to attend.

I would like to wish all the members of the APWU happy holidays and a prosperous New Year. ■

## Save the Date!

The next Secretary-Treasurer's training is scheduled for National Harbor, MD at the MGM for March 4-8, 2024. Details will be posted in the event section of the APWU website.





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](mailto:communications@apwu.org), together with your EIN by Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023. Winners will be randomly selected among those who correctly answer the following:

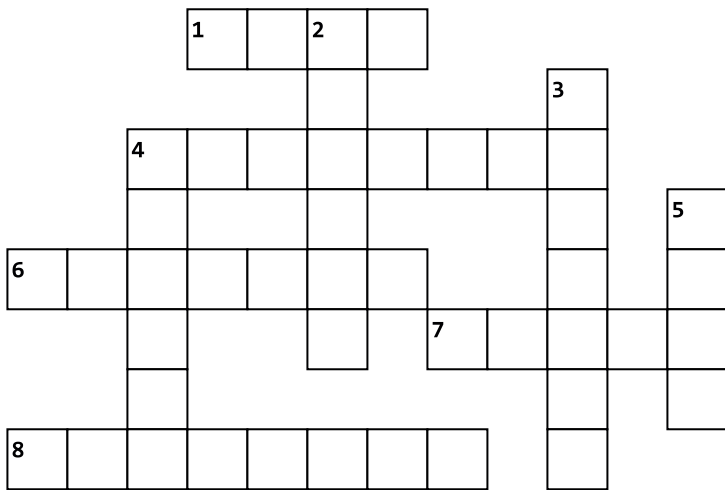
**The lucky winners from the September/October 2023 edition of the *American Postal Worker* were:**

**Kami Hunter**, Fort Wayne Area Local (IN)  
**Liset Hernandez**, Modesto Area Local (CA)  
**Lisa Relfe**, Kokomo Area Local (IN)

## APWU November-December QUIZ

1. The inaugural APWU Young Members Conference took place ahead of the 2023 All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas, NV. Young members sent more than 42,000 text messages urging postal workers to check their voter registration status and register to vote. What was the name of the themed event?
2. As winter approaches, it brings with it a unique set of challenges that can impact our safety and well-being. From plummeting temperatures to hazardous road conditions, it's crucial to be well-prepared to navigate the winter season safely. What is one step you can take to maintain home-heating safety?
3. The United Auto Workers union launched a historic strike against all three of Detroit's biggest automakers, known as the "Big Three" after its contracts expired. Name two of the three companies that autoworkers are striking against.

## APWU Crossword Puzzle



### Across

1. The General \_\_\_\_ Increase of 1.3 percent will go into effect on November 18.
4. Make sure you have Carbon \_\_\_\_\_ detectors in your home and test them regularly.
6. The officers and staff of the APWU wish you and your family a joyous and healthy \_\_\_\_\_ season, and a happy New Year.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ sit-down strike began on Dec. 30, 1936 in response to job and wage cuts at General Motors.
8. On September 27 the APWU hosted a Call \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Action in support of the Social Security Fairness Act.

### Down

2. The APWU is a UNI \_\_\_\_\_ Union affiliate that represents 20 million service sector workers in 150 countries.
3. The Government \_\_\_\_\_ Offset is one of two unfair rules that reduce or eliminate the earned Social Security benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System.
4. On September 1, union members called on BNY \_\_\_\_\_ to answer for \$2 billion loss of Brazilian postal workers pension funds.
5. The United \_\_\_\_\_ Workers was formed in May 1935.

## 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 know your rights.... check the list below. If you see your name printed, email us at: [communications@apwu.org](mailto:communications@apwu.org) by Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023 and we'll send you a promo code worth \$50 to use towards gear at [apwustore.org](http://apwustore.org).

**Benjamin Dardy Jr.**, Salmont Area Local (CA)  
**Alex Kontorsky**, Rochester SCF Area Local (NY)  
**Leticia Anguita-renta**, Mid-Florida Local (FL)

**CROSSWORD ANSWERS:**  
**Across:** 1. wage; 4. monoxide; 6. holiday; 7. Flint; 8. Congress;  
**Down:** 2. global; 3. pension; 4. Mellon; 5. auto



# Updates on National Disputes, Penalty Exclusion Period, and a Holiday Greeting

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR CHARLIE CASH

**H**appy holidays my union family! Your hard work will once again bring happiness and smiles to millions of people, not only in the United States but around the world.

No matter if you celebrate Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, or observe any other tradition during this time, please make sure you take some time to enjoy this time of year with your family and friends.

As a reminder, the “penalty exclusion period” begins with the start of Pay Period 26-2023 (Dec. 2, 2023) and ends with the conclusion of Pay Period 01-2024 (Dec. 29, 2023). The “penalty exclusion period” means that the penalty overtime rate will not be paid for hours that normally qualify as penalty overtime. Rather, the regular overtime rate will apply.

I would like to update you all on some pending national disputes. The first is the national dispute regarding the Article 12 (excessing) issues surrounding the Postmaster General’s “Delivering for America” plan and changes to the overall network.

In general, our dispute is over Article 12.5.B.1: “Dislocation and inconvenience to full-time and part-time flexible employees shall be kept to the minimum...” It is our position that the USPS is not making every effort to follow this provision. On its face, the USPS seems to be doing just the opposite. I have been pushing for an accelerated schedule to meet and discuss this dispute and arbitrate if necessary. The current plan is to arbitrate this dispute as quickly as possible if a settlement agreement cannot be reached.

One of the next cases that will be scheduled for early in 2024 is what most members know as the “direct deposit theft” or “LiteBlue hack” dispute. This dispute revolves around the issue that happened at this time last year. Hundreds of APWU employees had their Liteblue login information stolen. The thieves took this information, logged into the victims’ PostalEase accounts, and changed the direct deposit information the USPS had on file. This led to some employees losing their largest paychecks of the year. The direct deposits were sent to accounts not owned

by the victims where the money was then immediately emptied out.

The USPS has taken the position that it was the employees’ fault that their login information was stolen. The APWU takes the position that it was postal management’s lack of adequate security protocols that lead to the thefts. We believe we have the evidence that proves the USPS was aware of the security flaws and we will be asking an arbitrator to rule in our favor. We are seeking that the employees who lost their direct deposits be reimbursed in full by the USPS.

One other case being addressed is the “Welcome to the USPS” or the new employee orientation case. This case was scheduled for August of 2023, but was cancelled because we were making progress towards settlement. Due to an unforeseen health emergency, I was unable to continue the settlement discussions. But those are back on track. If the case cannot be settled, we will seek to arbitrate it in the spring of 2024 as well.

**PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU TAKE SOME  
TIME TO ENJOY THIS TIME OF YEAR  
WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

I am going to take a moment of personal privilege to close out this column. I want to congratulate and thank my friend and mentor—Jim Bean from the Salt Lake City Area Local on his retirement. Jim served for over 35 years as an officer or steward in his local. He is one of the most dedicated unionists I know and one of the most loyal friends that everyone who has the honor to call him a friend could have. Jim taught me much about the union and helped me be a successful member, steward, and officer of the APWU. Thank you, Jim, for all you did for the APWU! ■



# Essential Safety Tips to Help You Stay Warm and Secure During the Cold Months Ahead

**A**s winter approaches, it brings with it a unique set of challenges that can impact our safety and well-being. From plummeting temperatures to hazardous road conditions, it's crucial to be well-prepared to navigate the winter season safely. In this article, we'll explore essential safety tips to help you stay warm and secure during the cold months ahead.

## Home Heating Safety:

- **Inspect and Maintain Your Heating System:** Before the cold sets in, have your heating system professionally inspected. Ensure that your furnace or heater is clean, in good working condition, and free from any potential hazards.
- **Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors:** Carbon monoxide (CO) is a silent killer. Make sure you have working CO detectors in your home, especially near bedrooms and heating sources. Test them regularly to ensure that they are functioning correctly.
- **Fireplace and Wood Stove Safety:** If you use a fireplace or wood stove, have them cleaned and inspected annually. Keep flammable materials away from heat sources and always use a fire screen to prevent sparks from escaping.

## Winterizing Your Home:

- **Insulate and Seal:** Proper insulation and sealing can save you money on your heating bills while keeping your home comfortable. Check windows and doors for drafts, and add weather stripping or caulk where needed.
- **Clear Gutters and Downspouts:** Clean your gutters and downspouts to prevent ice dams, which can damage your roof and walls. Proper drainage is essential to avoid water damage.

