

Postal Worker

November/December 2024

**We Won't Be Silenced:
Postal Workers and Allies Rally for
Vote-by-Mail, Better Service, and
a Good Contract Now!**



**APWU Health Plan Open Enrollment Period
November 11 - December 9, 2024 (see page 10).**

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ABOUT THE COVER:

Rallying in over 90 cities, thousands of postal workers and allies came out in full force for APWU's Oct. 1 Day of Action, promoting Vote-by-Mail, demanding better staffing, public comments for the network changes that affect us all, and a good contract now!

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Negotiations: No Easy Victories – the Struggle Continues!

PRESIDENT MARK DIMONDSTEIN

For the fourth time, I am honored to be your lead negotiator for a new Collective Bargaining Agreement, also called our union contract. In the last three rounds of negotiations, we have made substantial progress in overcoming the setbacks of the 2010 concessionary contract and generally advancing the well-being of postal workers and our families. Some examples include: maintaining our full cost-of-living-adjustments (COLAs), no-layoff protections, the 50-mile limit on excessing, automatic conversions to career after two years for most postal support employees (PSEs), restoring two of the top steps lost in the post-2010 career pay scale, returning Level 8 jobs to the higher pre-2010 wage rates, eliminating all non-career jobs in maintenance, no subcontracting of existing postal vehicle service (PVS) work, improving PSE benefits, and more guaranteed work hours and rights for part-time flexible employees (PTFs).

Our general goal during negotiations is to continue the progress built over years of struggle and to enhance the well-being of postal workers with good wage increases and COLAs, improve workplace safety, guarantee better staffing, eliminate the divisive two-tier wage scales, and increase more career jobs.

Long before negotiations opened on June 25, we began the intense preparation process. Under the solid guidance of Industrial Relations Director and Chief Spokesperson Charlie Cash and the hard work of the National Negotiations Committee (NNC), and contributions by assistant craft directors, numerous national business agents (NBAs), and staff, the APWU researched our history of collective bargaining, studied economic trends, assessed USPS finances, examined other union contracts, and weighed APWU convention resolutions to develop our proposals and strategies.

Despite the union's best efforts, including a weeklong "lockdown" before the contract expired on Sept. 20, we have not, as of my writing, reached a new contract. *(See negotiations updates on page 5).*

Forks in the Road

Without a new contract by expiration, there were three possible paths forward:

- Declare an impasse, meaning negotiations are over. Then proceed with interest arbitration, where an

arbitrator dictates our future wages, benefits and conditions of employment.

- Withhold our labor and engage in an unlawful strike. No anti-worker law can deny workers our inherent right to withhold our labor as witnessed by the historic 1970 Great Postal Strike. Until conditions significantly change, strike actions today would clearly lack the needed overwhelming support of the members.
- Continue negotiations striving to reach a voluntary new contract. The reality is that without the hammer of "No Contract, No Work" and the legal right to strike, management has little pressure to get the negotiations done by the expiration date. In 2021, we were able to reach a solid new voluntary agreement within a few months after expiration.

As previously reported, the NNC unanimously voted that it is in the best interests of our members to continue with negotiations since some real progress has been made and it is always better to control our own destiny.

No Magic Wands

Negotiations are never easy, even when management comes to the negotiating table in "good faith" as they did in 2021. While the union and management will find some areas of mutual interest, negotiations reflect a "class struggle," i.e. the bosses versus the workers. Postal workers enter the battlefield seeking maximum gain in terms of compensation, safety, rights, and job security, while management seeks ways to get us to work harder for less. When we declare "Union Proud, Say it Loud" and wear our union gear, sign up non-members, and join rallies such as the October 1 Day of Action, we build our power and send management the message that we are united in our demands for a good new contract. ■

As this is the last magazine before the holiday season, whether you celebrate Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, or other holidays, I wish all our members a safe and joyous holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year!



NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE:

APWU and USPS 'Stop the Clock' to Continue Bargaining

The Collective Bargaining Agreement, or union contract, between the APWU and the USPS covers the wages, hours, and working conditions of 200,000 postal workers. Our current contract was due to expire at midnight, Sept. 20, 2024.

We opened bargaining with the Postal Service on June 25. Since then, we have met frequently to exchange proposals and make progress toward the good, new contract postal workers deserve. In the week leading up to contract expiration, the APWU and postal management were "locked down," engaging in around-the-clock negotiating sessions at the "main table," the "craft tables," and in other committees.

During the lockdown, there was some modest progress on a number of issues affecting all our crafts, including job security, protecting bargaining unit work, and a narrowing of differences on other important items, including the economic package.

However, the APWU and management were unable to secure a negotiated agreement by midnight, Sept. 20.

As contract expiration approached, your National Negotiating Committee (NNC) faced two options: either begin the process of mediation with the expectation that we would head to interest arbitration, or seek mutual agreement with postal management to "stop the clock," (meaning the contract does not expire on Sept. 20) and continue negotiations for a period of time.

It was the decision of the NNC to stop the clock and continue bargaining. We have secured an agreement from management that the negotiators will meet at least once a week going forward. It is also the position of the NNC that we will reevaluate progress on a regular basis and invoke mediation if further negotiations are not productive.

This decision is similar to the one taken by the NNC in our previous round of bargaining in 2021, when we stopped the clock and continued negotiations. In 2021, we reached a tentative agreement in early December, which the membership later ratified with a strong 94 percent "yes" vote.

"IT IS CRUCIAL THAT AS WE CONTINUE TO NEGOTIATE, OUR ENTIRE MEMBERSHIP STAYS ENGAGED, UNION PROUD, AND UNION STRONG IN OUR STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE."

