

THE AMERICAN Postal Worker

APWU

July/August 2024



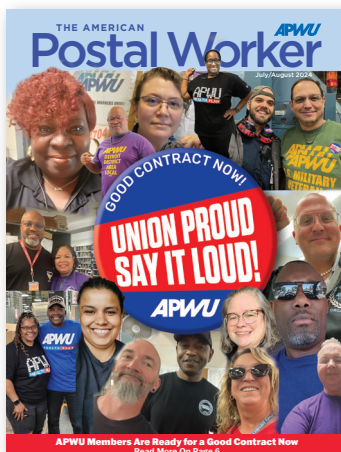
APWU Members Are Ready for a Good Contract Now
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ABOUT THE COVER:

“Union Proud, Say It Loud” APWU members rally across the country for “A Good Contract Now” on Opening Day of contract negotiations.

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Postal Workers Deserve a Great Contract!

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

Below is an excerpt from my address at the opening of national negotiations. The full text and a video can be found online at apwu.org.

The [APWU] welcomes this opportunity to represent approximately 200,000 postal workers in these important negotiations for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement between our union and the United States Postal Service.

For generations, postal workers were denied our right to negotiate over wages, benefits, and conditions of employment. That changed 54 years ago when postal workers won true collective bargaining rights resulting from the Great Postal Strike of 1970.

Now representatives of our union sit across the bargaining table from management as equals – not because we have important titles – but because we have a union sustained and supported by our members. In that sense, all our members are present at the bargaining table today.

We are negotiating against a backdrop of both high inflation, with its profound negative impact on workers and our families, along with rising worker militancy throughout the country. [Across industries], workers have been rising up demanding more of their fair share from employers, all while galloping income inequality enriches the billionaire class.

As postal workers pour our lifeblood into the institution and its mission, workers deserve good annual pay increases, stronger safety rights, an end to the unfair and divisive two-tier career pay scales, limits on subcontracting, a career workforce, and better work hour guarantees and rights for Part Time Flexibles. We advocate that all bargaining unit work in retail be returned to the Clerk Craft and that all the work bargained for in “Jobs Memos” of 2010 finally be returned to the workers as promised. In the light of the impact of profound and rapid technological changes on our jobs, it is high time for a shorter workweek with no loss of pay.

A toxic work environment permeates too many facilities – a long-standing problem in the culture of postal management that cries out for solutions. The union strives to

protect the hard-won gains and job security provisions secured over generations, and for dignity and respect on the job.

Declining service jeopardizes our bond with the people of the country, drives away needed revenue, and opens the gates for those who want to privatize the Postal Service.

[We] are passionate about the crucial mission of the public Postal Service “to provide postal services to bind the nation together,” to “provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas,” and to “render postal services to all communities”.

This mission remains in jeopardy, by those on Wall Street who would like to get their hands on the Postal Service’s \$78 billion plus in annual revenue, and by ideologues who oppose the very concept of the public good.

We are keenly aware that the Postal Service is still facing serious challenges, including the impact of technology and the internet on the communication habits of the people of the country, and the profound and permanent changes to the mail mix - letters are down while packages are up. Such changes create both hardships and hope.

Postal workers’ and the APWU’s vision are for a robust and vibrant Postal Service for generations to come.

We believe that the Postal Service should [provide] good, living-wage union jobs for workers from all walks of life, with equal pay for equal work for women and minorities, solid job opportunities for veterans, and be an incubator of great public service to every community, including new and expanded services for the people of the country.

The key to the Postal Service’s successful and bright future remains the hard work and dedication of hundreds of thousands of postal workers.

These negotiations are an opportunity for management to reward our dedication and hard work.

The APWU is ready to get to work! ■

APWU Negotiating Team Delivers Opening Day Statements



On June 25, contract negotiations began for our next main collective bargaining agreement with the Postal Service. The current contract expires on Sept. 20. Both the union and postal management exchanged opening statements, outlining their respective goals for the next agreement with each side expressing their desire to reach a negotiated agreement. Thousands of APWU members and supporters across the country tuned into the virtual livestream and answered the call to “gear up” with union gear on the workroom floor.

In his remarks, Industrial Relations Director and Chief Spokesperson for negotiations Charlie Cash emphasized the impact that the contract being negotiated today will have on postal workers and their families. The current contract will cover 200,000 postal workers and will affect three times as many people when their families are considered. “I know what a postal job can mean to a worker and their family,” said Cash. “It can mean having a respectable job that lifts up a family...The kind of income and benefits that give us a steady existence and allows for a comfortable retirement.”

In stressing the APWU’s priorities during contract negotiations, Cash stated “We are open to new ideas, and we want enforceable agreements, opportunities for career employment for everyone we represent, and pay and benefits that recognize the employees not seen by the public every day.”

“To you, the leaders of the Postal Service,” he continued. “It is time to deliver not just to America, but to those represented by the APWU, and I am confident that they will continue to do what they have always done—deliver prompt, reliable, and efficient service to the American public.”

Executive Vice President Debby Szeredy introduced the union’s core bargaining committee. In addition to the President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Industrial Relations Director, the core committee includes Clerk Division Director Lamont Brooks, Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun, Motor Vehicle Service

Division Director Michael Foster, and Support Services Director Arrion Brown.

Secretary-Treasurer Powell read statements from AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson, and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in support of the APWU.



President Dimondstein delivers remarks during Opening Day of APWU 2024 contract negotiations.

President Dimondstein, Lead Negotiator, then delivered his Opening Day remarks, welcoming the opportunity to represent APWU members and stating the APWU’s clear and transparent goals for this round of negotiations.

“As postal workers pour our lifeblood into the institution and its mission, workers deserve good annual pay increases, stronger safety rights, an end to the unfair and divisive two-tier career pay scales, limits on subcontracting, a career workforce, and better workhour guarantees and rights for Part Time Flexibles,” President Dimondstein said. “We advocate that all bargaining unit work in retail be returned to the Clerk Craft and that all the work bargained for in the ‘Jobs Memos’ of 2010 finally be returned to the workers as promised. In light of the impact of profound and rapid technological changes on our jobs, it is high time for a shorter workweek with no loss of pay. And of course, the union strives to protect the hard-won gains and job security provisions secured over generations and for dignity and respect on the job.”

“Our dedication to the postal mission carries on day in and day out, whether in times of pandemics and natural disasters or more ‘normal’ times,” Dimondstein continued. “And postal workers have earned, and deserve, a good and improved union contract.”

President Dimondstein’s full remarks are available to read on apwu.org. ■

APWU & Supporters Participate in Virtual

On June 24, thousands of APWU members and supporters joined a Virtual Kickoff Rally before the Opening Day of negotiations for a new union contract. The rally was emceed by Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell.

After opening the rally with the inspiring video about the Great Postal Strike of 1970, Secretary-Treasurer Powell remarked that “The end of that video says it very clear. The struggle indeed does continue.” Secretary-Treasurer Powell introduced AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler who, on behalf of 12 and a half million affiliated union members, offered the energizing message: “If we stand together and we stand strong, there is nothing that can stop us. We have your back; we can’t wait to see you win a contract that secures a bright future for every postal worker in this country.”

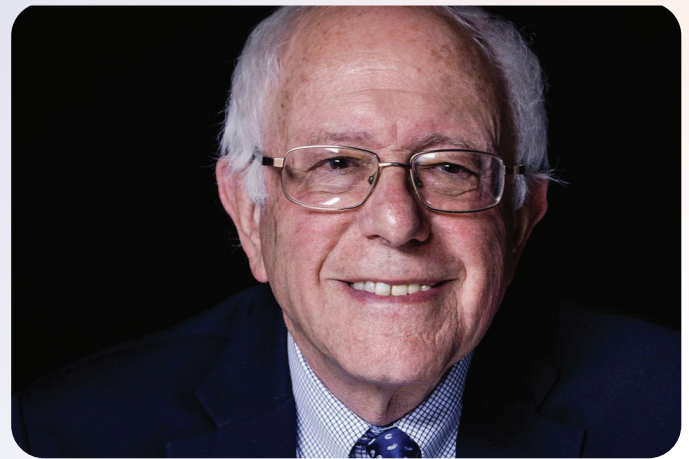
The next speaker, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, thanked APWU members for the “great and important work you do for the American people every single day.” Sen. Sanders then demanded that Postmaster General Louis DeJoy sign a fair and just union contract with the APWU. Sen. Sanders added, “Together, we will do everything that we can to save, protect, to strengthen, and to expand the U. S. Postal Service.”

NALC President Brian Renfroe highlighted the common goals the postal unions have and assured members “that NALC will be there to not only stand in solidarity, but actively... support your efforts because our fights are not only similar, our fights in many ways are the same.”

President Melanie Campbell of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation offered her support and solidarity and spoke to members about the long-standing fights for dignity and respect going back to 1968 when Dr. King demanded justice for the Memphis sanitation workers killed on the job.

Joining from the UK, Communication Workers Union General Secretary Dave Ward sent solidarity and fraternal greetings from across the Atlantic. Speaking about the challenges postal workers of the world face, he said “Don’t believe the people who think that postal services are finished... They need to understand that despite the fact that we’re in a rapidly changing world of communications, the Postal Service and the people that deliver it are critical to the infrastructure of America and countries across the world.”

Sara Nelson, president of the Flight Attendants union, addressed our fight to end the two-tier wage scale in negotiations. “You’re lifting up calls from the entire



Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) demanded that Postmaster General Louis DeJoy sign a fair and just union contract with the APWU.



APWU Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell emcees the Virtual Kickoff Rally.

working class to make sure that we are not allowing the corporate elite to divide us by having different tiers of employment at any of our work. When we do the same work, we need to be paid the same,” said Nelson.

Next up was AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Fred Redmond who said postal workers “Deserve a contract with family sustaining wages, good benefits, [and] strong protections.”

UMWA President Cecil Roberts delivered an inspiring speech. Talking about the battles that mine workers have fought with the support of APWU members, he offered reciprocal support. “You’ve been beside us. You’ve lifted us up in these difficult times we have faced. Now it’s time for coal miners and retirees to lift you up and stand with you.”

A. Philip Randolph Institute President Clayola Brown provided words of encouragement and support, because “Respect is at stake. Fighting for dignity and saving

Rally to Kick Off Contract Negotiations



AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler delivers solidarity from 12 and a half million union affiliated members.

jobs and getting rid of that devilish two-tier system for wages... makes this kind of a struggle necessary. Good luck, we're right there with you," she assured members.

Chairperson of Our Revolution and former CWA President Larry Cohen, then spoke about the many threats to postal workers, including the Staples attempts at privatization and Trump-era efforts to stymie Vote-by-Mail, fights that the APWU won through grassroots organizing. "If we don't have working class families organized, who's going to be there in our fights?" he asked. "I can say that personally, I'll be there, my union will be there, [and] Our Revolution will be there."

President of the 1.7 million member AFT, Randi Weingarten offered her support and encouragement to APWU members.

Speaking about the Great Postal Strike, RWDSU President Stuart Applebaum reminded rally-goers that, "The [Great Postal] Strike ended only after the workers negotiated their best contract in history because they stood together." Speaking about his father, who was a striking postal clerk, he continued "I was able to see within my own family the tangible difference that the contract made for us. When workers stand together, we have power. We [can] make demands [and must] be taken seriously."

APWU Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard introduced House Representative Alma Adams (D-NC-12) and House Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01). They reaffirmed their commitment to supporting postal workers during negotiations and through legislation.

Speaking about the power of "we," AFGE President Everett Kelly said "I've seen firsthand the determination and spirit of APWU members... We at AFGE, along with union members all across the labor movement, are ready to stand with you as you demand what is rightfully yours: safe, well-paid jobs where you're treated with dignity, fairness, and respect."

In his remarks, APWU Industrial Relations Director Charlie Cash energized participants, calling upon members to "Let management know that we are union proud, and it is time for a good contract. Union Proud, Say It Loud – let's get a good contract now!"

Rank-and-File Bargaining Committee Co-chairs Wanda Harris (Miami Local President) and Kim Miller (Keystone Area Local President) thanked members for the opportunity to negotiate on their behalf and offered inspiring remarks ahead of Opening Day.

Erica Smiley, executive director of Jobs with Justice, provided words of support too. To wrap up the evening, CLUW President Elise Bryant inspired viewers with song and chants before APWU President Mark Dimondstein capped off the evening with his remarks.

"We're bargaining for the public good, the public commons, and the good of the people of this country, and to protect, enhance, and expand this wonderful national treasure that belongs to all the people."

— PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

"It's all about postal workers," said President Dimondstein. "It's all about the working class and our responsibility as leaders to do our part to uplift and to build working class power." he said. "And when we go to the bargaining table, let's remember this. We're not just bargaining for postal workers. We're bargaining for the public good, the public commons, and the good of the people of this country, and to protect, enhance, and expand this wonderful national treasure that belongs to all the people."

Dimondstein concluded his remarks with a word of encouragement, "Carry on, everybody. Solidarity forever!" ■

APWU "Building Union Power" National Organizing Drive Blasts Past Goal of 5,000 New Members

At the end of the final day of our "Building Union Power" national organizing drive, the total number of new members reached 8,707 – we did it! You answered the call to sign up 5,000 new members of the APWU by Opening Day of contract negotiations to show management the strength of our worker power. APWU National sent emails, texts, and letters to members and nonmembers alike highlighting the benefits of being a part of our great union, showing everyone what a difference our union makes. We encouraged locals and members like you to hold organizing drives and to ask nonmember coworkers to join the union. While APWU National received many membership applications, the local recruiting efforts blew our numbers out of the water.

At the end of the organizing campaign, at least 463 locals recruited a new member – and we are now 3,707 over our original goal! This is because union members came



Members of the William H. Burrus, Cleveland Area Local #72 hold a nonmember organizing drive on opening day of contract negotiations to continue building worker power.

together to build a stronger and more active membership. We stood together in what was a true grassroots campaign – and a grassroots success – from the workroom floor to the negotiating table, so we can say with one voice – "Union Proud, Say It Loud – Good Contract Now!" ■

We Did It!

More than 8,700 new members join the APWU





Three lucky winners of the *American Postal Worker* quiz will receive a \$50 coupon for the APWU store so that you can gear up and show your APWU union pride. To enter the quiz,

email your answers to communications@apwu.org, together with your EIN by Aug. 5, 2024. Winners will be randomly selected among those who correctly answer the following:

The quiz winners from the May/June 2024 edition of the *American Postal Worker* were:

Theresa McDonald, Milwaukee Area Local (WI)
Timothy Frankland, Twin Cities PDC Local (MN)
Eilene Melchor, Albuquerque Local (NM)

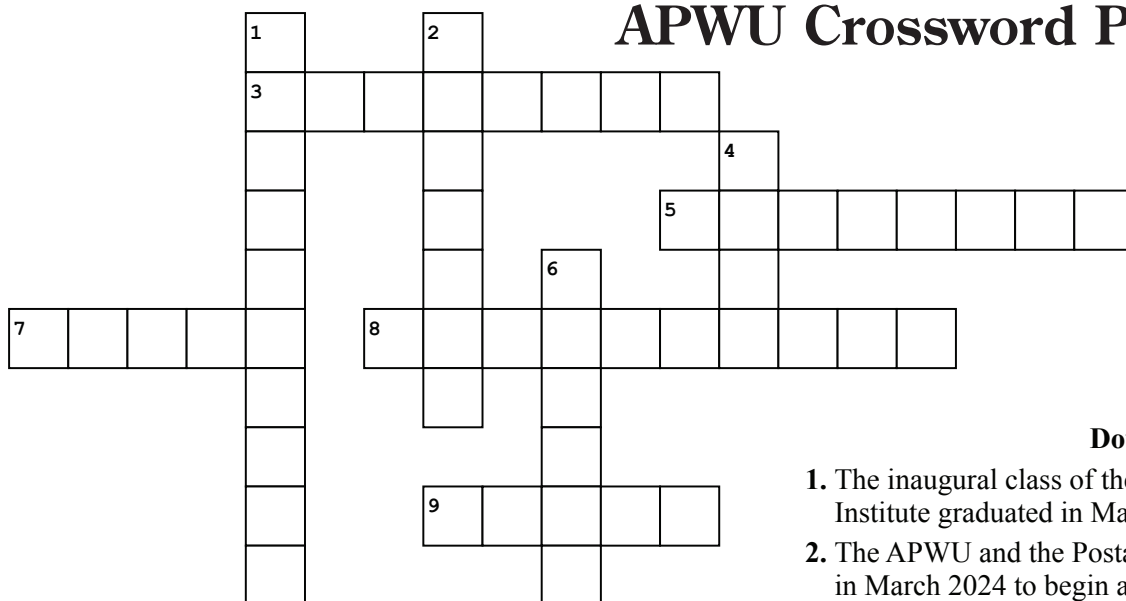
APWU July/August QUIZ

1. Hearing protection is especially important for APWU members given the diverse and noisy work environments we encounter. What type of equipment is essential for preventing hearing loss and maintaining effective communication in the workplace?

2. The APWU began negotiations with the Postal Service for a new union contract on June 25. What are two of the ways that members can get involved and show their support for the Contract Campaign?

3. What is the name of the APWU's current grassroots campaign to improve staffing and service at post offices across the country?

APWU Crossword Puzzle



Across

- The APWU campaign for _____ services and new work advocates for bringing new products and services into retail postal units.
- Prolonged noise exposure can lead to a condition called _____, which causes a ringing in the ear.
- In 1975, the Agricultural _____ Relations Act was signed into California state law, giving farm workers the right to unionize and collectively bargain.
- A new Veterans' Affairs policy eliminates initial _____ each year for certain mental health and substance use disorder visits through 2027?
- The winning entry for the 2024 Contract Campaign slogan is "Union _____, Say It Loud!"

Down: 1. leadership, 2. backlog, 4. file, 6. ballot

CROSSWORD ANSWERS:

Down

- The inaugural class of the APWU _____ Institute graduated in May.
- The APWU and the Postal Service signed an MOU in March 2024 to begin a review of the grievance _____.
- Direct _____ is an IRS program that provides the public with a free, online option for filing taxes.
- Currently, 26 states and the District of Columbia allow for citizen initiated and citizen led _____ measures, which can be a tool to bypass partisan gridlock in Congress.

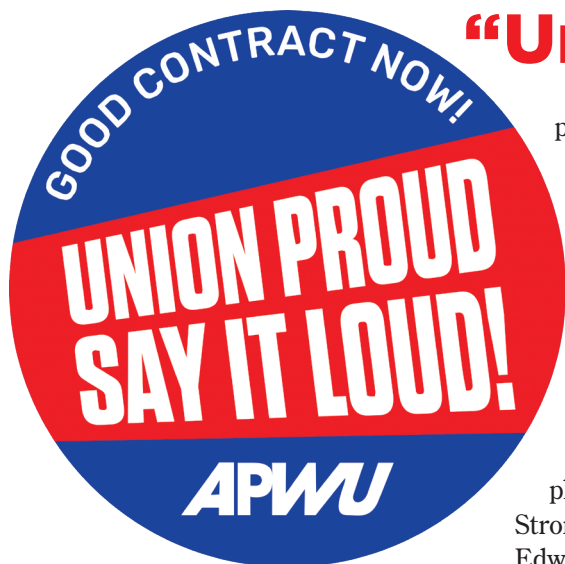
ARE YOU A LUCKY WINNER?

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 by Aug. 5, 2024 and we'll send you a promo code worth \$50 to use towards gear at apwustore.org.

Rudy Flores, Jr. (TX)
Ward Hageman (NE)
Darren Kirby (OR)

2024 CONTRACT CAMPAIGN SLOGAN CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED!

“Union Proud, Say It Loud!”



Earlier this spring, APWU National called on active, retiree, and auxiliary members to submit slogans to represent our fight for a contract that strengthens wages, benefits, and rights for APWU-represented postal workers, and to ensure that our essential service is safely and adequately staffed for years to come.

The members answered the call – APWU received more than 3,000 slogan ideas, which shows the enthusiasm and support for our Contract Campaign on the workroom floor. The National Executive Board is proud to announce that the winning slogan for our Contract Cam-

paigned contest is “Union Proud, Say It Loud!” The entry was submitted by Ronnie McGee, of the Atlanta Metro Area Local (GA).

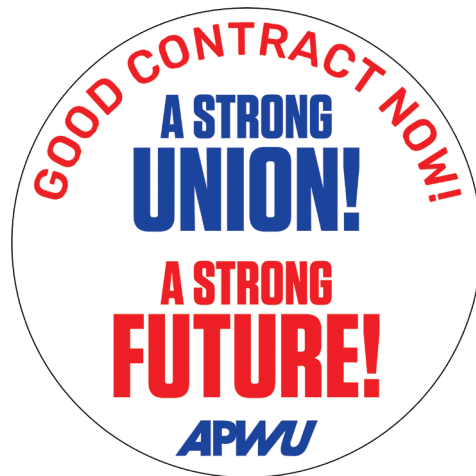
The second-place entry, “Unite, Organize, and Mobilize”, was submitted by Emily Kim of the Mankato Area Local (MN). The third-place entry, “A Strong Union, A Strong Future” was submitted by Edward Teets of the Boise Local (ID).

The APWU will use these slogans in Contract Campaign materials and on union gear for members to show their support of our fight for a good new contract. APWU will announce when merchandise is online for purchase at apwustore.org.

“Congratulations to our winners. The tremendous response to the contest shows our members’ enthusiasm for the upcoming contract negotiations,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

“We are proud of our members’ creativity,” said APWU Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth ‘Liz’ Powell. “The volume of responses shows that our members are ready to show

their union spirit and solidarity throughout our contract negotiations that start on June 25.” ■



GET INVOLVED IN THE 2024 CONTRACT CAMPAIGN

The APWU national negotiating team is only as strong as the members in our workplaces. Here's how you can make a difference:

- ✓ Sticker up on Gear Days every Thursday through September 19!
- ✓ Join APWU livestreams, rallies, and other events, either in person or online. For information on local and national events, visit apwu.org/events.
- ✓ There is strength in numbers! Ask your coworkers and friends to join in the excitement of building a strong, active union at local rallies, on gear days, and more!
- ✓ Be an organizer and sign up nonmembers to join our fight: If we are going to win the best possible contract, we need the strength of our members, united, for “A Strong Union, A Strong Future!”

SIGN UP FOR CONTRACT UPDATES BY TEXTING “CONTRACT” TO 91990

ELECTION 2024: Get Out the Vote & Vote-by-Mail!

The 2024 election cycle is well underway and the American people are counting on each and every one of us postal workers to accurately and efficiently process Vote-by-Mail election ballots. In addition to the work we do to move election mail, APWU members will also make a difference across the country as we cast our ballots in elections ranging from the presidential race to local school board elections. Union voters were the deciding factor in several key races in 2022, and that will hold true this year as well.

The APWU is committed to ensuring that all of our members are able to cast a ballot. As part of our “Get Out the Vote” (GOTV) program, we encourage every member to verify their voter registration status. This process is extremely simple. **Please go to vote.org and click “Check Your Registration”** — it takes less than a minute to check your registration status! Due to recent voter roll purges, it is crucial to verify your voter registration every election.

Additionally, it is not always easy to make the time to go vote, especially for working families. Therefore, we encourage members to Vote-by-Mail. Voting at home eliminates time at the polling place and allows more time to make informed decisions about your vote. The 2022 elections illustrated the accessibility and security of Vote-by-Mail measures, as approximately 35 percent of voters utilized this



method and 99.8 percent of ballots were delivered from homes to election officials within just five days.

We must embrace Vote-by-Mail and continue to ensure that everyone, no matter where they live or what their schedules look like, can cast their ballot securely. For more information, visit apwu.org/vote-by-mail. ■

<2 DAYS

ON AVERAGE TO
DELIVER BALLOTS FROM
VOTERS TO ELECTION
OFFICIALS

98.96%

OF BALLOTS DELIVERED
FROM VOTERS TO
ELECTION OFFICIALS
WITHIN THREE DAYS





As We Gather for National Convention, We Want the Best for Postal Workers and We Want Our Communities to Have a Robust Postal Service

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

The excitement of our 2024 National Convention is here. Detroit holds great memories for me as it is where I participated in my very first APWU convention in 1980. No words could describe my anticipation because the convention was where women in the APWU were taking a stand! We practiced our strategy to capture the microphones and make history. We had no idea how historical it would be. In those days, most national and international unions had no real empowerment program to build upon “A Woman’s Place Is in the Union” movement. I was one of many women that stood in line at the microphone so that our voices would be heard. When members voted on the floor, it was clear that we were going to be a great part of the APWU as we became intertwined in the National APWU Constitution, and there would be an opportunity to help bring more women into the APWU like never before. We did not want to settle for a token woman to represent us in Washington, DC. We wanted the grassroots ability to have more union women step up and become union activists all around the country. We set up a structure that was local, state, and regional and our goal was to help educate and inspire women to see that they had a place in this union at all levels. Last year, I attended the Kansas State Convention, and it was very emotional because it was the first time I walked into a state convention where a mass of strong women union activists gathered.