## Safe Winter Driving:

- **Winter Tires:** Consider switching to winter tires with good tread for better traction in icy and snowy conditions. Check your tire pressure regularly.

- **Emergency Kit:** Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle, including a blanket, flashlight, non-perishable snacks, a first-aid kit, and a shovel.
- **Drive Cautiously:** Slow down and increase your following distance on slippery roads. Avoid sudden movements and brake gently to prevent skidding.

## Personal Safety:

- **Dress in Layers:** Layer your clothing to stay warm. Use moisture-wicking base layers, insulating materials, and waterproof outer layers. Don't forget warm gloves, a hat, and a scarf.
- **Stay Dry:** Wet clothing can lead to hypothermia. Avoid getting wet, but if you do, change into dry clothes as soon as possible.
- **Limit Outdoor Activities:** Limit your time outside in the extreme cold, especially in strong winds, as wind chills can significantly lower the effective temperature.

## Emergency Preparedness:

- **Stock Up on Essentials:** Ensure you have an adequate supply of food, water, medications, and other essentials in case you are snowed in or unable to leave your home.
- **Stay Informed:** Keep a battery-powered weather radio or smartphone with emergency alerts to stay updated on weather conditions and any warnings.

## Check on Neighbors:

- **Community Support:** Reach out to neighbors, especially the elderly or those with mobility challenges, to ensure that they are safe and have what they need during the winter.

Winter can be a beautiful and enjoyable season, but it also comes with safety concerns. By following these essential safety tips, you can prepare yourself, your home, and your vehicle to stay warm and secure during the winter months. Remember that being proactive and prepared is the key to enjoying a safe and comfortable winter season. ■



# MEMBERS



Members of the Detroit District Area Local marching at the Labor Day Parade.



Members of the Philadelphia Area Local, including former MVS Assistant Director Ken Prinz, march during the Labor Day Parade.



Pittsburgh Metro Area Local members Tom Lockhart and Kelly Brown catching some shade at the Pittsburgh, PA Labor Day Parade.



Human Relations Director Daleo Freeman led a delegation of APWU members at the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington.

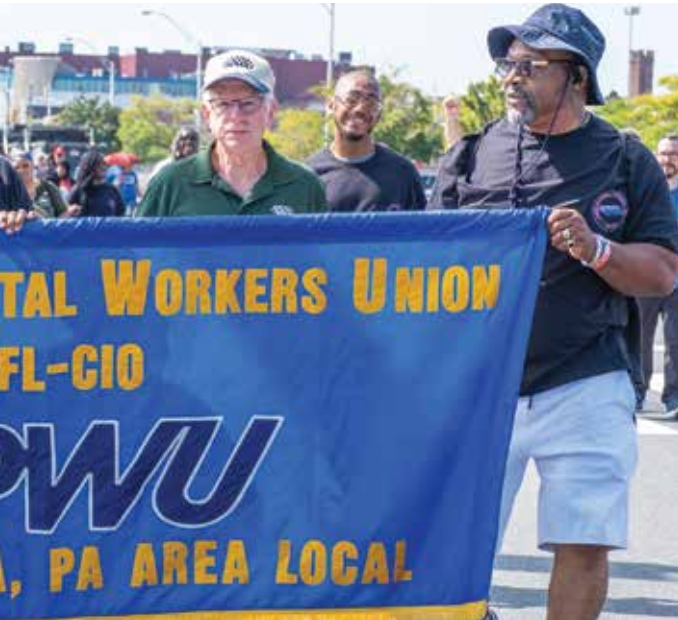


APWU delegates to the UNI World Congress joined a contract campaign rally in support of SEIU 32BJ members in Philadelphia, PA.





# IN ACTION



Legislative Director Todd Clark of the Cincinnati Area Local with Hamilton County, OH Commissioner Alicia Reece during the Local 164 Labor Day Picnic.



Toledo Area Local members, led by Local President Mike Fincher, joined striking autoworkers at the Stellantis Toledo Assembly Plant.



APWU Detroit District Area Local members Ally Marti Alston, retiree member Diane Walker, Ally Deborah Thompson, and retiree member Jane Duggan support UAW members on strike at Ford.



If you would like to see your event on action featured in the Members in Action pages, email your high resolution photos and a description to [communications@apwu.org](mailto:communications@apwu.org).



## Access care from an extensive nationwide network of providers and facilities

After careful consideration, the APWU Health Plan has switched our High Option Preferred Provider Network (PP0) to UnitedHealthcare's network of over 1.7 million providers! To find doctors in the UnitedHealthcare network, visit [apwuhp.com](http://apwuhp.com) and select **Are my doctors in the network?**

## ENROLL DURING OPEN SEASON

November 13 - December 11, 2023

Choose between two smart medical plans that feature a nationwide UnitedHealthcare network of 1.7+ million providers and 7,000+ hospitals and care facilities - and no referrals needed.

You also have access to:

- 13,500 urgent/convenient care clinics
- 5,800 freestanding ambulatory surgery centers
- 100% digitally-focused virtual primary care group

As of August 1, 2023

### Open Season Hotline

**Call:** 800.PIC.APWU (8:30am - 6pm ET)

**Email:** [virtualopenseason@apwuhp.com](mailto:virtualopenseason@apwuhp.com)

**Website:** [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com)

### 2024 Premiums

	Enrollment Code	Biweekly	Monthly	APWU Career Special Rate*
High Option Self Only	471	\$124.52	\$269.79	\$124.52
High Option Self Plus One	473	\$244.95	\$530.73	\$244.95
High Option Self and Family	472	\$304.05	\$658.77	\$304.05
Consumer Driven Option Self Only	474	\$76.78	\$166.36	<b>\$15.36</b>
Consumer Driven Option Self Plus One	476	\$166.88	\$361.58	<b>\$33.38</b>
Consumer Driven Option Self and Family	475	\$182.05	\$394.45	<b>\$36.41</b>

\*APWU rate applies to APWU Career Bargaining Unit Employees enrolled in FEHB more than 1 year



# 1 extensive network and 2 plans to choose from.

## High Option

With low copays and low deductibles, the High Option is a premier plan in the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program.

### 100% covered services:

- In-network preventive care and screenings
- Lab tests (covered blood work performed at a LabCorp or Quest Diagnostics)
- Maternity care and support
- Accidental injury outpatient services within 72 hours
- Diabetes generic oral medications
- Tobacco cessation and weight management programs

### In-network copays:

- \$10 for a 24/7 virtual visit
- \$25 for office visits, including specialists
- \$30 for urgent care centers
- \$10 for retail non-specialty Tier 1 drugs

### High Option Special programs:

- A 24-hour NurseLine
- Pregnancy support programs such as Maven
- Cancer Support Program
- Kidney Resources Program
- One Pass Gym Discount
- UnitedHealthcare Hearing

## Consumer Driven Option

The Consumer Driven Option is a proactive alternative to conventional healthcare that can save you money

### 100% covered services:

- In-network preventive care and screenings
- Healthy pregnancy and tobacco cessation programs

In January, the Health Plan funds a Personal Care Account (PCA) members can use for covered medical services. Members are covered at 100% until the PCA is exhausted. The Plan funds the PCA at \$1,200 for Self Only and \$2,400 for Self Plus One and Self and Family.

### In-network copays:

- Pay just 15% of the plan allowance for a 24/7 virtual visit
- No upfront deductible, coinsurance or copays until you exhaust your PCA

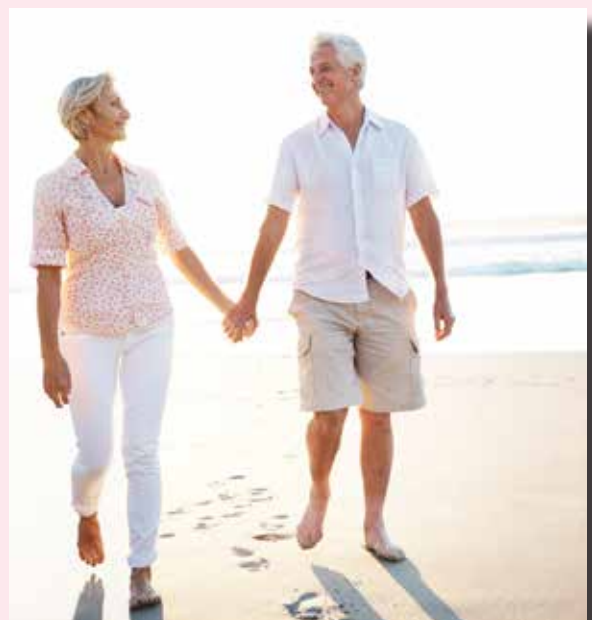
### APWU Career Special Rate:

**USPS pays 95% of the premium** for Career Bargaining Unit Employees that have been enrolled in FEHB for one year. Start saving and enroll today!

A **Medicare Advantage** plan designed for our retired High Option members. It's time to get excited about these 2024 benefits:

- No deductible, coinsurance or copays for covered medical services
- \$85 Monthly Part B reimbursement
- \$60 quarterly over-the-counter allowance
- \$1,500 hearing aid allowance
- Dental Coverage
- Prescription drug coverage (Part D)
- As well as Wellness programs such as a free gym membership, 24-hour telephonic nurse-support and in-home visit with a healthcare practitioner

To be eligible for these added enhancements at no additional cost, you must be: retired, have Medicare Parts A&B and enrolled in our High Option plan.



# LABOR NEWS

## Hotel Workers Take Action in Southern California and Las Vegas

After months of rolling strikes by hotel workers in Southern California, UNITE HERE Local 11 have called for boycotts at hotels in Los Angeles and Orange counties that haven't agreed to new labor contracts. The union is fighting for wage increases, improved healthcare, robust staffing, pensions, and job security. So far, tentative agreements have been reached at the Biltmore and the Westin Bonaventure in downtown L.A.

On Oct. 12, thousands of hospitality workers across Las Vegas partici-

pated in a city-wide picket at MGM, Wynn, and Caesars Entertainment casinos. 43,000 Culinary Workers Union Local 226 members continue negotiations for a new five-year union contract. Members of the union voted 95 percent to authorize a citywide strike. They demand wage increases, improved working conditions, mandated daily room cleanings, increased safety, and advanced job training.

Leaders of the Culinary Union addressed APWU delegates at the 2023



Culinary housekeeper Idil Ismael discussed her union's fight for good jobs.

APWU All-Craft Conference. They discussed their contract struggle and efforts to ensure that "One Job Should be Enough." ■



## WGA Ratifies Contract, SAG-AFTRA Strike Continues

The Writers Guild of America (WGA) West overwhelmingly voted 99 percent to ratify its new contract on Oct. 8, officially ending one of the longest labor disputes in entertainment history. The WGA strike ended on Sept. 27, after halting most TV and film production for 146 days.

"Through solidarity and determination, we have ratified a contract with meaningful gains and protections for writers in every sector of our combined membership," said WGA West president Meredith Stiehm. "Together we were able to accomplish what many said was impossible only six months ago."

New gains include a writer's bonus for top-performing shows on streaming platforms, staffing minimums for writers' rooms, and new protections on the use of artificial intelligence (AI). It also

provides a new minimum wage step for writer-producers and increases for most minimums over the three-year contract.

Meanwhile, actors and performers in SAG-AFTRA continued their strike into October, as *The American Postal Worker* magazine went to press. The bosses' organization, the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), refused to bargain for almost three months from July 12. They agreed to return to negotiations for just three and a half days before walking out again.

Facing similar issues to the writers, SAG-AFTRA members are seeking fair pay that reflects the industry's move to streaming and control over the use of their image through AI. "... they [the AMPTP] think that we're going to cower, but that's never going to happen because this is a crossroads and we must stay on course," said SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher.



## Autoworkers Halt Production at "Big Three"

The United Auto Workers (UAW) launched a historic strike against three of America's largest automakers: Ford, GM and Stellantis, amid stalled negotiations. The UAW is calling for better wages, benefits, and job security, including a 36 percent pay increase over four years, reinstated annual cost-of-living adjustments, pension benefits for all employees, and end to the two-tier workforce and a four-day work week.

The strikes began on Sept. 15 with 13,000 employees at three plants in Michigan, Missouri, and Ohio, and have begun to spread across the U.S. Instead of striking all plants at once, select UAW locals are increasingly called upon to walk out until demands are met. This method cuts production of profitable vehicles while minimizing the impact on the UAW's strike fund.

On Oct. 11, the strikes hit Ford's biggest plant, where 8,700 members at the Kentucky Truck Plant walked out.

"Autoworkers have waited long enough to make things right at the Big Three," said UAW President Shawn Fain. "Either the Big Three get down to business and work with us to make progress in negotiations or more locals will be called on to Stand Up and go out on strike."



## Kaiser Unions Reach Safe Staffing Contract Agreement After Workers Walk Out

More than 75,000 health care workers at Kaiser Permanente walked out of work on Oct. 3 for a planned three-day strike, the largest of its kind for healthcare workers in recent U.S. history.

The patient-care workers, represented by a coalition of eight unions, sought higher wages to attract employees who left their fields during the pandemic. The workers aimed to protect patient safety and improve quality of care by demanding proper staffing. Understaffing contributes to longer patient wait times and high levels of burnout for workers.

On Oct. 13, the workers and management reached a tentative agreement including a \$25 minimum wage in California, \$23 elsewhere, raises, and protections against outsourcing work. The union members were due to decide on ratification in late October, as the *American Postal Worker* went to press. ■

## Steelworkers Ratify Three-Year Contract at Cliffs Northshore Mining

In September, workers at Cleveland-Cliffs Northshore Mining in Babbitt, MN voted to ratify their first union contract. The workers joined the United Steelworkers (USW) in July through a majority sign up agreement. The three-year agreement includes a lump sum bonus, annual wage increases, enhanced job security, and occupational health and safety improvements.





# The Clerk Division 2023 All-Craft Conference



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

**T**he Clerk Division held its general session and workshops at the 2023 All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas, NV. We taught classes on steward training, local leadership, RI-399 Craft Jurisdiction, Articles 12 and 16, gaining clerk craft work, and POSTPlan.

Prior to our officer reports, NBA Linda Turney recognized and honored recently retired Central Regional Coordinator Sharyn Stone, followed by former Clerk Division Assistant Director Dr. Pat Williams honoring the life and work of recently departed former Clerk Division Director James P. McCarthy.

Maui Area Local President Ofaloto Satoaifaiga and Vice President Robert Robinson addressed the delegates regarding the devastating wildfires in Lahaina on the island of Maui, HI.

A motion passed that allowed for a collection of donations. A staggering \$30,000 was collected, which included a match from APWU Headquarters.

Clerk Division Assistant Director Sam Lisenbe, began his officer report, and spoke about recent Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) signed by the craft, such as the Jobs Audit MOU and the Clerk Craft Jobs MOU Remedy rollout. He also spoke about the Retail Training Taskforce, the expansion of the Smart Lockers program, the Enterprise Payment System, as well as the ongoing Letter of Demand and Letter of Indebtedness issues where the Postal Service has allowed the Department of Treasury to force deductions from retirees checks when they have valid and timely grievances.

Lisenbe provided updates on recent Step 4 activity. We have worked diligently to close out older disputes to minimize the backlog and have encouraged NBAs to pre-arbitrate and settle disputes. Current Step 4 discussions with management include Dispatch Coordinator and New Employee Orientation. The Division leadership has also sent a notification on Arrow Key Accountability.

President Mark Dimondstein spoke about the issues members are facing today. From voter rights to worker rights, Dimondstein urged members to forge ahead with the hard work and difficult issues facing workers.

Assistant Director Lynn Pallas-Barber began her officer report with updates on recent national disputes and other ongoing issues such as the Alternative Dispute Resolution Process (ADRP), the MOU on Filling Residual Vacancies, PSE Compliance, Small Office Complement Report, Human Resources Shared Service Center contract officer, Wounded Warrior Leave, RI-399 Committee meetings, as well as preparing for the 2024 contract negotiations.

**WE UPDATED MEMBERS ON  
THE ONGOING INITIATIVE TO  
PROTECT CURRENT CLERK WORK  
AND TO CREATE NEW WORK AND  
JOBS FOR THE CRAFT.**

During my director report, I spoke about the young members and my optimism about their futures in our union. I have been planning and organizing a mentorship program for almost two years. I urged delegates to return to their locals to find and mentor young members, create relationships, and prepare them for the future of the APWU, and the continued struggle to protect the craft's work.

We updated members on the ongoing initiative to protect current clerk work and to create new work and jobs for the craft. We can expand craft work by providing notary services, issuing fishing licenses, property permits, and transportation passes, and registering the public to vote. We concluded the session with the resolutions, which included subjects such as PSE opting on scheduled absences of five or more days, and rules on reassignment and excessing.