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION BRINGS THE EXCITEMENT OF MEETING STEWARDS AND COMRADES FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. IT LETS YOU KNOW THAT THIS STRUGGLE IS REAL AND THAT WE ARE BIGGER THAN OURSELVES.

The National Convention brings the excitement of meeting stewards and comrades from all over the country. It lets you know that this struggle is real and that we are bigger than ourselves. I hope that many of our new convention delegates feel the spirit of why our union work is so important, and the fact that we can speak our mind and voice our vote. There are politics, yes, but there is also democracy. Your contract resolutions will be very important to me and our negotiating team. We want the



Women at the 1980 Convention in Detroit captured the microphones to make a stand for equal representation in the APWU.

very best for postal workers, we want our communities to have the Postal Service they deserve, and the service obligations we owe them under law. Some European countries have privatized their First-Class Mail service and lost many postal jobs. We do not have to follow them. Package volume is growing but First-Class Mail has been falling behind. However, we still need to protect both. Prompt services are to be provided no matter where you live or what your circumstances are. Everyone depends on first-class service. It is discriminatory to cater to those who have and take away from those who have not. Our service is based on the premise that we bind the nation together. The answer is simple, the Postal Service should build back the overnight service for First-Class Mail and continue to expand and add more package equipment throughout our network so that prompt package service does not just occur in bigger cities. While we do that, the Postal Service should also invest in more staffing and comprehensive training programs for new employees, and demand accountability for toxic managers instead of letting them go rogue in another location. Managers should be working with employees, not against them. Employees are not the enemy. The Postal Service needs to support the programs that our customers love – Express mail services, passport processing, money orders and banking, certified return receipt, and registers to expand new, affordable services and stop limiting services from those who “have not.” ■

The Postal Service Agrees to Pause Delivering for America 10-Year Plan until 2025

In response to union, community, and political pressure, Postmaster General (PMG) DeJoy has agreed to pause a number of the planned mail consolidations that are part of the “network modernization” changes currently underway. In a letter to Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) on April 16, PMG DeJoy stated that he would pause the movement of processing operations associated with the Mail Processing Facility Reviews until at least January 2025. This decision was in response to a letter of concern by a bipartisan group of 26 Senators.

“From the very beginning of these plans, the APWU leadership has advocated that management needs to slow down to ensure that the rights of the workers are upheld and respected, and that planned changes must improve service,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “While we acknowledge the need for change in light of changing technology, changes in the mailing habits of the people, and to the mail

mix, the network changes have thus far been implemented in a chaotic and detrimental way. Slowing down the process and commitments to improve service are welcome and needed steps.”

The letter also commits to not moving forward with any consolidation plans without advising Congress, and moderate the pace of any planned changes.

The APWU has initiated a detailed information request to obtain the full and accurate list of consolidations that the Postal Service will put on hold, as well as any potential impact on excessing of employees from one facility to another.

“I commend all throughout our union ranks, our community allies, and many friends in Congress who have made, and will continue to make, their voices heard loud and clear – there must be no short cuts when it comes to service,” shared Dimondstein.

...I agree to pause the movement of processing operations associated with the Mail Processing Facility Reviews.

I trust that this pause in implementation activities will be of interest to you. I want to stipulate as part of the pause however that the processing facilities on the attached list will also not commence, just as the cost savings will not be achieved while we pause. We estimate the cost savings to be \$133-177 million, and the positive investments Chairman Peters, the dialogue we had yesterday was productive and our commitment to pause MPFR activity will work to restore confidence in our modernization actions are meant to achieve from both a cost savings perspective, and at a pace of network change that is a approach to satisfy any of your concerns regarding their engagement warranted with the PRC. I need more time to evaluate and hope you our challenge.

In the meantime, we will continue to work hard to restore service in the

Sincerely,
Louis DeJoy

To read the letters, visit:
apwu.org/pmg-network-modernization-consolidations-slowdown

The APWU will share more information as it is received from the USPS. ■

Congress Holds Second Field Hearing on the Social Security Fairness Act

On June 7, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) held a field hearing in Columbus, OH on the *Social Security Fairness Act* (H.R. 82, S. 597). To date, there has been a House committee hearing in D.C. and House and Senate field hearings to evaluate the legislation and raise awareness about the unfairness of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). This is an important step to shine a light on the importance of repealing these harmful provisions of Social Security law.

The act continues to gain momentum in both chambers of Congress with 322 cosponsors in the House and 57 in the Senate. If passed, this bipartisan legislation would repeal the WEP and GPO, which unfairly reduce, or sometimes eliminate, Social Security benefits for millions of government re-

tiirees, including postal workers. The WEP and GPO penalize Civil Servant Retirement System (CSRS) retirees who meet the requirements for Social Security benefits through secondary employment and have paid their fair share into the program.

The hearing, which took place at the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 67 union hall in Columbus, OH, featured testimony from public servants penalized by the WEP and GPO, including firefighters, police officers, and teachers. The witnesses at the hearing spoke about how their retirement security is threatened by these antiquated laws, which have made it difficult to attract new hires in their respective fields. Sen. Brown was proud to announce Sen. Ron Wyden's (D-OR) recent

endorsement, since he is the chair of the Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over this bill.

APWU leadership has met with Senate bill leaders Sen. Brown and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) at least three times to strategize on how to increase the number of cosponsors. We also participate in bi-monthly meetings with the staff of House bill leaders Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA-06) and Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07) to discuss outreach. Additionally, we have had numerous one-on-one meetings with members of Congress on this legislation and helped get the stories of two APWU members affected by the WEP and GPO published in national news outlets to raise further awareness. ■



Maintaining and Retaining Financial and Election Records?

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

The *Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act* (LMRDA) requires labor organizations to meet basic standards and fiscal responsibility. These requirements pertain to financial reports and elections. Section 206 of the LMRDA requires the retention of financial records specifically for five years. Therefore, all types of financial records, beginning from the year 2019 to the current year, must be maintained and retained to comply. Examples of records that state and local affiliates should retain include, but are not limited to, are as follows:

- Original receipts
- Disbursement journals
- Cancelled checks and checks stubs (a copy of cancelled checks should be provided with the bank statements)
- Bank statements
- Dues Check Off (DCO)
- Vendor invoices
- Payroll records
- Credit card statements
- Vouchers for union expenditures
- Bank deposit and transfer receipts
- Internal union financial reports and statements
- Executive Board and General Membership meeting minutes
- Accountant documents

It is important to keep all electronic documents, including recordkeeping software used to prepare and retain financial data and records. It is important to ensure that you have a backup storage plan in place for your electronic documents and financial records. Financial records contain *Privacy Act* protected information, therefore the only method to discard of financial records is to shred them. It is permissible to shred any financial records prior to the year 2019.

Are there criminal provisions if any person willfully violates the provisions of LMRDA? Absolutely! Any

person who willfully makes a false entry in or willfully conceals, withholds, or destroys books, records, reports, or statements required to be retained can be fined up to \$10,000 or imprisoned for up to one year, or both. The Secretary-Treasurer's Department provides virtual training to ensure that local and state presidents and treasurers are aware of their responsibilities. Virtual training is also available for trustees who provide required financial oversight of the funds used for the sole benefit of the members and the union.

Election records must be preserved and retained for one year from when the ballot count has been certified. The LMRDA requires all election records be retained, including membership eligibility lists, copies of nomination and election notices, voting instructions, return envelopes, marked, challenged, unused ballots, and tally sheets. The election official designated in the APWU Constitution and Bylaws is the custodian of the election records. If there is no designated election official, the treasurer should retain the election records.

Union Proud, Say it Loud - Good Contract Now!

If you missed attending the June 24 virtual "kickoff" rally, your participation is needed to continue building union power during contract negotiations. Our current contract expires on Sept. 20, 2024, and contract negotiations will be challenging, as expected. One of the ways you can show your support throughout the negotiations process is to wear APWU gear, especially on Thursdays for Gear Day. The history of the APWU has proven there is always strength in numbers. As a union we have shown we have strength. A Strong Union, A Strong Future!

Fiduciary Responsibility Training

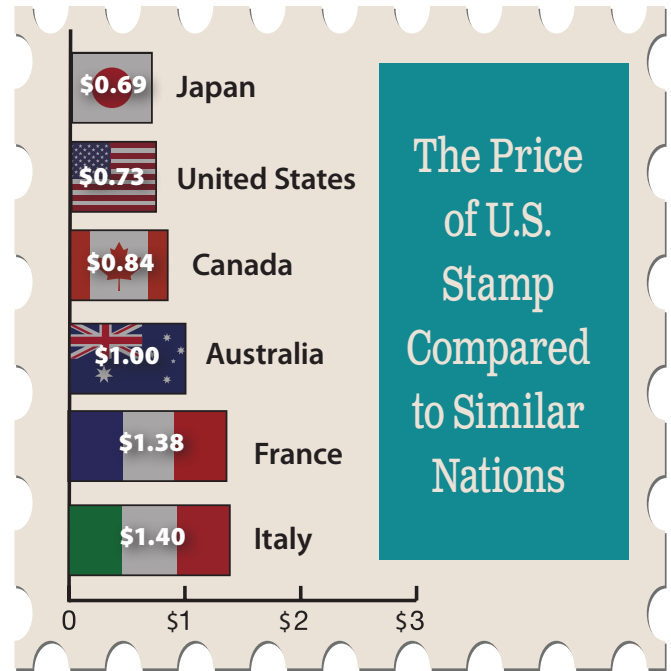
The Secretary-Treasurer's Department provides virtual fiduciary training for local officers who are unable to attend fiduciary training during the Pre-Convention workshops. We recommend that local and state presidents and treasurers attend at least one Secretary-Treasurer's Workshop per year. To schedule virtual Fiduciary Responsibility training, contact Annette August-Taylor, Executive Assistant to the Secretary-Treasurer at 202-842-8538 or email aaugust@apwu.org. ■



The Price of Stamps

The price of a First-Class Mail Forever stamp is scheduled to rise to 73 cents on July 14, the second price change this year. What many customers may not realize however, is that the U.S. stamp remains one of the best prices among postage

of many other developed countries. As the largest postal market handling half of the world's domestic mail, the Postal Service can offer stamps and mail services at lower rates than other peer countries. Of the 30 countries studied by the U.S. Postal Service Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the U.S. First-Class Mail Forever stamp was one-third of the average price of those nation's stamps. Despite the recent rises in stamp prices, it is still a bargain to send mail in the U.S. compared to the rest of the world. Check out the graph to see the price of stamps from some of the other nations in the sample. You can find the OIG report online at stories.uspsoig.gov/the-price-of-a-stamp-an-international-comparison. ■



*Prices were calculated using exchange rates from June 24, 2024.

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

Management Reducing Package Presort Discounts

The presort discount system, created decades ago, turned over large sections of postal operations to private companies, for private profit. The Postal Service gives companies like Pitney Bowes and other large mailers huge postage discounts, or “corporate welfare,” to presort letters and packages before entering them “downstream” in the postal network. These discounts vary based on how much sorting work the presort companies undertake (how much postal worker work they replace). This “last mile” strategy guts postal processing facilities and bypasses postal truck transportation. Today, private companies sort roughly 80 to 90 percent of all letter mail volume before entering the postal network. Likewise, private parcel “consolidators” presort the majority of parcels delivered by the Postal Service, with many being entered directly at the

delivery unit, bypassing nearly the entirety of the Postal Service’s transportation and processing networks. The Postal Service has fully endorsed, promoted, and accelerated this presort and last-mile strategy for decades – until now.

As recently reported in the press, Postmaster General DeJoy has announced the first step of changing course. The Postal Service is in the early stages of eliminating the deepest of several discounts where package consolidators sort to the Destination Delivery Units (DDUs) and five-digit presort.

“This is a welcome early step in the right direction,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “The presort system has been killing our jobs, diverting needed revenue for the USPS, and enriching the private

sector at our expense. We hope this is the first step of many to reverse course regarding the presort rip-offs and bring more work back into the USPS to be performed by unionized postal workers.”

According to the news coverage, some of these prospective changes will bring more revenue into the Post Office and place more parcels further “upstream” into the Postal Service’s distribution and sorting facilities.

APWU national leadership will continue to monitor these developments and their effects. We will continue to urge postal management to shrink these corporate welfare schemes and re-invest in postal workers, the postal network, and our unrivaled ability to provide quality and affordable services to the mailing public. ■



Negotiations Is Our Path to Winning an All-Career Workforce

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR CHARLIE CASH

On June 25, 2024, we opened negotiations for the “APWU Main Agreement” that covers most APWU-represented employees, except for those who work in Information Technology/Accounting Services (IT/AS), the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC), Postal Nurses, or private sector employees.

This contract covers nearly 200,000 employees, the largest contract being negotiated in the U.S. in 2024. Our contract affects the lives of all those employees and their families. Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this contract could have a direct effect on over 609,000 people.