On behalf of the Clerk Division, I hope participants enjoyed the 2023 All-Craft and returned home safely. I want to thank you for all you do, because you're the ones that make it all possible. ■

# Successful Maintenance Craft Conference in 2023



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

**W**e successfully completed the 2023 APWU All-Craft Conference in Las Vegas, NV. The Maintenance Craft Conference started on Monday, Oct. 2, 2023, and lasted for three days. The Saturday before the conference, we attended the Maintenance Council meetings. The conference started with a general session on Monday, Oct. 2, and continued with regional breakouts and workshops on Article 32 Subcontracting, and Line H in small offices following on Tuesday and Wednesday. During the craft conference, we were addressed by several guest speakers, held a lively debate about Maintenance craft issues, and ended in solidarity to return home and continue to conduct the business of the Union. Assistant Maintenance Craft Director (A) Terry Martinez welcomed delegates and the Division leadership, including Assistant Maintenance Craft Director (B) Jason Treier and NBAs: John Gearhard, Jeffrey S. Beaton, Louis M. Kingsley Jr., Curtis Walker, Carlos Paz, Craig Fisher, Dave Sarnacki, Hector Baez, and Kenneth Lester to the session. Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzalez took to the podium and welcomed members to his region and spoke about the impacts of Article 12 excessing on Maintenance Craft employees because of management's 10-year "Delivering for America" plan.

## National Executive Council Addressed Members

Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun introduced APWU National President Mark Dimondstein, who attended with Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, Industrial Relations Director Charlie Cash, Southern Regional Coordinator Yared Wonde, Northeast Regional Coordinator Tiffany Foster, Eastern Regional Coordinator AJ Jones, and Central Region Coordinator Amy Puhalski. Dimondstein spoke about the ongoing labor disputes of allied labor unions, including the United Auto Workers and the Culinary Workers Union Local 226. He concluded by saluting the leadership and hard work of Director Balogun and all Maintenance Division representatives in the current issues facing Maintenance employees.

## Maintenance Division Officer Report

Director Balogun began his report and discussed the current priorities of the Maintenance Division. The number one priority, he said, was finalizing a settlement on the



Maintenance General Session during the APWU All-Craft.

Maintenance Capable vs. Non-Maintenance Capable dispute, which he hopes is near. Other notable issues and disputes the officers are working on include:

The Part-time Regular Cap violations, the Small Delivery Unit Sorter (SDUS) Clerk Maintenance Operator dispute, Promotion Cancellation, Maintenance Management Orders (MMOs), APWU concerns regarding the Shared Community Toolbox initiative, MS-47 Handbook revisions (including the new e4776 pilot and Self-Laundering MMO), FMO Work Ticketing Program, Mail Processing Equipment Relocation Teams, and the In-Service National Questions & Answers.

Maintenance officers also discussed pending national level subcontracting cases, Article 19 notifications, and a Resolution submitted by the Albuquerque Local (380) regarding the payment of grievances to separated or retired employees.

The general session concluded with a presentation by Northeast Regional Maintenance NBA Dave Sarnacki, on Article 38 updates to the Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM) and new Maintenance Division Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in the 2021 National Agreement.

## Director Balogun's Concluding Remarks

"Thank you for attending, it was a great conference with over 400 people in attendance from the Maintenance Division," said Balogun. "We were glad to have an almost 30 percent [increase in] new attendees. It was a very successful deliberation, and after the conference we had regional breakouts for all the five regions. So, I am very proud and energized that the future of the Maintenance Division looks so bright." ■

# All Craft Conference Report



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Garrett Langley

**H**undreds of MVS officers and delegates from around the country attended the All-Craft Conference, Oct. 2 – 4 in Las Vegas. We had excellent training, and we hope that attendees will utilize it to create winning grievances.

The MVS Division officers reported on several resolved issues.

## Postal Vehicle Operator (PVO) Pilot Alternative Dispute Resolution Process (ADRP) MOU

We previously reported on the ADRP. We successfully obtained an agreement to use the ADRP for PVO pilot programs. It is extremely important that local union officials know and understand this process if their local has one of these pilots in the facility. Items that may be referred to the ADRP for the pilot are: complement/staffing, seniority list, creation/posting of bid duty assignments, and work rules identified in the memorandum that established the pilot program, when unresolved at the local level. Other items may be added by mutual agreement to the ADRP at the headquarters level.

All other issues will continue through the normal Article 15 grievance/arbitration process. Disputes may be initiated at the Step 2 level within 14 days of the date on which the employee or the union may reasonably have been expected to learn of its cause. The dispute, if unresolved at Step 2, will receive a special GATS number and then be assigned to Area Level Labor Relations to be discussed with the appropriate National Business Agent. If the dispute is still not resolved, the parties will exchange all appropriate documents and position papers at the area level and moved to the national level. This will hopefully allow for quick resolution of concerns and missteps by the Postal Service related to the implementation of the pilot program.

## Level 8 Pay Anomaly

Shortly after the 2021-2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was signed on Feb. 28, 2022, the

APWU began working on pay anomalies created by the changes made to the grade 8 pay schedule. Anomalies are nothing new and are expected when pay schedule advancements are made. Elimination of the AA through FF steps were not necessarily the root of the problem, as much as retaining time in step credit was. Allowing employees to carry their current next step in grade wait time forward allowed junior employees to advance beyond senior employees.

To remedy the situation, the payment process itself remains the same as in previous pay anomaly circumstances in terms of using a lump sum settlement payout. However, unlike some previous occurrences where affected employees were automatically identified within the payroll system, employees in this case need to be identified manually and agreed upon by the parties.

Senior employees who were jumped over need to have their step, and/or next step in grade time adjusted to the level of the junior employee who advanced beyond them.

Once all impacted employees have been identified, advanced to the proper step, and have the proper next step wait time adjustment, a one-time lump sum payment will be made to affected workers.

The APWU and USPS are jointly going through the employees who were in grade 8 as of June 17, 2022, the day prior to the implementation of change. Unfortunately, when two different systems are used (finance and operations), they often provide different results in which comparisons and edits must be made. Many other changes to employees' steps and grades can also complicate these corrections.

Those corrections are being reviewed.

We enjoyed seeing all the attendees and are glad that we could see everyone in person. ■



# Support Services All-Craft Training



Director Arrion Brown

The Support Services Division provided three days of informative and productive training at the APWU 2023 All-Craft Conference. We taught workshops on building the labor movement through the Support Services Division, grievance writing and preparation, properly completing *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA) paperwork, and back pay training. They were well received, and members left the conference more informed with the intent to share the information with their respective locals.

The “Building the Labor Movement through Support Services” class had five main objectives: to teach the history of the Support Services Division, to define a union, provide a history of the labor movement, understand how we can build the labor movement through the Support Services Division, and the importance of organizing, which was a discussion led by APWU Organization Director Anna Smith.

The history of the labor movement portion taught how unions were first organized by workers who fought for better wages and working conditions more than a century ago, a fight that unions continue today. We looked at the successes of the labor movement, such as the *National Labor Relations Act* of 1935, which legally recognized unions legally in many industries for the first time. We also discussed the violent repression working people endured while struggling to better their lives. That included the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, where coalminers on strike against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company were engaged in armed conflict against the Colorado National Guard who were sent by the Governor to break the strike.

The struggles working class people have experienced throughout history led the group to discussions about economics. The discussion centered on the reality that our economic system has not, and does not, work for masses of working people. Unions remain key institutions for working people to fight back against a system that was not designed for us.

The grievance writing and preparation class taught how to fully develop grievances at the earliest possible point. Grievances should be thoroughly investigated

and written out in detail at least by the time they are submitted at Step 2. Key items to include in a fully developed grievance are: the contractual violation(s), date of the incident, names of those involved in the violation, witness statements, associated JCIM language, and a detailed remedy. The importance of timeliness was also stressed when filing grievances and moving them through the system. They should always be filed and moved to the next steps whether information has been provided or meetings with management have occurred, unless an extension is agreed to with management. Grievances help defend our contract and membership; fully developed grievances are foundational to that defense.

**THE DIVERSITY OF TOPICS ALLOWED  
THE ATTENDEES TO LEAVE THE  
CONFERENCE MORE INFORMED AND  
BETTER EQUIPPED TO REPRESENT  
THE MEMBERSHIP.**

Training for the FMLA explained when employees are eligible for FMLA and how to submit documentation properly. Documentation should be completed by your healthcare provider and all questions on the documents should be answered. A failure to complete FMLA paperwork properly will delay processing until the information is completed.