The APWU has been transparent about our main objectives in this round of negotiations. The APWU submitted a proposal to eliminate the divisive two-tier wage structure on Opening Day.

Nearly 120,000 employees are on what we commonly call the “new pay scale” implemented in the 2010-2015 contract. There are close to 70,000 employees in Grade 6 Steps GG through A alone! Those on this scale will not reach the same top step as employees hired as career employees prior to May of 2011.

We also proposed the elimination of Postal Support Employees (PSEs). We want an all-career workforce. Currently there are over 20,000 of these non-career employees. We made strides towards this all-career workforce in the 2021-2024 contract when the parties agreed to the automatic conversion of PSEs after two years of PSE service within an installation, except for PSEs assigned to four-hour Remotely Managed Post Offices (RMPOs). Over the life of the 2021-2024 agreement, we have seen career numbers slightly increase as PSEs have been converted to career.

We believe that we have good arguments to make for our objectives. The two-tier structure is not unique to the Postal Service. It was implemented throughout labor after the 2006 Great Recession impacted bargaining and the economy like no other time in recent memory. But it has not been a success. It has been divisive in the workforce and has created animosity amongst workers. But we have begun to see the two-tier structure collapse in other industries. This is an issue that our union family members

in other unions are willing to go out on strike over. It is not conducive to employee retention or job stability. Our data shows that since the Postal Service implemented this structure in 2011, APWU-represented employee retention has plummeted. Previously, a low percentage of postal employees left their jobs voluntarily before retirement. Today, that rate of attrition is several times higher than it was before 2011. Retention, general rejection, and failure of the two-tier wage system are two of the strong arguments we will use to demand elimination of this wage structure.

**I KNOW WHAT IS LIKE TO BE NON-CAREER.
I WAS A NON-CAREER EMPLOYEE
(TRANSITION EMPLOYEE) FROM EARLY 1994
TO LATE 1997. IT WAS LIFE CHANGING WHEN
I BECAME A CAREER EMPLOYEE. THE NON-
CAREER MODEL IS A FAILURE.**

What about the elimination of the PSEs as a classification of employee? We are not asking that any PSEs be “let go” from the Postal Service. We are arguing that they should all be made career employees and all new hires thereafter be career employees. I know what is like to be non-career. I was a non-career employee (Transition Employee) from early 1994 to late 1997. It was life changing when I became a career employee. The non-career model is a failure. The pay is not as competitive as it should be. Management abuses these employees and treats them as disposable. Over 30 percent of PSEs quit early in their career because of poor treatment by management. Management knows the non-career model is a failure. We believe we have the data to support our position.

The law requires the Postal Service to provide good jobs and be a “model employer.” They can choose to do that and prove to current employees and future employees they are committed to that by bargaining in good faith and agreeing to a contract that recognizes the worth the APWU-represented employees bring to the American people’s Postal Service.

Solidarity! ■



Preventing Hearing Loss at Work and Home

Hearing protection is especially important for APWU members given the diverse and noisy work environments we encounter.

The Industrial Relations Department is committed to ensuring that we keep you informed about hearing hazards and the precautions you can take to protect your hearing.

Below are key points highlighting the importance of hearing protection for APWU members:

- **Chronic Noise Exposure –**
APWU members, particularly those working in mail processing facilities, are often exposed to loud machinery and equipment noise. Prolonged exposure to such noise at work or while doing chores at home can lead to permanent hearing loss.
- **Irreversible Damage –**
Unlike other injuries, hearing loss from noise exposure is often irreversible. Once the hair cells in the inner ear are damaged, they do not regenerate, leading to permanent impairment.
- **Effective Communication –**
In noisy environments, hearing protection helps reduce the impact of loud sounds while allowing workers to hear important communications and alarms. This is crucial for maintaining safety for APWU members on workroom floors.
- **Alertness to Hazards –**
Good hearing is essential for detecting warning signals, approaching vehicles, or machinery that could pose a risk. Hearing protection helps in maintaining the ability to perceive and respond to such hazards.
- **Prevent Noise-Induced Stress Levels –** Constant exposure to high

noise levels can lead to increased stress and fatigue. Hearing protection helps create a more comfortable work environment, reducing stress, and improving overall well-being.

- **Improve Focus and Reduce Accidents –** Reducing noise levels helps APWU members focus better on our jobs and reduce the likelihood of accidents on and off the job.
- **Regulatory Requirements –** Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations mandate hearing protection for workers exposed to noise levels of 85 decibels or higher over an eight-hour period. The Postal Service must comply with these standards to ensure worker safety.
- **Prevent Tinnitus and Other Issues –** Prolonged noise exposure can lead to conditions such as tinnitus (ringing in the ears), which can significantly affect quality of life. Hearing protection helps prevent these issues, supporting overall health and well-being.
- **Long-Term Health –** Protecting hearing reduces the risk of associated conditions such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease, which have been linked to chronic noise exposure.
- **Support for Aging Workforce –** As our APWU members age, susceptibility to hearing loss increases. Using the hearing protection that the Postal Service must provide is crucial to support older employees and maintain their hearing health over time.
- **Extended Career Longevity –** By protecting hearing, our APWU

members can continue to work effectively and safely for longer periods, benefiting both the individual and their families.

- **Hearing Protection or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

You may require hearing protection if noise levels cannot be controlled to below OSHA limits. Hearing protection will be made available if noise levels exceed 85 decibels.

Radio headsets are not a substitute for approved hearing protectors. Do not wear them in areas where hearing protection is required, as there is no level of protection provided.

Earmuffs offer a comfortable fit and provide effective noise reduction, which is ideal for louder environments or for employees who prefer not to use earplugs for various reasons.

Earplugs provide a high level of noise reduction and are suitable for a range of noise environments. This is the most common PPE used by Postal Service employees for hearing protection.

The Correct way to Insert Earplugs:

- Use clean hands, and clean earplugs.
- Pull the top of your ear up and back with one hand to straighten out your ear canal. Insert the earplug straight into the ear canal with your other hand until there is a snug fit.

Using hearing PPE is essential not only for preventing hearing loss, but also for maintaining effective communication, reducing stress, and hearing for your entire lifetime. ■

Sources:

Hearing Conservation OSHA 3074.

USPS Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM) Chapter 8 Safety Health and Environment.

MEMBERS



APWU-represented drivers of Albuquerque Mail Service (AMS) rally in front of the company's yard while drivers and APWU leaders of Albuquerque Local 380 provide words of encouragement. The message is loud and clear: we demand a good, fair contract!



Western Michigan Area Local Members enjoy their food at their Member Appreciation Barbecue to welcome new members and honor current members.



The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) gathered during May to celebrate its 50th anniversary in Niagara Falls, NY. APWU members represent our union with pride! Among the APWU delegation are National Officers Judy Beard (National CLUW Treasurer), Anna Smith, and Sarah Jane Rodriguez.

IN ACTION



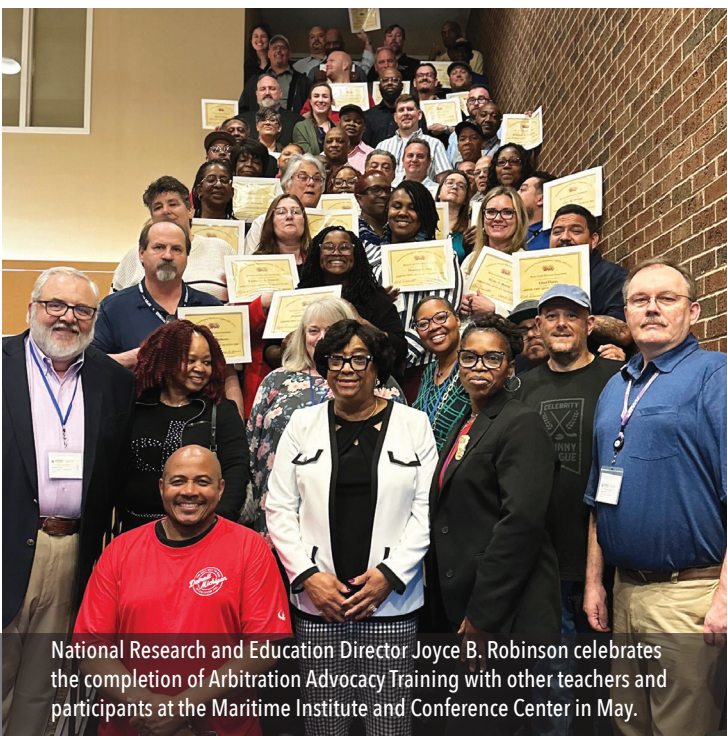
APWU members rally in front of the USPS Headquarters before a Board of Governors meeting demanding better service for our communities.



The Western Michigan Area Local holds a Member Appreciation Barbecue to encourage fellowship among current members and their families, as well as to encourage nonmembers to join the APWU.



South Alabama Area Local 715 shows their union pride on a gear day!



National Research and Education Director Joyce B. Robinson celebrates the completion of Arbitration Advocacy Training with other teachers and participants at the Maritime Institute and Conference Center in May.



APWU members at Roanoke Local 482 wear union gear to support their Union on Opening Day of Negotiations.

Clerk Division Encourages Postal Service to “Think Outside of the Box”



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

The APWU-USPS Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) contains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) titled Retail Training Taskforce. Over the last several years, the Clerk Division has utilized this taskforce to encourage the Postal Service to look for new ways to offer services that have not previously been available to postal customers. These new services are a benefit to the Postal Service in terms of additional revenue, while also advancing the APWU’s goals of new work and jobs for the members we represent.

For example, during the past few years, services such as FBI fingerprinting and the General Services Administration (GSA) background checks have each expanded to over 4,000 locations. Both programs combined have netted the Postal Service millions of dollars in additional revenue. Passport revenue has already garnered over \$100 million during this postal fiscal year. The market share for the Postal Service in passports continues to hover around 70 percent nationwide. This is why the Clerk Division leadership urges our Sales and Services Associates (SSAs) and Sales Service and Distribution Associates (SSDAs) to voluntarily accept, with the proper training and qualifications, passport processing duties. We want to add to that 70 percent market share because our clerks can process passports more efficiently than other agencies or businesses. More work for the craft means more union jobs.

USPS Connect Local has also expanded in size since its launch in February 2022. It offers small and medium-sized businesses the opportunity for same-day or next-day delivery service of Parcel Select Packages and First-Class Mail (now referred to as Ground Advantage) if brought to a participating post office before a certain time of the day. The original plan was to expand this program to over 2,600 locations. Several offices were added this year. Postal employees must be available at these offices to accept and process mail targeted for the program.

These are just a few of the services we have pushed the Postal Service to expand, but we want more. New laws and regulations make it possible for the Postal Service to negotiate with local and state authorities for services that do not necessarily fall under the federal umbrella.

We have proposed offering services such as processing marriage licenses, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) pre-checks, drivers’ permits, fishing and hunting licenses, notary services, and safe and secure packaging for customers. These are just a few of the suggestions we have made. Nevertheless, all these services represent value to the Postal Service in terms of revenue and would enhance job opportunities for the Clerk Craft.

A recent study ascertained that one in six packages are returned to the sender. This gives the Postal Service the opportunity to gain return postage revenue and have retail postal clerks box the returns for major retailers. This would allow companies to compete with Amazon for same and next day local deliveries, even at the local level chain stores.

The Clerk Division has been specifically discussing the following opportunities through the USPS/APWU Retail Task Force:

1. Gun Permits
2. Marriage Licenses
3. TSA Pre-Checks
4. Driver’s Permits
5. Tax Refunds (State and Federal)
6. Property Permits
7. Border Crossing Passes
8. High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Transportation Passes
9. Voter Registration
10. Fishing Licenses
11. Notary Public Services
12. Package Returns and Fulfillments
13. Package Wraps
14. Stamp Collecting

The unfortunate truth we must face is that First-Class Mail volume continues to be on the decline. For the Postal Service and its employees to survive, both parties must look for new, innovative approaches to providing services that are both desired and necessary. Change is inevitable, and our job is to make sure those changes benefit our Clerk Division members while ensuring a strong, viable Postal Service for decades to come. ■

Maintenance Dream Team 2024



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

As 2024 Negotiations begin, it is important to understand how proposals are drafted. Throughout the year, Maintenance Craft resolutions are submitted by local and state organizations. Resolutions are proposed changes to the national agreement. Resolutions are reviewed by the Maintenance Resolutions Committee and thoroughly discussed and voted on at the Maintenance Craft Conference. Once the Craft Conference ends, the entire body of the National Convention discusses and votes on the same resolutions. Resolutions that are adopted at the convention become embodied in and with all other resolutions from past conventions. They are a road map for our national negotiations because they identify the priorities the body of the National Convention wants the negotiators focus on.

2024 Maintenance Division Negotiating Team

- Idowu Balogun, Maintenance Division Director
- Terry B. Martinez, Assistant Director (A)
- Jason Treier, Assistant Director (B)
- David Sarnacki, Northeast Region NBA
- Curtis Walkers, Central Region NBA
- Hector Baez, Western Region NBA

Reflecting on Our 2021 APWU/USPS Contract Negotiations

During the 2021 National Negotiations, one of the first steps was establishing the ground rules for how negotiations would proceed. Negotiators from both sides submitted proposals to the main table, and shortly thereafter the craft table meetings began. On occasion, the scope of some proposals went beyond Article 38 and were referred to a different Article table. The Part-Time Regular (PTR) cap for example, falls under Article 7 and 38. The June-teenth holiday had to be adopted under Article 11 prior to changes being made to the PS Form 4852.

Negotiations are not as simple and straight forward as most would think. It is not as simple as walking into negotiations, demanding what we want, and then having it given to us on a silver platter. For example, The Per Diem Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for employees

traveling to the National Center for Employee Development (NCED) in Norman, OK was a significant achievement for the Maintenance Craft. The APWU requested per diem during the 2015 National Negotiations, but management rejected the proposal after weeks of discussion. During the 2021 National Negotiations, the APWU submitted four separate proposals concerning the NCED per diem and training to benefit our members. This time around, the Postal Service agreed that they had a vested interest to incentivize training and travel to the NCED and agreed to our proposal.

When craft table negotiations begin, APWU Article 38 team members break into subcommittees to discuss specific proposals with their counterparts. Once the subcommittees have finished, team members return and present their work to the entire Maintenance team for discussion. If necessary, the subcommittees can reconvene for further discussion concerning delicate details and other concerns. On occasion, either party may submit a counterproposal to the initial proposal, which requires even more internal discussion and debate. The Maintenance team members thoroughly discuss (sometimes spiritedly) all proposals, and the Maintenance Division Director makes the final decision on how to proceed from the APWU side.

In addition to the table discussions during negotiations, a lot of research goes into each proposal submitted by both parties. APWU Search, the APWU case log database, is utilized to research arbitral history on each issue. We review the archives and notes from previous negotiations to determine the intent and reasoning of the parties for adopting previous language, sometimes going back decades. During negotiations, each side has a note taker to record what transpired during negotiation sessions. The notes are reviewed by the team, and any necessary additions or corrections are made. The notes can be reviewed for several reasons, including determining the intent of the parties. Previous negotiation notes are also reviewed by the APWU Article 38 team to better understand the history of negotiations on a variety of subjects.

We are the Dream Team, and we have your back! ■

Focused on Negotiations



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Garrett Langley

As this edition of *The American Postal Worker* arrives, the 2024 APWU/USPS Contract Negotiations will be underway. The Collective Bargaining Agreement expires Sept. 20, 2024, with the Opening Day of negotiations on June 25, 2024. We, as always, will pursue the best possible outcome for the members of the Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) Division regarding pay, benefits, and working conditions. Be mindful, this is not a one-sided process.

We negotiate with the Postal Service, who has goals and plans that are the opposite of the APWU's. Often, their wants and needs are to take back wages and benefits that have already been won in the past. The first goal on everyone's list is always "more money," and rightfully so. A "fair day's pay for a fair day's work" is the cornerstone of the union. We must remember that the financial aspect, while it is a particularly important component of a fair contract, is not the only part of the contract that is negotiated and is often the last item that is agreed to in a contract. While a significant pay increase is always a goal during negotiations, it cannot be our only focus.

As we make gains in one area, the Postal Service will expect and attempt to gain concessions in others. We must attempt to achieve the best balance, as well as the best overall package. We still believe that our primary focus during negotiations must be "to protect and gain work." You may ask how you can be involved in the negotiations process. Any member in good standing may submit a resolution to your local, state, or national union as prescribed by the APWU Constitution and Bylaws.

If we can come to an agreement on a tentative contract, then it will be passed on to the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee to determine if it is acceptable to send to the membership for a ratification vote. If we fail to come to an agreement, then we would proceed with mediation, and then on to interest arbitration.

The MVS negotiating team will consist of MVS Director Michael O. Foster, MVS Assistant Director Garrett Langley, MVS Southeastern Sub Region National Business Agent (NBA) Bruce Amey, MVS Southwestern

Sub Region NBA Dyrike Shaw, MVS Northeastern Sub Region NBA Rick White, and MVS Eastern Sub Region NBA Shana Parker.

While negotiations are taking place, it is imperative that you show your support for a fair and equitable contract by wearing your contract stickers and union gear. We hope that the Postal Service comes to the negotiating table and bargains in good faith, but we will be prepared if they don't.

APWU Member Reaches 50 years of USPS Employment

In May, I traveled to San Francisco for the California Postal Workers Union Convention. While in attendance, I had the opportunity to meet with one of our Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) drivers who in March reached the milestone of 50 years of postal employment; Brother William T. Cooper. Brother Cooper, an APWU steward from the East Bay Area Local, recently celebrated 50 years as a Tractor Trailer Operator at the San Francisco Network Distribution Center (NDC). He started his career as a Motor Vehicle Operator (MVO) in Berkely in 1974 and was excessed to the San Francisco Bulk Mail Center (BMC) in 1975. Fondly called "Pops" by the MVS members, his main obligation has been to encourage the members to come to work and do the job right. Brother Cooper has been a proud member of the MVS Craft and the union. Brother Cooper would also like to thank MVS Director Ken Mitchell of the Oakland Local for his support over the years. We are grateful for the strong craft leadership. ■



MVS Division Director Michael O. Foster congratulates East Bay Area Local Steward William T. Cooper for 50 years as a Tractor Trailer Operator at the San Francisco Network Distribution Center.

Contract Negotiations



Director Arrion Brown

The Support Services Division will participate in several different sets of contract negotiations throughout the summer and fall. Each round of negotiations is an opportunity to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for our APWU sisters and brothers. We look forward to successful negotiations for the Operating and Facility Services and the Material Support Crafts of the main agreement, as well as a successful overall main agreement, a new contract for Human Relations Shared Services (HRSSC), and the first contract for private sector mail haul drivers employed by Albuquerque Mail Service (AMS).

The Operating and Facility Services and Material Support Crafts are smaller crafts within the main agreement that the Support Services Division negotiates on their behalf. A common issue between these crafts, which we will introduce proposals to resolve during negotiations, is the Postal Support Employee (PSE) language that exists in the Operating Services contract and Material Support Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Operating Services Craft currently has language that allows management to utilize PSEs if they do not exceed 10 percent of the career Operating and Facility Services employees. Historically management has never utilized PSEs for the Operating and Facility Services Craft. The Material Support Craft has an MOU that allows PSEs to comprise 20 percent of the workforce. The APWU prioritizes career employees, and the PSE position is not career. Our goal is to eliminate the language that allows the use of PSEs in Operating and Facility Services, which has not been utilized, and decrease the percentage of PSEs allowed under the Material Support MOU. In recent negotiations, the reduction of PSEs has been mutually agreed upon by both the APWU and the Postal Service, and we look to continue that trend with Operating and Facility Services and Material Support Craft negotiations.

The HRSSC contract expires Oct. 22, 2024. We will begin negotiations in either late summer or early fall for this contract. Although we have not yet solicited negotiation dates, we have met with local leaders and discussed key issues they would like to improve upon. To initiate negotiations, the union must send our intent to bargain

notice to Postal Service management between 120 and 90 days prior to contract expiration. When we notify the Postal Service, we will solicit dates to bargain from management. This will be the second contract negotiation for HRSSC, and our goal is to expand upon their very successful inaugural contract that they ratified in 2021.

The newest members to organize with the APWU are the private sector mail-haul drivers of the Albuquerque Mail Service (AMS) based in Albuquerque, NM. These drivers won a successful union campaign in January 2024, and have been building union power and solidarity since day one. We held our first negotiations session with the company, which is being represented by the Jackson Lewis law firm, on May 20, 2024.

**FOR ALL CONTRACTS, THE APWU
WILL FIGHT DILIGENTLY FOR
THE ADVANCEMENTS THAT
OUR MEMBERS DESERVE. WE
WILL COMMUNICATE WITH OUR
MEMBERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR
DEMANDS, AND WORK TO MAKE
THOSE DEMANDS A REALITY.**

Prior to our negotiation session, a team of AMS drivers and fellow Albuquerque Local 380 members marched on the company's office to demand a good, fair contract. The drivers demand transparency and respect. We rallied in front of the gates of the company's yard while AMS drivers and local APWU leaders provided words of encouragement. The message to the company was loud and clear: we demand a good, fair contract for the hard work and dedication AMS drivers provide. We look forward to continuing negotiations and tentatively agreeing to terms that the drivers can support and ratify.

For all contracts, the APWU will fight diligently for the advancements that our members deserve. We will communicate with our members to understand their demands, and work to make those demands a reality. ■

SOUTHERN REGION COORDINATOR

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



Yared Wonde, Southern Regional Coordinator

Standing Strong to Build a Bigger Union and Advance Forward, Together

The best way to win big is by “standing strong” to build a bigger union. Members should continue to encourage nonmember coworkers to join the APWU; we are all in this fight equally and our union gets twice as “strong” with equal pay and equal rights – what we all deserve.

I have witnessed the Postal Service’s relentless assault on our members. Over the past two years, Article 12 excessing has impacted every district across the Southern Region, disrupting employees’ lives and livelihoods. It is evident that reassignments have affected numerous facilities. As we always have, we will continue to fight back against these challenges the APWU way. Do not be discouraged. With the collaborative efforts between myself and the National Business Agents (NBAs) regarding excessing, most of the impacts have been canceled. Our partnership has been instrumental in supporting locals with Article 12 grievances, and ensuring that affected members receive the assistance they need. Along with the participation of local leaders, we are making sure to actively monitor the impacted employees’ retreat rights closely.

Additionally, with the implementation of the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established by APWU Headquarters, we are attempting to reduce the grievance backlog. In this process, I would like to recognize Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell who took the lead, and I applaud her efforts on behalf of myself and the Southern Region members.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of our Clerk, Maintenance, and Motor Vehicle Service Division NBAs who work tirelessly to represent our members:

Clerk Division NBA – Atlantic Region:

- Jim DeMauro
- Doris Orr-Richardson
- Sandra Munoz-Hernandez

Clerk Division NBA – Memphis Region:

- Pamela Smith
- Joe Jolley

Clerk Division NBA – Dallas Region:

- Charles Tillman
- Diann Scurlark
- Carlton Williams

Clerk Division NBA – Shared with the Central Region/Southern Region:

- Robert “Bob” Kessler
- Daniel F. Skemp
- Ashley Cargill
- Emily Weber

Maintenance Division NBA:

- John Gearhard
- Carlos Paz

Motor Vehicle Service Division NBA:

- Bruce Amey
- Dyrike Shaw

I also want to acknowledge the dedication of our coordinators in other regions for the exceptional work they are doing to support our members and advance our union’s mission.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all APWU members for their unwavering support and for entrusting me with a leadership role within our esteemed union. Serving the Southern Region and being part of the executive board has been an immensely fulfilling experience. It has been an honor and privilege to serve as the Southern Region Coordinator, and I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of our union and the lives of our fellow postal workers.

From my heart, I can affirm that there is no greater reward than serving our fellow men and women. As I continue in my role as Southern Region Coordinator, I am committed to serving the membership with dedication and integrity. I am here, willing, and ready to support in any way I can.

Always remember, let us continue to “stand united, uphold our values,” and advance forward, together. ■



Judy Beard, Director

Our Fight Continues: Engaging with Ballot Measures, Promoting Federal Retirement Fairness, and Protecting Our Letter Carriers

What's on the Ballot? Citizen-Initiated Ballot Measures

One way to get engaged this election season is through the ballot initiative process. Ballot initiatives are state-level measures that give citizens the power to change laws through a vote. Currently, 26 states and the District of Columbia allow for citizen-initiated and citizen-led ballot measures, which can be in the form of a constitutional amendment, state statute, or veto referendum. Ballot measures can be a key tool to bypass the partisan gridlock in Congress and allow citizens to pass measures at the state level on minimum wage increases, Vote-by-Mail, tax initiatives, reproductive rights, voting rights, and more.

In addition to citizen-led measures, almost every state (except for Delaware) is required to hold a vote on any change to their state constitution. As this edition goes to press, 117 statewide ballot measures in 35 states have received the proper clearance to appear on the ballot.

Please educate yourself on what will appear on your ballot this November. You can visit apwu.org/2024-elections for resources, including your sample ballot, which will include any approved ballot measures.