The Back Pay training for grievance settlements class addressed how to complete PS form 8038. The PS 8038 is the form submitted to management and used by management to complete PS form 8039. It is critical for bargaining unit employees to review PS form 8039 for accuracy prior to management submitting the forms for processing. Discrepancies between the 8038 and 8039 forms delay processing and payment and must be corrected.

The diversity of topics allowed the attendees to leave the conference more informed and better equipped to represent the membership. ■

## SOUTHERN REGIONAL COORDINATOR

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



Yared Wonde, Southern Regional Coordinator

# The USPS 10-Year Plan: Impact on APWU Members and Collaborative Solutions

**T**he United States Postal Service is currently in the midst of a significant transformation: a 10-year plan aimed at modernizing its processing and delivery network. Central to this plan are the creation of Regional Processing and Distribution Centers (RPDCs) and the repurposing of some facilities. As a union official for the APWU, it's crucial to examine how these changes will affect our members and emphasize our commitment to minimizing any adverse effects.

The Postal Service's 10-year plan involves the establishment of 60 RPDCs across the country. These centers are strategically positioned to streamline mail processing and enhance the efficiency of mail delivery. For example, the Atlanta RPDC region now boasts a new facility in Palmetto, located in southwest metro Atlanta. Additionally, this region has seen the repurposing of four Local Processing Centers (LPCs) from previous Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs).

Undoubtedly, these sweeping changes have a profound impact on the employees represented by the APWU. It is essential to recognize the concerns and challenges that may arise for our members during this transition. The transformation of facilities and workflows can bring about shifts in job roles, work locations, and schedules. Workers may face uncertainty about our future roles within the Postal Service.

However, it's important for APWU members to know that our union is committed to safeguarding your interests throughout this transformation. We are dedicated to upholding the provisions outlined in the collective bargaining agreement (CBA), specifically Article 12, which outlines the process for impacted employees. The union will make sure that this process is followed correctly to protect the rights and well-being of our members.

### Here are some key aspects of our approach:

**1. Communication:** The APWU will ensure transparent and timely communication with our members, keeping them informed about changes, their rights, and any new opportunities that may arise.

**2. Enforcement of CBA:** We will enforce the CBA rigorously. If there is a violation, we will take the necessary steps to ensure that our members' rights are protected.

**3. Grievance Initiation:** If the local union needs guidance or assistance, we encourage them to initiate a grievance in a timely manner. We will be there to provide support and reach out to the appropriate craft National Business Agents when necessary.

**4. Advocacy:** The APWU will actively advocate for the fair treatment of our members, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed.

UNDOUBTEDLY, THESE SWEEPING CHANGES HAVE A PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE EMPLOYEES REPRESENTED BY THE APWU. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECOGNIZE THE CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES THAT MAY ARISE FOR OUR MEMBERS DURING THIS TRANSITION. THE TRANSFORMATION OF FACILITIES AND WORKFLOWS CAN BRING ABOUT SHIFTS IN JOB ROLES, WORK LOCATIONS, AND SCHEDULES. WORKERS MAY FACE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT OUR FUTURE ROLES WITHIN THE POSTAL SERVICE.

In conclusion, the Postal Service's 10-year plan, with its focus on RPDCs and facility repurposing, represents a significant transformation that will impact APWU members. However, our commitment to our members remains unwavering. We will navigate these changes collaboratively, adhering to Article 12 of the CBA and striving to minimize any adverse effects on our bargaining unit employees. Together, we will ensure that the Postal Service transformation benefits both the organization and its dedicated workforce. ■





Judy Beard, Director

# Building Grassroots Strength: Fourth Biennial Legislative Conference Convenes

The APWU Legislative and Political Department held its Legislative Conference on Oct. 1 in Las Vegas, NV. Keeping in line with the theme of the conference, Building Grassroots Strength, conference attendees participated in workshops designed to provide our members with the knowledge and resources to enact positive change at the local, state, and federal level. Workshops were held on the following topics: legislative advocacy and lobbying; understanding Postal Service operations, the Postal Regulatory Commission and Board of Governors; the building blocks of COPA; reshaping democracy at the state and local level; the history of the labor movement; and strategic communication for action.

The conversations continued through lunch, where attendees had the opportunity to engage with other members and leaders in their specific regions to discuss regional politics, the importance of the union vote, and how the APWU can make a difference during elections up and down the ballot.

The conference culminated in a general session that centered on working-class politics and the need to focus on issue-based education over partisan discourse. A panel of representatives from a number of community and national organizations addressed the general session and highlighted the fights and issues they are engaged in, and how to work as a union and community to advance our causes.

We thank all of those who attended our conference and contributed to a meaningful and productive dialogue to build the APWU's grassroots strength. Those in attendance were asked to take what they learned back to their local and state unions, and continue member, family, and community outreach in preparation for the 2024 elections.

## Young Workers' Conference Parties with a Purpose

The Legislative and Political Department was thrilled to participate in the inaugural Young Workers' Conference on Sept. 30. APWU young members are both the present and the future of the union movement, and just by being in attendance demonstrated their commitment to building a stronger APWU. After learning about the recent razor-thin margins that decided elections and control of Congress, young members participated in a social gathering themed "Party with a Purpose." During this party, they texted more than 42,000 fellow members using the peer-to-peer messaging platform Hustle to urge postal workers to register to vote and to check their registration if already registered. ■



Paul Catha, Culinary Workers Political Director, speaks at the Legislative Panel.

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WERE ASKED TO TAKE WHAT THEY LEARNED BACK TO THEIR LOCAL AND STATE UNIONS, AND CONTINUE MEMBER, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2024 ELECTIONS.

We're Asking Every Member to Check Their Voter Registration Status. Scan the QR Code to check yours!





Anna Smith, Director

# The More Involved We Are, the More We Achieve

**A**PWU membership is so much more than just signing an application to join. It's about all of us having a collective voice. Union membership is about empowering ourselves to stand up for our rights, improving our working conditions, and achieving a better future. Being union means you can engage in collective decision-making, participate in democratic processes, and have a say on issues that affect your work life.

It won't be long before we start negotiations with our employer where once again, we will be fighting to secure fair wages, benefits, and working conditions. Collectively, we must stand together to ensure that our rights are respected. This is where being a member has to be more than just signing up and paying dues.

As with any organization, there will be those who get heavily involved while others want little or no involvement. While we don't know everyone's personal circumstances, we do know that the level of involvement by our members will dictate the level of our success. This stands true at every level of our union, from the most remote post office to the big city plants. The more involved and educated each member is, the more we will be able to achieve.

A misconception that some members have is that paying dues is all that is needed, that it's like paying auto or health insurance. Why is this a misconception? With auto, life, pet, and health insurance, you pay a monthly fee, so that when something happens, when you need help, your carrier is there. With union dues, despite how some might like to paint it, there is no such thing as never "using the union." Just about every minute of the day, you actually "use" the benefits of being union. The sky is the limit for the list of examples of how each of us "uses the union."

Our contractual wages alone help pay for the roof over our heads, the food we eat, transportation, the activities large and small that we enjoy, and the health care we use, to name a few. It's not all about the monetary value of our wages. Consider breaks and lunch periods, safety on the job, the right to talk at work, the ability to bid on jobs, and the right to protection against arbitrary discipline. Each

of us uses the rights and benefits of being union every day, and to think otherwise would be just plain silly.

So, what do we need from each and every capable member? Involvement. Every time we reach out to our non-members, we have new co-workers who make the decision to stand with us. This holds true with recent mailings and texts after many of us received a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). For those who have recently joined, get actively involved in the labor movement.

You can get involved by actively recruiting your non-member co-workers to stand with us. Just imagine our worker power if every APWU member asked at least one non-member to stand with us. They may not all join, but every new member standing with us is one less standing against us.

As 2023 comes to a close, let's work together to make organizing in 2024 a top priority! Happy holidays to you and yours! ■



**Take a photo or screenshot of the QR code. Ask your nonmember coworkers to join the union today by scanning the image on your phone.**

## LOCAL LEADERS - REMINDER

During our peak season, do not delay sending in Membership Applications (Form 1187s). In order for membership to be automatically reinstated when a PSE is rehired within 180-days after the conclusion of their current term of employment, the original application must have been submitted and entered.





Joyce B. Robinson, Director

# Assistance for Family Caregivers of Veterans

**T**he U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) offers support for caregivers of eligible veterans. The changes in PCAFC Improvements and Amendments, under the VA Mission Act of 2018, became effective in October 2020.