 **Get Ready to Vote in 2024**

Federal Retirement Fairness Act (H.R. 5995)

In addition to voting on ballot measures in your state, we want to give you an update on an important bill that could affect our members, other postal union employees, and federal employees: the *Federal Retirement Fairness Act* (H.R. 5995). If passed, this bill would allow temporary postal and federal employees who are promoted to career positions the option of “buying back” the time that they worked as a noncareer employee to use toward their retirement. Temporary postal employees are noncareer

employees, such as Postal Support Employees (PSEs), Transitional Employees, and Casuals who are unable to make contributions to their retirement benefits until they become career Postal Service employees.

Last Congress, the bill received 100 cosponsors in the House of Representatives. Currently, the bill has 107 cosponsors and momentum is growing to introduce the bill in the Senate. Since we have surpassed the number of cosponsors from the last Congress, the time is now to put pressure on our elected officials to support the *Federal Retirement Fairness Act*!

Protect Our Letter Carriers Act (H.R. 7629, S. 4356)

The APWU has joined the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) to fight against a rise in violence that NALC members are facing. Last year, there were nearly 650 robberies of letter carriers on the job, up significantly from just 64 in 2019. Many of the criminals robbing and assaulting letter carriers are armed, creating a truly unsafe work environment for our fellow postal workers.

We are educating members of Congress about the problems postal workers face and have encouraged the introduction of legislation that would keep letter carriers, and all postal workers, safe. If signed into law, the *Protect Our Letter Carriers Act* would give the Postal Service \$7 billion over the next five years to install high-security collection boxes and secure electronic universal keys. Additionally, the bill requires the U.S. Attorney General to appoint an Assistant U.S. Attorney in all 94 judicial districts to coordinate and prioritize cases involving crimes against letter carriers. For those convicted of these crimes, the bill also strengthens the sentencing guidelines to ensure assaults on postal workers are treated like assaults on federal law enforcement officers.

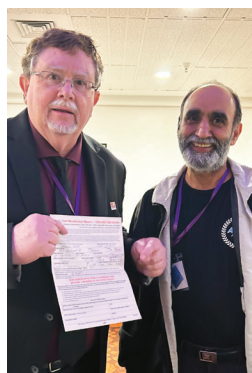
The APWU strongly supports the passage of both the *Federal Retirement Fairness Act* and the *Protect Our Letter Carriers Act*. We urge everyone to call their congressional representatives and spread the word to your family, friends, coworkers, and community organizations! ■



Anna Smith, Director

We Did It! “Building Union Power” Organizing Drive Recruits More Than 8,700 New APWU Members

Goals were set, plans were developed, we made commitments, we got motivated, we organized, and we succeeded! We commend all of our members across the nation for the work that went into our 2024 “Building Union Power” national organizing drive. No journey is without obstacles, but our ability to overcome challenges and adapt to change is what helped us achieve and exceed our goal of 5,000 new members, with more than 8,700 new members making the decision to stand with us. Of course, achieving our goal doesn’t mark the end of our organizing journey by any means. We must continue our efforts and use this momentum to increase our worker power during contract negotiations and on the workroom floor. Management will take every opportunity to turn a nonmember against the union to support their efforts. Let’s make it known, loud and clear, that we are increasing our union power!



Members around the country held events to recruit nonmembers during the “Building Union Power” organizing drive.

Peak [Hiring] Season Is Around the Corner

We are coming upon that time of year again when locals need to be reviewing their organizing materials inven-

tory and gearing up to accommodate the Postal Service’s increased hiring of new employees. During this time, the Organization Department fields a lot of questions about new-hire orientations. Year after year, managers have informed local leaders that employees being hired are “Holiday Postal Support Employees” (PSEs) and do not need to have union orientations. The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) covers all aspects of PSE wages, benefits, hours, and working conditions. The PSE workforce is comprised of employees who do not yet have career appointments, but who enjoy union representation and negotiated rights.

You will not find a PSE position title of, “Holiday PSE,” “Temporary PSE,” “Peak PSE,” or “360-PSE,” PSEs are hired for a term not to exceed 360 calendar days per appointment. A PSE is not a Holiday Clerk Assistant.

Regardless of what time of year a PSE is hired, when PSEs are separated due to lack of work, reappointments must be made by PSE seniority. PSEs will be reappointed ahead of applicants who have not served as PSEs, provided the need for hiring arises within one year of the break in service. Some additional provisions the APWU has secured for PSEs include:

- **Overtime Pay** at the rate of 1.5 times the basic hourly straight-time rate for work performed after eight hours on duty in a service day, or 40 hours in a service week.
- **Penalty Overtime Pay** at the rate of two times the basic hourly straight-time rate, excluding the month of December, for all work in excess of 10 hours in a service day, or 56 hours in a service week.
- **Night Differential Pay** for hours worked between 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- **Higher-level Pay for Higher-level Work** whereby the event a PSE is temporarily assigned to a higher-level position, PSEs are to be paid at the higher-level rate for the time spent performing higher-level duties.

You can find a PSE Rights and Benefits Brochure by visiting apwu.org/organizers-tool-kit or sending a request to organization@apwu.org.

Thank you for everything that you do every day. ■



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

Avoiding Foreclosure on Your Home

Millions of homeowners are facing financial difficulties because of how they structured their mortgages. Some borrowers did not understand the risks of a mortgage tied to fluctuating interest rates. Others borrowed more than they could afford or did not anticipate a sufficient cash cushion to cover them when their adjustable rates rose.

Develop a Checklist

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offer the following checklist to improve your chances of keeping ownership of your home:

- **Don't ignore the problem.** The further behind you become, the harder it will be to reinstate your loan.
- **Open and respond to all mail from your lender.** The first notice will offer good information about foreclosure prevention options.
- **Contact your lender.** If you have missed a mortgage payment, contact your lender about outlining refinance options. Speak to the lender's Loss Mitigation or Collection Department to obtain information on options.
- **Discuss your situation honestly.** Give the lender specialist an accurate account of all bills and statements.
- **Review the terms of your mortgage.** Find out how much equity you have in your home. Review the "reset" points and see if there are penalties or restrictions should you qualify to refinance.
- **Know your mortgage rights.** Learn about the foreclosure laws and time frames in your state by contacting the State Government Housing Office.
- **Understand foreclosure prevention options.** HUD's housing counseling program helps families obtain, sustain, and retain their homes.
- **Prioritize your spending.** Review your finances and see where you can cut spending. Look for optional expenses that you can eliminate, such

as cable television and streaming services, memberships, and entertainment. Delay payments on credit cards until you have paid your mortgage.

- **Consider your options.** Your lender may approve a retention, which grants a temporary reprieve from the full monthly payment to help resolve financial issues. Payments normally resume later. If the property is worth less than the balance owed on the mortgage, liquidation can allow the homeowner to settle with the lender.
- **Use your assets.** Sell that second car or jewelry. Check whole life insurance policies for a cash value. Even if these efforts don't significantly increase your available cash or your income, they demonstrate to your lender that you are willing to make sacrifices to keep your home.

IF YOU TAKE THE ABOVE STEPS AND ARE NOT ABLE TO REACH A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION, DON'T GIVE UP. THE HUD FUNDS FREE OR VERY LOW-COST HOUSING COUNSELING NATIONWIDE.

Be Aware of Foreclosure "Rescue" Scams

Be aware of con artists who scam homeowners into moving out and deeding their property over to a third party under the guise that they can rent the property with the option to buy it back later. In many cases, the original homeowner may not be able to afford the rent and can face eviction, or the price to buy the property back is too high.

Seek Assistance from a Housing Counselor

If you take the above steps and are not able to reach a satisfactory conclusion, don't give up. The HUD funds free or very low-cost housing counseling nationwide. Housing counselors can help you understand the law and your options, organize your finances, and represent you in negotiations with your lender if you need this assistance. To find a HUD-approved housing counselor near you, call (800) 569-4287 or TTY (800) 877-8339. ■

New Veterans Affairs Policy Exempts Copayments for Certain Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Visits Through 2027



Attention APWU veterans and APWU family members of veterans: Through Dec. 29, 2027, veterans no longer need to make copayments for their first three outpatient mental health care and substance use disorder visits each calendar year through 2027.

In this edition of Home Front, we will educate our APWU veterans and their family members about the new Veterans Affairs (VA) mental health care laws that exempt certain copayments for outpatient treatment to millions of veterans, regardless of VA enrollment status.

On May 29, 2024, President Biden-appointed Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Denis McDonough stated "We want every veteran, regardless of their financial status, to have access to the mental health care they deserve, and that's what this copayment exemption is all about. We are constantly working to expand access to mental health care, and we won't rest until every veteran has access to care whenever and wherever they need it."

This new VA copayment exemption benefit is backdated to June 27, 2023. Eligible patients who paid copayments in 2023 will receive automatic refunds. The exemption period will end on Dec. 29, 2027. To be eligible for this exemption, the outpatient visit must be with a qualified mental health professional at a VA medical facility or provided through the VA's approved network of Community Care Providers. VA will automatically refund veterans for any copayments paid to the VA on or after June 27, 2023, for these mental health appointments, with no further action required by those veterans. The VA, and the entire Biden-Harris administration are committed to providing all veterans with the timely, world-class health care they deserve.

Additional Resources for Veterans in Emergency Crises

Effective Jan. 17, 2023, the VA launched a policy addressing veterans in acute suicidal crisis. Eligible veterans in acute suicidal crisis can go to any VA or non-VA emergency

facility for no cost to the veteran for emergency care. This expansion of mental health care will help prevent veterans' suicide by guaranteeing no cost, world-class care in times of emergency crisis. It will also increase access to acute suicide care for up to nine million veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA Health Care.

ON MAY 29, 2024, PRESIDENT BIDEN-APPOINTED SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DENIS MCDONOUGH STATED "WE WANT EVERY VETERAN, REGARDLESS OF THEIR FINANCIAL STATUS, TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE MENTAL HEALTH CARE THEY DESERVE, AND THAT'S WHAT THIS COPAYMENT EXEMPTION IS ALL ABOUT."

Preventing Veteran Suicide Is the VA's Top Clinical Priority

"Veterans in suicidal crisis can now receive the free, world-class emergency health care they deserve no matter where they need it, when they need it, or whether they're enrolled in VA Health Care or not," said VA Secretary McDonough. "This expansion of VA care will save veterans' lives, and there's nothing more important than that."

In conclusion, thanks to the VA, all APWU veterans can now receive three free VA outpatient mental health treatment visits per year and up to 60 days of emergency VA suicidal treatment, at any VA medical center, at zero cost to the veteran, and you don't even have to be enrolled in VA Health Care to get these new VA mental health benefits.

Our goal remains the same - keeping our APWU veterans informed and updated on veterans' information and benefits.

For further information regarding veteran news and health benefits, visit va.gov. ■



Daleo Freeman, Director

The Importance of the Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a vital resource for the well-being of APWU members. As the National Director of the Human Relations Department, I want to ensure that every member understands the value of this program. Below is an overview of what the EAP is, the services it offers, the roles of its various committees, the support it provides during employee-related deaths, and how to stay engaged and seek help when needed.

What is the Employee Assistance Program?

Per Article 35 of our contract, “An employee’s voluntary participation in the EAP for assistance with alcohol and/or drug abuse will be considered favorably in disciplinary action proceedings.” The EAP assists members in many other areas as well.

The EAP is a confidential and voluntary service designed to help postal workers and their families address personal and work-related issues, enhancing their overall well-being and productivity.

Services Provided by the EAP

- **Counseling Services:** Confidential counseling for stress, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, and substance abuse. Available in person, by phone, or online.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Immediate support for traumatic events, personal loss, or workplace conflicts requiring urgent attention.
- **Legal and Financial Consultation:** Advice on debt management, estate planning, legal rights, and helping employees make informed decisions.
- **Work-Life Balance Resources:** Assistance with childcare, eldercare, and other family-related concerns impacting job performance.

Functions of the District Advisory Committees and the Joint Committee on Employee Assistance

- **District Advisory Committees (DAC):** Promotes the EAP within districts, organizes informational sessions, and provides feedback for program improvement. Members include union representatives, management, and EAP professionals.

- **Joint Committee on Employee Assistance (JCEP):** Oversees the EAP’s national strategy and implementation, ensuring that it meets postal workers’ needs. It includes representatives from the APWU, management, and EAP service providers.

Assistance During Employee-Related Deaths

- **Bereavement Counseling:** Grief counseling for employees and their families to help cope with the loss of a colleague.
- **Crisis Response Teams:** On-site support and counseling following a traumatic event or employee death.
- **Memorial and Support Services:** Assistance in organizing memorial services and providing ongoing support for those affected.