### Veteran Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, the veteran must have a serious injury, which is a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or more, and meet the eligibility requirements to participate in the program. Eligibility requirements include: veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury or serious illness in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or after Sept. 11, 2001, or on or before May 7, 1975, and/or veterans in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six continuous months based on either an inability to perform an activity of daily living, or a need for supervision, protection, or instruction.

THE APWU THANKS ALL OUR VETERANS WHO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE FOR OUR SAFETY! FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BY CONTACTING A CAREGIVER SUPPORT COORDINATOR AT: (855) 260-3274 (MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8:00 A.M. TO 10:00 P.M. EST OR SATURDAY 8:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. EST) OR BY VISITING [WWW.CAREGIVER.VA.GOV](http://WWW.CAREGIVER.VA.GOV).

### Family Caregiver Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible as a Family Caregiver you must be: 18 years of age or older; either the eligible veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, step family member, an extended family member, or someone who lives with the eligible veteran full-time, or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver; assessed by the VA as being able to complete caregiver education and training and demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and additional care requirements. In addition,

there must be no determination by VA of abuse or neglect of the eligible veteran by the caregiver.

### Payments for the Caregiver

Eligible Primary Family Caregivers may qualify to receive a monthly payment if the veteran meets the eligibility requirements determined by the VA based on the following:

- Unable to perform Activity of Daily Living – An eligible veteran must either require personal care services when they perform Activity of Daily Living (ADL) or need supervision, protection, or instruction on a continuous basis. ADL includes:
- Bathing, grooming, and/or dressing or undressing themselves;
- Adjusting any special prosthetic or orthopedic appliance, that by reason of the disability cannot be done without assistance (this does not include the adjustment of belts, lacing of shoes, etc.);
- Attending to bathroom needs;
- Feeding themselves due to loss of coordination of upper extremities, and/or;
- Mobility problems (walking, going up stairs, transferring from bed to chair, etc.);
- A need for supervision, protection, or instruction – The veteran or service member has a functional impairment that directly impacts their ability to maintain their personal safety daily.

The APWU thanks all our veterans who put their lives on the line for our safety! Find additional information by contacting a Caregiver Support Coordinator at: (855) 260-3274 (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST or Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST) or by visiting [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov).

**As this is the department's last article of 2023, I extend my best wishes to you and your loved ones for a happy holiday season and a New Year filled with peace, good health, and happiness. Thanks for your membership and your support! ■**

*The text in this article is from the US Department of Veterans Affairs.*



## 10 Roads Express Workers Say “APWU YES!” Again, and Again

**W**orkers from 10 Roads Express in Capitol Heights, MD joined over 1,000 APWU-represented Ten Roads workers when they voted 14-4 to join the APWU in the latest of a string of successful union organizing campaigns.

The victory on Oct. 10 was the second win in Maryland, following the drivers’ victory in Brandywine in July. A total of six 10 Roads Express units have voted “APWU YES” since 2022.

Drivers at the capital-area facility reached out to APWU organizers because of their experiences with poor management, favoritism, and disrespect on the job. Management responded to their drivers’ desire to form a union by sending in union-busting consultants.

Kendrick Tucker-Kittrell, a 10 Roads Express Driver at the Capitol Heights location, expressed his hope that the victory will bring improvements to the workroom floor. “I hope that we can make it a safe working environment where we can actually thrive and where managers care about the drivers and care about the people who work for the company. I’m just happy that the people [have] a voice inside the big company.”

Reacting to the news, Support Services Director Arrion Brown said: “The Capitol Heights 10 Roads Express drivers have joined many other drivers from the company

who have chosen a strong union voice against the company’s authority. We welcome them and are proud they chose to join the APWU.”

The October victory in Maryland follows an August win for workers in Richmond, VA, where 10 Roads Express drivers voted unanimously, 17 to 0, to join the APWU.

Shortly after the result in Richmond was announced, driver and organizer Roland Weeden reflected on the win, saying, “It means we have a say, and we are not people [that] they can fire at will. We do our jobs, get the mail across the country, and it’s good to have that union support. Keep pushing forward and it will come through.”

“I congratulate the 10 Roads Express drivers in Richmond and Capitol Heights on these wins, and welcome these new members into our union,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “I’d like to thank lead organizer Rich Shelley, as well as the organizing team, Lori Cash, Chuck McFarland, and Ray Scanlon for their efforts in supporting this campaign. These successful campaigns are yet another example of the worker power that 10 Roads Express drivers have exhibited in their recent organizing campaigns. The message remains the same, if you want better wages and benefits, dignity and respect, and protection against unfair management decisions, you need a union.” ■

## 2024 RETIREE COLA ANNOUNCEMENT

The 2024 cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for federal retirees and other beneficiaries will be added to annuity payments effective January 2024.

- The Social Security Administration announced that the 2024 COLA will be 3.2 percent.
- Federal retirees in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) will receive a 2024 COLA of 3.2 percent on their annuity, while those in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) receive 2.2 percent. Under current law, if the CSRS COLA is above 3%, the FERS COLA is 1% less than the CSRS COLA.
- The 2024 CSRS and FERS retiree COLAs are based on the third quarter (July, August, September) average CPI-W index (1982-84=100) in 2023 over the 2022 third quarter average.





Daleo Freeman, Director

## The Human Relations Department's Year in Review

**I**t has been an exciting and noteworthy year. We are proud to report that the Human Relations Department has been on the move to better assist locals and states with issues under the jurisdiction of the department. Here is just some of the work that we have accomplished over the past 12 months.

### Human Relations Educational Assembly

For the first time on my watch, we held an Assembly that proved to be a significant educational and empowering family gathering. We were overjoyed by the engagement of members from across the country who were able to attend the training.

We encouraged members to take the information given on Workers' Compensation Programs, Civil Rights, Civic Participation, the Employee Assistance Program, the Postal Employees Relief Fund, Veterans Resources, Equal Employment Opportunity and more back to their respective areas and educate members on these issues. It was an honor and extreme pleasure to train and assist in training our fellow family members.

### Office of Workers Compensation Programs (OWCP)

First, under the area of OWCP, we have successfully trained over 1,000 members, activists, stewards, and officers.

We conducted trainings in the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Texas, Hawaii, Maryland, Iowa, Alabama, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Utah, New Mexico, Florida, Illinois, Georgia, and many other cities and states.

The word is out on the outstanding training that we provide, and we are looking forward to continuing the work that is both wanted and needed.

As a department, we provided much-needed assistance to members who needed representation for specific OWCP cases. We have successfully won favorable decisions for a number of members. So, again, the department is moving forward with excellent representation for our members.

The Employee Assistance Program is much needed and a contractual right under the collective bargaining agreement. We have been meeting actively to assure the importance of having assistance available to members as they need it.

### Veterans' Rights and Benefits

We are encouraged to report that the department has set forth a program to activate our members that have served this country as well as those that represent veterans. We have started building a coalition across the country to mobilize around issues that affect our service members, whether they are active or not. I am looking forward to continuing the work.

At the All-Craft Conference, we were proud to hold a meeting for APWU veterans. The well-attended meeting discussed the issues that veterans face within the Postal Service and how we can protect the earned rights and benefits of the union's veteran members.

### Civil Rights and Engagement

It is a priority of the department to remain active around our civil rights, which are being threatened or attacked. We stand together with the civil rights issues of the day. We participate in the movement daily, and proudly organized a group of APWU members who attended the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington.

So, we continue to strive for equality for all and to protect the rights and benefits of all who have served, as well as mobilize and continue to secure assistance for all who are in need. As we become more knowledgeable and empowered, we provide education to give our members assistance and help everyone understand we have a right to compensation when we get injured on the job.

I want to thank all of those who have participated and provided this information in all these areas. I appreciate you all, please have a safe and productive new year, and stay tuned to what we have in store for next year. Thank you for encouraging continued progress.

Remember, the struggle won't continue without work.

*In Solidarity!* ■

## APWU Retirees Still Fighting for Justice



Nancy Olumekor, Director

*Thank You, Veterans!*

**T**hank you to all veterans and active military personnel for their service, and for continuing to support me in the true spirit of unionism. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve the membership of the APWU Retirees Department, I cannot do this work without your support!

### 2024 COLA Increase for Retirees

In January, federal retirees and other beneficiaries will see another cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) added to their Social Security benefits. The 2024 COLA will be 3.2 percent, the Social Security Administration announced.

Federal retirees in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) receive the full 2024 COLA of 3.2 percent, while those in the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) receive 2.2 percent. When the CSRS COLA increases more than 3 percent, FERS retirees receive 1 percent less than the full 2024 COLA.

### Reminder!!! Retirement Planning Seminar on ZOOM

The Retirees Department will continue to hold retirement planning seminars on Zoom at least three times each year. The information will be available on the APWU Event page. On Nov. 18, 2023, we will host a Retirement Planning seminar on ZOOM which will be followed by Disability Retirement on ZOOM Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023.

### 2023 Retirees Educational Conference

There were over 200 retiree members in attendance for the 2023 Retirees Educational Conference from Oct. 2 – 4, 2023. Retirees attended workshops and a general session, with presentations from national officers, and discussions and debates on various issues by the retiree members.

The general session presentation by Judy Beard, APWU Political and Legislative Director, and Rich Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, focused on our legislative priorities, since retirees will play an important role in the 2024 elections. We were also encouraged to keep the pressure on our congressional representatives to pass legislation that will protect retiree benefits and benefits for working people everywhere. Our

entire session called congressional representatives to ask for their vote and support for the *Social Security Fairness Act*, H.R. 82.

President Dimondstein encouraged us to establish relationships with young workers because the APWU has over 35,000 of them, many with little or no knowledge of the labor movement and history. Mentoring is a great opportunity for retirees to share union experiences and achievements. President Dimondstein and Secretary-Treasurer Powell presented the charter to the Magic City Retiree Chapter#2 from Birmingham AL Area Local.

**MENTORING IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY  
FOR RETIREES TO SHARE UNION  
EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS.**

During the second day of the general session, we honored deceased retiree activists and retiree members. Pittsburgh PA Retiree Chapter president Charlotte Richards was presented with memorial keepsakes in honor of her deceased husband, former local president Pittsburgh, PA Area Local John Richards. We recognized deceased retirees Al Fouche, former Detroit District Retiree Chapter president; Phyllis “PK” Woods, president of the John R Smith (Dayton, Ohio) Retiree Chapter; Gary Kloefer, Greater Cincinnati Retiree Chapter; and James Malone who served 50 years as local president of the South Suburban Area Local and 50 years in the USPS prior to retirement.

We discussed the importance of preparing a record of our wishes for our family members when we are no longer able to speak for ourselves. The “Workers & Retirees Record Organizer Vital Papers” booklet is available to all members at the APWU Store on the website.

In closing, I wish each of you Happy holidays, and good health and happiness in the New Year.

*In Solidarity.* ■





Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

## Open Season is Here and it's Time to Learn About the APWU Health Plan!

**D**uring Open Season (Nov. 13 - Dec. 11), your local Health Plan Representatives (HPRs) will be talking to you about the benefits of joining or remaining with the APWU Health Plan. HPRs play a vital role in the success of the Health Plan, and they are committed to helping their locals.

### Why should you join the APWU Health Plan?

The Health Plan employs 160 union workers that are members of OPEIU and SEIU. The APWU Health Plan is a competitive and comprehensive health insurance plan that is available to all postal workers, federal employees, and retirees. Our coverage includes medical services, hospitals, urgent care, doctors, medical tests, virtual visits, mental health care, and prescription drug coverage.

Our health plans offer a variety of benefits, including:

- Low premiums.
- 100 percent coverage for routine in-network preventative care.
- A wide network of providers.

### How can HPRs help you?

HPRs can help you understand the benefits of our two health plans and help you choose the right plan for your needs. They can also answer any questions you have about your coverage and put you in touch with plan resources like Customer Service.

### Open Season Resources

Visit [www.apwuhp.com](http://www.apwuhp.com) and click on the Open Season tab to get information about our plans. The APWU Health Plan has a dedicated phone line (1-800-PIC-APWU) that will be available from Nov. 6 through Dec. 11. Call this number to get answers about any of our APWU Health Plans.

### Thank you to all HPRs!

On behalf of the entire APWU Health Plan, I would like to give a special thank you to all of the HPRs who work tirelessly to help their fellow members. Your dedication and commitment are appreciated. ■

## The 2023 Open Season for Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

The *Postal Service Reform Act (PSRA)* will not impact the upcoming Open Season, which will run from Nov. 13, 2023 through Dec. 11, 2023.

The PSRA was signed into law in April 2022. The law requires the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in conjunction with the Postal Service, to implement the new Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program.

PSHB will be a separate program within the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. It will be administered by OPM. Coverage under the PSHB Program will begin effective Jan. 1, 2025.

If you are a postal employee or retiree, you will be required to select a health insurance plan in the PSHB Program during the 2024 Open Season period, which will run from Nov. 11, 2024, to Dec. 9, 2024.

If you do not actively select a PSHB plan, you will be automatically enrolled in a comparable PSHB plan. PSHB plan options and premium information will be available in Fall 2024. Information on how and where to enroll will be available as we approach the 2024 Open Season.

# Billionaires in Space - What You Need to Know

In the past few years, there has been global fascination with a handful of obscenely rich men and their headline-grabbing pursuits. A “billionaire space race” has broken out between Elon Musk, Richard Branson, and Jeff Bezos, who are collectively worth more than \$500 billion. While the exploits of these three billionaires can be easily dismissed as ego trips of the ultrarich, they actually raise serious questions about the privatization of public goods and even the place of our democratic institutions.

Musk, most known for leading Tesla and the social media platform X (previously Twitter), aims to establish colonies on Mars through his company SpaceX. Richard Branson, the head of Virgin Group, is working on a space program with an eye on future space tourism. Bezos, the founder and former CEO of Amazon, heads Blue Origin, an aerospace company with aspirations to create an industrial base in space.

Each of their companies began as civilian enterprises, funded with seed money from the billionaires’ other incredibly lucrative companies. As APWU President Mark Dimondstein pointed out in 2021, they built their wealth on the backs of workers. Each of them notoriously engaged in labor abuses and union busting. In addition to their ill-gotten wealth, each of the three has also gobbled up more and more public funding, including billions from defense agencies, NASA, and others. SpaceX alone has received over \$15 billion in government contracts since 2003, while Bezos’s Blue Origin secured a NASA contract exceeding \$3 billion.

In the past, American research and development through NASA was once a point of civic pride; to a great extent, today’s advancements are no longer a collective endeavor, but instead they rest in the hands of a few of the world’s richest men. So, instead of governments putting our hard-earned tax dollars towards programs approved by our elected representatives, they’re handing over billions of dollars to the wealthiest people on Earth.

Musk’s ventures reach far beyond just finance. His Starlink internet satellites have been used in the war in Ukraine, and he recently declined to allow their use for a specific military operation. Regardless of the merits of this decision, it is alarming that the power of a single

billionaire is great enough to bypass governments, and to become a decisive factor in matters of war and peace.

Another worry stems from Musk’s apparent disregard for democracy. When Bolivia’s government was overthrown in 2019, Musk faced criticism for supporting the outcome, as it could grant his companies easier access to the country’s abundant lithium deposits. His response, a casual tweet stating, “We will coup whoever we want,” raises significant concerns.

While the achievements of today’s private aerospace companies may seem impressive, supporters of a public Postal Service and democratic rights should view the “Billionaire Space Race” for what it is: a dangerous abdication of responsibility by governments that only further enriches and empowers some of world’s wealthiest and most powerful people. Instead of lauding Musk, Bezos, and Branson as heroes, postal workers and our allies should recognize them for the privatizers they are and mobilize to defend our public goods and our democratic rights. ■



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





# Bank Branch Closures Highlight the Need for Postal Banking

A sharp drop in the number of bank branches across the country is causing alarm among community advocates.

## Most Banks Have Been Closing Branches Since 2007

In the wake of the Great Financial Crisis of 2007-09, millions of Americans saw their local bank branch close. Alarming, that trend has only continued since. In 2023, so far, bank branch closures are only accelerating. Through September of this year, banks had closed more than 3,000 branches across the United States, while opening just 1,000 branches.

JP Morgan Chase led the country in branch closures this year, shuttering 144 branches despite gross profits of \$128.7 B in 2022.

During the Financial Crisis, there were a spate of banking industry mergers and acquisitions, which explains many of the branch closures. In today's more stable financial world, they are still making the choice to close branches while they continue to push consumers toward mobile and online services.

## The Rush to Online Banking Leaves Low, Middle-income Families Excluded

The recent trend of favoring digital services accelerated during the restrictions of the pandemic. But as the world returns to pre-covid levels of public activity, the continuing bank branch closures are causing serious problems for underserved communities.