Reaching Out and Staying Active

- **Attend EAP Meetings and Workshops:** Participate in informational sessions, workshops, and training programs.
- **Provide Feedback:** Share experiences and suggestions with DAC and JCEP members to help improve the program.
- **Contact EAP:** For questions or assistance, reach out to eap@apwu.org. Our team is here to help you set up meetings, provide information, and connect you with support.

The EAP is dedicated to the health and well-being of our members. By using its services, participating in its programs, and seeking support when needed, you can ensure a healthier and more productive work life. The EAP is here for you – don’t hesitate to make use of this essential service. ■



RETIREES

Tell Congress to Pass the Social Security Fairness Act, NOW!



Nancy Olumekor, Director

As we celebrate our nation this summer, what could be better than honoring and respecting our public service workers – postal workers, teachers, police officers, firefighters, foreign pension recipients, and many more – who have tirelessly fought to be free from unjust penalties? As we have done in past years, retirees recognize the anniversaries of Social Security signed into law in August 1935 and Medicare, which was signed into law in July 1965. For 48 years, any retiree paying into Social Security reaped fair and equitable benefits from Social Security. Unfortunately, over the last 40 years, millions of retirees no longer celebrate the anniversary of Social Security because Congress enacted the Government Pension Offset (GPO) in 1977, and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) in 1983.

The WEP reduces Social Security benefits for workers that pay into the Social Security system, but who also worked additional job(s) that did not pay into Social Security.

**TO CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES,
CALL 1-202-224-3121 OR USE THE APWU
LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE AT 1-844-402-
1001 TO REMIND YOUR CONGRESSIONAL
REPRESENTATIVE AND SENATOR THAT
WHILE SOCIAL SECURITY CELEBRATES
ITS 89TH ANNIVERSARY IN AUGUST 2024
AND WE WANT OUR FAIR SHARE OF THE
ANNIVERSARY CAKE!**

The GPO reduces Social Security benefits to spouses or widows by two-thirds if they receive a retirement or disability pension based on other employment – such as the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), state pensions, or local pensions – that did not pay into the Social Security system. The WEP and the GPO has overwhelmingly affected public employees who served our nation, kept us safe and secure, educated our children, and kept our government running at the local, state, and federal levels.

The WEP unfairly cuts the earned benefits of public service workers and foreign pensioners, and the GPO reduces or denies spousal and survivor benefits. They will not reap the full Social Security benefits they are paying for now, as employees. They contributed to the Social Security system at the same rate as other employees who contribute to Social Security, yet they are denied an equitable benefit for those contributions. They qualified for Social Security benefits just as other citizens have, and they should not be penalized because they chose to serve our community through public service.

We are still waiting for Congress to enact the *Social Security Fairness Act* (H.R.82 and S.597) legislation which, if passed, would repeal the WEP and the GPO and provide a fair return on their investment in the Social Security system. Those CSRS annuitants as well as many local and state government annuitants, such as teachers, firefighters, and the police cannot relax and enjoy their retirement when they know that they are being denied the full Social Security benefits that they should receive.

Now is the time for Congress to act. The House Ways and Means Committee and Subcommittee on Social Security have acknowledged that the penalties imposed by the WEP and GPO are disproportionate and fundamentally unfair. Congress can move these bills to the floor and pass them. With 322 bipartisan cosponsors in the House and 59 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate, our elected officials have spoken for their constituents. Now it is time for the Congressional leadership to rectify these discriminatory policies and advance H.R. 82 & S.597 to a successful conclusion. We must put the pressure on Congress by writing letters, calling and sending them emails asking them to cosponsor and vote for the *Social Security Fairness Act*. To contact your representatives, call 1-202-224-3121 or use the APWU Legislative Hotline at 1-844-402-1001 to remind your Congressional Representatives that while Social Security celebrates its 89th anniversary in August 2024 and, we want our fair share of the Anniversary Cake! ■

HEALTH PLAN



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

Feel better without a trip to the ER

Get secure, non-urgent care by phone or video 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Next time you're sick, avoid the long wait and high cost of the ER.

Instead, get care from a Teladoc Health® board-certified doctor or other licensed provider for non-urgent and common conditions like the flu, allergies, coughs, sore throats, rashes and more. You can even get a prescription, if needed, sent to a pharmacy of your choice.

TELADOC HEALTH

- ✓ Have a confidential visit from anywhere
- ✓ Talk to a board-certified doctor by phone or video within minutes
- ✓ Get affordable care when you need it

ER

- ✗ Travel to the nearest ER while sick
- ✗ Deal with long wait times and risk of exposure to germs
- ✗ Pay potentially high fees for non-urgent

Get confidential virtual care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

TeleHealth is a convenient and low-cost solution for all APWU Health Plan members. You are able to get care from your home or anywhere you may need to access care. For most TeleHealth consumers, the cost for a video visit is lower than urgent care, emergency room and office. For APWU Health Plan members, see the member cost share below:

High Option - Pay only a \$10 copay when you use Teladoc.

Consumer Driven Option - Your cost share will be less when you use TeleHealth services; only 15% coinsurance or you can use your PCA (for no out-of-pocket fees) while funds are available.

Visit **apwuhp.com** for all your Teladoc benefits!

Visit **Teladoc.com** for more information or call **1-800-TELADOC (800-835-2362)**

Tefere Gebre

LABOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



The American Postal Worker recently spoke with the Greenpeace USA's Chief Program Officer Tefere Gebre, who has over 30 years of experience in coalition building, activism, and organizing in the labor movement. He was previously the executive vice president of the AFL-CIO, and became the first immigrant, political refugee, black man, and local labor council leader elected as a national officer of the AFL-CIO, when elected in 2013.

You have a breadth of experience spanning both the labor and environmental justice movements – can you tell readers how those struggles are related?

They are one and the same. Workers are almost always at the frontlines of corporate driven oppressions and destruction. Workers disproportionately tend to live near the most polluted areas where they are exposed to chemicals that cause great harm to them and their families such as asthma and cancer, that undercut life expectancies. Workers, unions, and organizations have begun pushing for protections on the job, as well as advocacy to address the root causes of the climate crisis. Workers are also the ones [that] respond, at great risk to themselves, to climate disasters such as wildfires, flooding and extreme heat. If we care about jobs, we must first have a planet to work on. There will be no jobs on a dead planet.

One phrase we hear a lot, particularly in regard to organizing around climate change, is the need for a “just transition.” What is that and how could it transform our communities for the better?

“Just Transition” is the need to shift away from toxic fossil fuels to a regenerative and clean energy economy in a way that secures workers’ rights and livelihoods, and ensures communities are protected.

History teaches us that past major economic transitions have left workers behind. In order to ensure that the long-fought [battle] for a clean energy transition doesn’t uphold the same systems of oppression and exploitation, its terms must be dictated by workers, labor unions, and broader social movements, not by corporations and the politicians they support.

Energy Transfer, the company behind the Dakota Access Pipeline, has filed a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP) against Greenpeace. What is that and what impacts could it have?

SLAPPs are meritless lawsuits often brought by the wealthy and powerful that are intended to silence criticism, activism, protest, and free speech. Even if SLAPP defendants prevail, they can still lose by being forced to spend time and money defending themselves.

In our case, Energy Transfer is suing for \$300 million — an amount that threatens to shut us down — for participating in a protest led by Indigenous organizers. The case also attempts to establish “collective liability” — a dangerous precedent that could hold any group represented at a large protest responsible for the actions of others. Our struggle against this lawsuit is about so much more than Greenpeace and the environmental movement. It could have impacts on every American who wants to exer-

cise their rights to freedom of peaceful expression and peaceful protest.

Why should union members be concerned about SLAPPs?

SLAPPs are a fundamental threat to unions and union members exercising their rights to challenge corporate power. The labor movement was born out of protest. SLAPPs can be used to silence our collective voices by making it impossible to protest for fair wage, workplace safety and shop floor democracy. The spread of corporate overreach tactics, especially SLAPPs, are the greatest threat that unions, environmental defenders and civic society face.

How can we support your work in our communities?

Greenpeace needs APWU members’ solidarity to fight back against corporate greed: The only way we can defeat a trillion-dollar fossil fuel giant is by practicing solidarity. Sign our Open Letter to Energy Transfer and pass it on to your family, friends and coworkers, and stay tuned for updates and follow @Greenpeaceusa on social media to learn about more actions as we head to trial. Beyond the trial, keep in touch so we can build our movements stronger together for healthy and safe communities and a just economic future. ■



Standing Rock Sioux Tribe members and allies march to demand an end to the Dakota Access Pipeline project that went through sacred native lands.



FROM the FIELD

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

“My first week at the APWU Leadership Institute was eye opening. If anyone thought this was going to be easy, they thought wrong. This week was filled with learning about the Labor Movement and what it means to be in a union.”

– Kimberly Maurer, President
Twins City Postal Data Center
Local 7019

“Stepping into [negotiating] the new contract, I do believe that we are in good hands when it comes to our national leadership. With that being said, continue to fight the fight for yourself and each other. Know your rights as a union member and stand in solidarity.”

– Eddie Hosendove
480-481 Area Local (MI)
Human Relations Director

“Do I have to worry about getting laid off at [the] USPS with declining First-Class mail volume year after year? Well, quite frankly, I don’t worry about it. As long as I work under a labor contract, it’s not keeping me awake at night. Why? Our contract has a no layoff clause.”

– Stephen Rotzler
Florida State APWU (Six Bits)

“I am too young to worry about retirement.’ Many employees have thought the same thing at some point, myself included. I am not here to give you financial advice, but I want to encourage all of you not to [wait to] plan later for 30 years down the road. Take action now so that when you start looking at the end of your career, you will be glad you took action early.”

– Jerry Waldron, Vice President
Beckley Area Local 1409

LABOR NEWS

Southern Workers Ratify Inaugural Contracts with Blue Bird, New Flyer

The South used to be a haven for corporations who could “set up shop” and skimp workers on pay, benefits, and safety. However, workers are standing up, fighting back, and changing the story by winning new unions and contracts.

One year after voting to unionize with the United Steelworkers Union, workers at Blue Bird Corp., a manufacturer of electric and low-emission school buses in Fort Vally, GA voted overwhelmingly in favor of approving their first collective bargaining agreement on May 24. The three-year agreement, which covers more than 1,500 workers, includes substantial wage increases, a company-sponsored retirement plan, profit sharing, and improvements to health and safety practices.

Additionally, workers at the New Flyer electric bus manufacturing plant in Anniston, AL have successfully unionized with the Communications Workers of America and ratified their first union contract. The contract, which covers nearly 600 workers, includes raises, restrictions on forced overtime, expanded paid time off and holidays, cost-of-living adjustments, and improved benefits.

By fighting for these new contracts, these workers are showing their bosses that Southern workers deserve dignity and respect on the job – with a union contract! ■



REI Workers Continue Winning Unions, Rallying for New Contracts



On Feb. 9 workers at the Castleton REI location in Indianapolis, IN voted 27-17 to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union. On April 18, REI workers in Santa Cruz, CA voted 33 to 12 to unionize with the UFCW, becoming the tenth REI location to unionize. Despite the growing number of unionized stores, none of the unionized locations currently have been able to negotiate a contract with their management teams.

In May, workers at unionized REI locations across the country escalated their fight for new contracts and good faith bargaining by holding rallies, leafletting Co-op members, and participating in demonstrations and strikes during REI’s annual Anniversary Sale events throughout the month. Workers demonstrated in Bellingham, WA; Castleton, IN; Chicago, IL; Cleveland, OH, and New York, NY. RWDSU President Stuart Applebaum, NYC council members and other elected leaders, and AFL-CIO NYC Central Labor Council President Vincent Alvarez joined protesting REI workers in front of the store at the SoHo location in New York City with to demand a fair contract by the end of 2024.

Alabama Autoworkers Seek New Union Vote at Mercedes-Benz

The United Auto Workers (UAW) union filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on May 24 seeking a new union election at the Mercedes-Benz plant in Alabama. A week before the appeal, the UAW lost a vote to unionize the Mercedes plant, which would have been one of the largest plants in the South to unionize. The UAW accused the company of violating labor laws “in a relentless

anti-union campaign” to suppress union support in the vote, which included the firing of pro-union employees and holding mandatory captive-audience meetings. In its filing to the NLRB, the UAW stated that Mercedes’ efforts to influence the vote constituted unfair labor practices and prevented a free choice by employees, warranting a new election.

Denmark Abandons Universal Mail Service

The Danish government recently repealed its universal service obligation for postal services. Their national postal operator, PostNord, now has no legal obligation to provide letter and package delivery to the country's 3.5 million addresses, leaving mail delivery entirely to the free market.

The effects have been dramatic for postal workers and the Danish public. The United Federation of Workers in Denmark (3F), which represents postal workers, reports there are now just 7,500 Danish postal workers, which is down from 24,000 just a few years ago. Letter mail is delivered perhaps just one day a week. And package delivery is unreliable, with companies driving down wages of workers and driving unsafe trucks.

3F is committed to organizing the unorganized and winning new legislation to restore quality postal services in Denmark.



DC Hotel Workers Secure Better Wages, Better Staffing Following May Day Action

On May 1 - International Workers' Day - more than one thousand UNITE HERE-represented hotel workers from Local 25 rallied in Washington, DC for higher wages and decreased workloads due to understaffing. The unionized workers from 22 hotels in the Metropolitan DC area have been negotiating a new contract, and despite record profits in a post-pandemic rebound in the hotel industry, the hotel workers continue to experience heavy workloads, understaffing, and wages that aren't sufficient to support their families.

Management took notice! By June 13, more than 99 percent of members voted to ratify a new, four-year agreement that includes significant wage increases and improved benefits at more than 20 hotels.



Canadian Amazon Workers Won't Stop Organizing Despite Management's Dirty Tricks

In April, workers at two Amazon fulfillment centers in Vancouver, British Columbia (Canada) applied to establish a union with Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 315,000 workers. "Workers at Amazon are seeking job security, health and

safety, and fair wages," said Unifor National President Lana Payne. "Forming a democratic union in their workplace is the path to improved conditions of work."

During card-check certification in May, more than 45 percent of

workers at the Delta facility signed union cards. In Canada, if 55 percent of eligible workers at a facility sign union cards, certification is automatically granted. If 45 percent of workers sign cards, workers must take a vote instead. During the card-check certification process, Amazon ramped up hiring and increased the workforce by 30 percent, which diluted union support and dashed hope for an automatic certification. Unifor filed an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge with the B.C Labour Relations Board (BCLRB).

Voting took place from May 28-May 31, but Unifor's Western regional director Gavin McGarrigle said the results may be delayed until the challenges regarding voter composition and the ULP complaint have been resolved. ■

The IRS Direct File is Here to Stay – But Under Immediate Threat

In the March-April edition of this column, we reported on an important new public service that was being piloted in some portions of the country.

The program, called **Direct File**, was an effort by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide a public option for tax filing, bypassing the abusive tax preparation firms operated by big tech companies like Intuit.

The pilot program offered taxpayers in 12 states the option to file both their federal and state taxes online, for free, with the new tool offered by the IRS. While it's not always easy to get excited about paying taxes, the program has actually helped thousands of working people access tax breaks to which they're entitled, all without forking out exorbitant fees to the big tech tax preparation companies.

Following the success of the 2024 filing season, the IRS announced in late May that Direct File would be a permanent option, and that they would seek to expand the program to address more complex tax situations

by inviting all states to partner with Direct File in the months ahead.

The pilot program went off without a hitch in 2024, with more 140,000 taxpayers filing using Direct File. More than 90 percent of filers reported that the experience was either "Excellent" or "Above Average". The IRS estimated that Direct File users saved more than \$5.6 million in fees by filing for free this year.

Of course, the program was controversial, with opposition being driven by Intuit TurboTax and the other big tax preparation companies. While the IRS has announced they're making Direct File permanent, its opponents haven't yet given up the fight.

The big tech tax preparers have convinced governors in 13 states to side with the corporations over their constituents and refuse to cooperate with Direct File. There is also an effort in Congress to slip a poison pill into upcoming appropriations negotiations, which would prohibit the government from using federal funds to "develop or provide taxpayers a free, public electronic return-filing system." ■

Turning the Tide on School Privatization

In other good news, the school board in New Orleans, LA is fighting to reclaim control of schools in Orleans Parish.

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the state of Louisiana took control of most of New Orleans' schools, turning it into a patchwork system of charter schools to educate the region's children. While the schools continued to be financed publicly, the democratically-elected school board had very little control over how schools were operated. Instead, they were only able to open and close schools and manage a few district-operated buildings and all of the district's teachers lost their jobs.

By 2019, there wasn't a single publicly run school in New Orleans, making it the country's first all-charter school district.

That will change next school year when the school board opens a new district-run public school in the fall.

The plight of New Orleans' schools following Katrina is a great example of what author Naomi Klein coined as the "Shock Doctrine." Klein describes it as "the brute tactic

of systematically using the public's disorientation following a collective shock to push through radical pro-corporate measures."

While the corporate charter schools ran education in New Orleans, they failed to deliver on their promises of improving performance. In 2022, more than half of all the schools received D or F ratings. All but four of the district's 65 charter schools failed to meet the state's performance goals.

The announcement that the Orleans Parish School Board will reopen a district-run school is a turning point in the battle to keep public schools public and a win for our allies in the fight to preserve public institutions like the Postal Service. ■

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.

APWU Campaign for Expanded Services, New Work

Postal workers know that mail is changing. There are fewer letters and flats, and increasingly more packages. Much of our future depends on bringing new products and services into our retail units – and the revenue that comes with it. Any new services that we can provide would help to strengthen the bond with the people. The new 2022 *Postal Service Reform Act* (PSRA) allows the Postal Service to perform non-postal services for local, state, and tribal government agencies.

Post offices in Arkansas and Hawai'i are leading the way to show how this can be done. In these states, postal workers partnered with the state government to offer identity (ID) proofing for unemployment insurance benefits. Postal workers at the participating locations are trained to complete ID-proofing services to improve the timeliness of benefit payments while reducing the risk of fraud. It also increases equity for claimants who don't have reliable high-speed internet.

"These are tremendous examples of what kind of new work we can win if we work with state governments. I encourage every local and state entity to reach out to the various levels of government with the aim of identifying areas that the Postal Service can perform needed work, such as fishing and hunting licenses, notary services, internet access, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, car registration and licensing, and basic financial services," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

Leading the charge to win new and expanded services isn't just a benefit to the future of the Postal Service, it's also our commitment to serving the public who rely on us. Ninety-five percent of the U.S. population lives within five miles of a Post Office. Working to expand postal services is an investment in our communities and an investment in the job security and bargaining power of our members. ■

Better Staffing, Better Service –

A Grassroots Campaign to Improve Our Public Postal Service

For decades, postal workers have faced a hostile management culture that is made worse by chronic short staffing in our facilities. The APWU leadership has been working hard to get management to address this issue. We connected with the public as short staffing negatively affects the services that we provide and creates a more stressful workplace for our members and all postal workers. To that end we have engaged an "ad hoc" staffing committee that has advised the national leadership and helped propel our "Better Staffing, Better Service" campaign forward. All local and state organizations have now received packets of brochures and public petitions. We are prepared to assist locals and states in this important fight, whether with communications assistance, campaign materials, media help, or advice on appropriate grievances, and other tactics.

While there was considerable progress with a series of Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) regarding Function 1 mail processing staffing, we have not con-



vinced management to increase the complement in retail. Too often this results in temporarily closed post offices due to a lack of proper staffing. Along with all other avenues, we must win the staffing battles in the streets with the support of the public. If you are ready to get more involved in this fight, go to apwu.org/better-postal-staffing. You can also reach out to campaign lead Sam Wood or email staffing@apwu.org. ■



APWU National Officers join the inaugural class at the graduation ceremony.

The first-ever class of the APWU Leadership Institute celebrated their graduation with a ceremony at the Maritime Institute this May. The class of 32 APWU leaders came from every region, every craft, and with various levels of experience in the union. Over the course of the Institute, they learned the fundamentals of organized labor, significant labor struggles of the past and present, and how to effectively organize in the workplace and beyond. The ceremony included each graduate giving a speech on the importance of leadership and activism to create positive change in our union,

our communities, and our world, further exhibiting their determination to return to their locals and carry out their work as union leaders.

“The first class of our APWU Leadership Institute was a tremendous success,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “This group has left as even stronger leaders, and these activists are ready to continue building the APWU for years to come. We can’t wait for our next class!”

Registration for the second class will be opening soon. Stay tuned to apwu.org/institute for more information. ■

The APWU, USPS Agree to Review Grievance Backlog, Seek Justice for Waiting Members

Due to management’s constant violations of the contract, there is an endless backlog of grievances. At the time of publication, there are more than 20,000 grievances currently scheduled and awaiting national arbitration. Decisions in these cases can affect members’ pay, retirement benefits, and job security, which makes it even more urgent that the backlog get addressed. Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to arbitrate these many cases, so from time to time the APWU and the Postal Service engage in a review process. In March 2024, APWU President Mark Dimondstein signed a memo with USPS Deputy Postmaster General Douglas Tulino, agreeing to a months-long review process to address the backlog and bring answers to members awaiting a decision. APWU Secretary Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell is spearheading this process for the APWU, and the Regional Coordinators and National Business Agents (NBAs) are fully engaged in this fight as well. This is one more benefit that makes a “union difference”. The APWU will work hard during this review process to do the best we can to adjudicate members’ cases in a timely manner, for justice delayed is justice denied. ■



Looking Back: This Time in Our Labor History

Cesar Chavez Leads "1,000 Mile March" for Farm-Worker Rights in California



Summer 1975 - Cesar Chavez trekked more than 1,000 miles in 59 days leading a march up the coast of California to educate farm workers about their newly won right to unionize following the passage of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (CALRA). California Governor Jerry Brown signed CALRA into law on June 4, 1975, which protected farm workers' right to unionize, collectively bargain, to vote in secret-ballot elections, and established the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB). The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 specifically excluded agricultural workers from the protections of the Act, exclusions that remain in many states today.

Cesar Chavez was born in Yuma, AZ in 1927 and grew up in a family of poor migrant Mexican-American farm workers. During the Great Depression his family lost their ranch and moved to California, where Chavez began working in the fields at the age of 11, witnessing the indignity and discrimination faced by agricultural workers.

He spent the following decades fighting for worker dignity and to improve the pay and working conditions for agricultural workers

who, like his parents, kept food on peoples' tables across America, despite often enduring their own hunger, poor working conditions, and starvation wages.

Chavez co-founded the United Farm Workers (UFW) union with Dolores Huerta in 1962 to advance "La Causa" (the cause), which was the movement to organize Mexican-American farm workers by bringing workers and their families together through community organizing.

Inspired by the nonviolent civil disobedience actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., Chavez started organizing workers in the 1950s, and spent the 1960s and 1970s organizing marches, boycotts, and fasting to draw attention to La Causa and justice for farm workers.

The UFW action that culminated in the passage of CALRA was its march to the E&J Gallo Winery in Modesto, CA on March 1, 1975. The UFW had represented Gallo grape workers since 1967, but their contract expired in 1973. After months of working without a contract, Gallo informed its workers and the UFW that they would no longer be represented by the UFW and would be represented by the Teamsters instead.

Gallo refused to hold a secret-ballot representational election, despite calls from the workers. More than 85 percent of the workers walked off their jobs and the UFW called for a boycott of Gallo products. The strike and boycott remained in effect until 1978 when the UFW won its contract back.

Workers marched from San Francisco, Fresno, and Stockton to Modesto to bring attention to the boycott and to continue their calls for a union election. Chavez stated that it would last "for an eternity" unless the company allowed secret-ballot and representational elections for workers to make their own choice about which union would represent them. More than 15,000 people participated in the marches and rallies.

The Modesto March brought national attention to the plight of farm-workers in the state, and it energized the state's farm labor movement. Governor Jerry Brown was a longtime supporter of the UFW. Upon his election in 1974, Brown quickly began pushing for labor law reform. Farm owners, reluctant to continue fighting against the UFW, stopped resisting the proposed reforms and the CALRA was passed and signed into law. Chavez and the UFW celebrated the victory and informed workers of their rights by trekking more than 1,000 miles from the Mexican border along the coast to Salinas and then from Sacramento to the UFW's La Paz headquarters near Bakersfield, CA. Tens of thousands of farm workers walked and rallied with Chavez to hear him speak and organize their ranches. ■



Important information about your health insurance plan.

APWU Retirees:

SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD FOR MEDICARE PART B RUNS THROUGH SEPT. 30, 2024.

As a result of the *Postal Service Reform Act of 2022*, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in conjunction with the USPS have implemented a new **Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program** as required under the new law, including a Medicare Part B Special Enrollment Period for USPS annuitants and their eligible family members. **The special enrollment period runs through Sept. 30, 2024.**

Who is eligible to apply?

If you and your eligible family members were entitled to Medicare Part A as of Jan. 1, 2024, you may be entitled to apply for Medicare Part B during the Special Enrollment Period without paying a late enrollment penalty.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the PSHB program?

Please contact the USPS:

Dial 1-833-712-7742 or email retirementbenefits@usps.gov.