This March, Sen. Sherrod Brown, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, wrote to the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), asking the OCC to meet with low-and medium-income households to discuss branch closures in their community.

A report last year from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) highlighted Sen. Brown's concerns. The NCRC report found that one-third of all bank branch closures from 2007-2022 occurred in lower-income or majority-minority communities. The report also noted that local bank branches are key to community investment, by turning local deposits into financing for local development like homes, schools, and businesses. Without a local bank branch, there is a threat that local communities do not have enough access to community development financing.

The first wave of bank closures following the Great Recession hit rural communities particularly hard. NCRC found that, between 2008 and 2016, branch closures caused more than 80 rural banking deserts – communities with no local banks or financial services.

Clinton-era banking deregulation allowed banks to set up branches across state lines. Since then, the number of small community banks has dwindled. The country's largest financial institutions increasingly dominate the country's banking system. Following the Great Recession, the increasingly consolidated industry turned away from efforts to expand their branch network focusing instead on high-value services and, most recently, on digital services.

## Postal Banking Would Help Working Class and Minority Communities

The impact of a bank branch closure is tremendous on a community. Lending to small businesses goes down. People are more likely to face high ATM fees. Closures also force people to turn to riskier and pricier alternative financial services like pawn shops and payday lenders. Whether in rural or urban areas, branch closures are more likely to hurt working class and minority communities.

Supporters of postal banking point to this ongoing trend of closing bank branches as another argument for why it's time for postal banking. There are more than 30,000 post offices, located in most communities across the country; that's why the postal network is well placed to serve as a valuable tool for financial inclusion.

We still need to fight for better regulation of the financial industry to stop bank closures from hurting our communities. But we should also keep up the fight for every community in America to be able to bank right there at their neighborhood post office. ■

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



## FROM the FIELD

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

“Do you know any nonmembers? Ask them to help us out and show solidarity and strength during these difficult times of change at the USPS. Remember, the benefits we all enjoy are derived from the dues each of us pay; it takes all of us to collectively bargain [for] wages, health care, annual leave, sick leave, hours guarantee, and the right to address workplace violations through the grievance procedure. We all benefit from each other, show your support for your union and help organize nonmembers. Explain the benefits that each and every member has helped achieve over the years through the hard-fought battles of our predecessors. We can all become activists for positive change in our union.”

– Dan Hensler  
Tri-County Area Local (Cincinnati, OH) President  
*Spokesman*

“The younger people of this generation have to step up and get involved. The union needs younger legs and younger minds to carry the union through the 21st century. Young people understand the need and importance of having a union. You are standing on the shoulders of yesterday’s pioneers. This union needs you. Every postal employee in [a] craft needs to be a member. There is strength and power in numbers. Remember, nothing in life is free. It takes resources; to speak more plainly, money. Don’t quit on this organization, APWU, because it sure as hell hasn’t quit on you.”

– Stanley Odom  
Jacksonville (FL) BMC/NDC  
Local Member, *The Local View*

“Some of the challenges we are going to face won’t be won in the grievance procedure. These challenges will have to be accomplished by contacting your state and federal representatives. We also must start voting for politicians who have our best interest at heart. Our job is our livelihood and should be at the top of the list when deciding on a candidate to vote for, whether it’s a state or federal official. Although we face these challenges, with your participation, we are willing and ready to fight. We will not sit idly by and watch the destruction of the Postal Service and the continued delaying of the mail. We are hoping each and every one of you join the good fight. Divided we fall, together we stand strong.”

– Glenn Griggs  
Milwaukee (WI) Area Local President  
*The Hi-Lites*

# Looking Back on Labor History

## Flint Autoworkers Change the Face of Labor and Women Win in the APWU



**Dec. 30, 1936** – Factory workers at the General Motors (GM) plant in Flint, MI began a sit-down strike in one of the first major labor disputes in the U.S. auto industry.

In 1935, during the Great Depression, the average autoworker worked in difficult and often unsafe conditions while earning only half of what was needed for a family of four.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) was formed in May 1935, but its organizing efforts were resisted by GM, who controlled the city's politicians, police force, and utilized groups like KKK-offshoot, the Black Legion, to intimidate union activists. Within a year of formation, the UAW had just 150 members.

Workers began a wave of actions in July 1936, after hundreds died in plants across Michigan, because management refused to halt production during a heat wave.

On Nov. 12, welders at the Fisher Body One plant in Flint, MI were fired for participating in a sit-down strike, and then re-hired the next day following mass protests. This action emboldened autoworkers and their membership grew to 1,500.

GM then made plans to move operations to a less unionized area. Workers caught wind and prepared to halt production at two plants by early 1937 to force the company to switch to hourly pay and recognize the union.

In the early morning of Dec. 30, workers witnessed factory materials being loaded onto

railcars. They held an emergency meeting and voted to immediately seize the factory to prevent the equipment and their jobs from being moved, building barricades.

Police tried to storm the plant on Jan. 11, but failed, and withdrew rather than fighting with 400 women from the union's Emergency Women's Brigade. The following day, newly elected governor, Frank Murray, deployed the National Guard to protect strikers from the police and company thugs. Autoworkers by then were on strike in Michigan, Ohio, New York, California, and beyond. More than 125,000 strikers had closed 50 GM plants.

The workers in Flint held the plant for 44 days until Feb. 11, 1937, when GM finally agreed to recognize the UAW as the exclusive bargaining representative for union members nationwide. Within the next year, UAW membership grew from 30,000 to 500,000, and wages by as much as 300 percent. ■



Secretary-Treasurer  
Elizabeth "Liz" Powell



Research and Education Director  
Joyce Robinson

**Nov. 18, 1989** – The 1989 Election of National Officers saw an historic win for women leaders in the APWU.

Elizabeth "Liz" Powell's election as Northeast Regional Coordinator, made her the first woman to serve on the National Executive Board. Additionally, Joyce Robinson was elected Director of Research and Education, becoming the first woman to serve as a resident officer.

Powell began her postal career as a clerk in Hempstead, NY, and served as secretary-treasurer and president of her local. In 1983, she was elected as a Clerk Division NBA. In 2009, Powell

was appointed Secretary-Treasurer, and elected to the position in 2010, which she still holds to this day, alongside Robinson who continues to serve as Director of Research and Education. ■



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**Enroll during Open Season, November 13 – December 11, 2023**

### 2024 High Option premium rates

Low Network Copays: Virtual Visits \$10, Office and Specialist \$25 and Urgent Care \$30

#### Self Only enrollment code 471

Biweekly	Monthly
\$124.52	\$269.79

#### Self Plus One enrollment code 473

Biweekly	Monthly
\$244.95	\$530.73

#### Self & Family enrollment code 472

Biweekly	Monthly
\$304.05	\$658.77

### 2024 Consumer Driven Option premium rates

Your own Personal Care Account helps pay for medical expenses

#### Self Only enrollment code 474

Biweekly	Monthly
\$76.78	\$166.36

#### Self Plus One enrollment code 476

Biweekly	Monthly
\$166.88	\$361.58

#### Self & Family enrollment code 475

Biweekly	Monthly
\$182.05	\$394.45

### APWU special rates biweekly

Special rates apply to APWU Career Bargaining Unit Employees

#### Self Only enrollment code 474

APWU career less than 1 year in FEHB	PSE	APWU career more than 1 year in FEHB
\$76.78	\$76.78	\$15.36

#### Self Plus One enrollment code 476

APWU career less than 1 year in FEHB	PSE	APWU career more than 1 year in FEHB
\$166.88	\$166.88	\$33.38

#### Self & Family enrollment code 475

APWU career less than 1 year in FEHB	PSE	APWU career more than 1 year in FEHB
\$182.05	\$182.05	\$36.41

### Two plans. One extensive network.

All members receive 100% coverage for some in-network services.

- ☒ Preventive care and screenings
- ☒ Maternity care and support
- ☒ Breast cancer screenings
- ☒ Tobacco cessation program
- ☒ Lab tests – covered blood work performed at a LabCorp or Quest Diagnostics (High Option only)
- ☒ Accidental injury outpatient services within 72 hours (High Option only)
- ☒ No primary care provider requirement
- ☒ Freedom to use network and out-of-network providers

In January, the Health Plan funds a PCA members can use for covered medical services. Members are covered 100% until the PCA is exhausted. The Plan funds the PCA with \$1,200 for Self Only and \$2,400 for Self Plus One and Self and Family.

This is a summary of benefits and features. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the Health Plan's Brochure (R171-004)