- PRESIDENT DIMONDSTEIN

"The entire APWU negotiating team is united in our efforts to secure the good new contract that our members deserve," said APWU Industrial Relations Director and Chief Spokesperson Charlie Cash. "We all believe that continuing negotiations is in the best interest of our members as we continue to make progress towards our bargaining goals."

"The APWU will not be deterred in our quest to win a contract that hard-working postal workers can be proud of," declared President Mark Dimondstein. "It is crucial that as we continue to negotiate, our entire membership stays engaged, union proud, and union strong in our struggle for justice."

The APWU will continue to keep the members updated, including regular messages on the negotiation hotline at (202) 642-9049, our website (apwu.org), and on our social media channels. ■

What does "STOP THE CLOCK" Mean?

All provisions of the 2021-2024 contract remain in force, including:

- Current no-layoff protections and 50-mile limit on excessing
- Step increases and leave benefits continue as per existing agreement
- Bidding and seniority rights carry

Future COLAs and general wage increases must be negotiated in new agreement.

WE WON'T BE SILENCED: APWU Members Loud

Thousands of dedicated postal workers took to the streets for our “October 1 National Day of Action” to let the public know just how well we can move the mail when given the proper tools.

Rallying in over 90 cities from the East Coast to the West - and beyond – thousands of postal workers from hundreds of APWU locals and states, with the support of community allies, came out in full force on Oct. 1 to promote Vote-by-Mail, advocate for a strong new contract with language to guarantee better staffing, and demand that postal management treat all mail, all year long, with the same care and attention that election mail and ballots receive during election season. This means increasing staffing at post offices and providing better service, which the public deserves! The APWU also demands that the public have a voice in how the Postal Service runs by allowing public comments and making them available

and accessible in the face of the network changes that affect us all.

Postal workers know just how well the public postal service can work. In 2020, postal workers delivered 97.9 percent of ballots to election officials within three days. In 2022, postal workers delivered 99 percent of ballots to election officials within five days. With signs that read “VOTE BY MAIL, WE WON'T FAIL,” our message rang loud and clear.

“Postal workers and the Postal Service are prepared to do an excellent job to ensure that ballots and election-related mail are delivered in a timely manner. But efficient and timely service also should apply



Spokane, WA



Eagan, MN



Detroit, MI



Tampa, FL



Dallas, TX



San Diego, CA

and Proud for October 1 National Day of Action

all year to the delivery of prescription drugs, Social Security checks, financial documents, personal correspondence, and other mail and packages,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “With the chaotic implementation of ‘network modernization’ combined with new management plans to slow down more mail, particularly as it relates to rural America, mail service is heading in the wrong direction. This must be reversed and fixed. Postal workers know what it takes to get back on track, and I hope management heard us loud and clear today!”

“We are proud to be able to show up for the people in every community to deliver their vital and sometimes life-saving mail,” said APWU Secretary-Treasurer Elizabeth “Liz” Powell. “By rallying on the streets of over 90 cities, we showed that we are ready to take care of election mail and ballots this fall, and to do what it takes to provide high-quality, dependable mail service to every household in America, while ensuring the public’s right to comment.”



Niagara Falls, NY

Hundreds of local news stations and newspapers covered the rally, and social media was flooded with photos and videos coming from workers in the streets at actions, ultimately reaching millions of everyday voters and postal customers. Those who could not get off work to participate sent in selfies wearing stickers and buttons to show solidarity. At the end of the day, we sent the message to the public about the trustworthiness of election mail, and a message to management about the need to provide that same great service year-round with improved staffing and a good contract for APWU members.

Find our petitions, photos, and more from our National Day of Action at apwu.org/rally. ■



Raleigh, NC



Salt Lake City, UT



Boston, MA



Pasadena, CA

SEASON'S GREETINGS

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

Robert Romanowski Appointed to Fill New Clerk Division Assistant Director 'C' Position



Clerk Division Assistant Director
"C" Bob Romanowski

APWU Clerk Division Director Lamont Brooks appointed Robert "Bob" Romanowski to fill the newly created Clerk Division Assistant Director 'C' position on Oct. 8, 2024, with an effective date of Nov. 4, 2024.

Delegates approved the creation of this position at the 2024 APWU National Convention, held in Detroit, MI, by an overwhelming margin. In accordance with the APWU Constitution and By-Laws, the Clerk Division Executive Committee, consisting of headquarters officers and national business agents (NBAs) representing the craft, voted to accept Director Brooks' recommendation, which they passed unanimously.

Romanowski began his postal career at the Toms River, NJ Post Office in 1997 as a Mail Processing Clerk. He

served as a steward, clerk craft director, and vice president for his local until he was elected to the position of National Business Agent, Clerk Division, for the Philadelphia Region in 2007, where he has served in that capacity until his appointment as Assistant Director 'C'. He also participated in three national-level contract negotiations alongside headquarters craft officers and other selected NBAs.

Romanowski has always believed strongly in the education of the union's stewards, officers, and members, and has been an instructor at a West Virginia summer school for over 20 years. In addition, as an NBA, he has assisted APWU Research & Education Director Joyce Robinson as an instructor on numerous issues for training purposes over the years.

Director Brooks cited Romanowski's experience, ability, and strong commitment to the union as the primary reasons for his appointment to the assistant director position. Please join us in congratulating Bob Romanowski on his appointment to this vital new position in the Clerk Division of APWU. ■



APWU November/December QUIZ

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 December 3, 2024. Winners will be randomly selected among those who correctly answer the following:

1. **Project 2025 would harm veterans in several ways. Name one way it would hurt veterans or their benefits.**
2. **The election season is over, but legislative work is year-round! What is one way you can stay engaged in politics after the elections?**
3. **True or False – "Holiday PSE" is a real job title.**

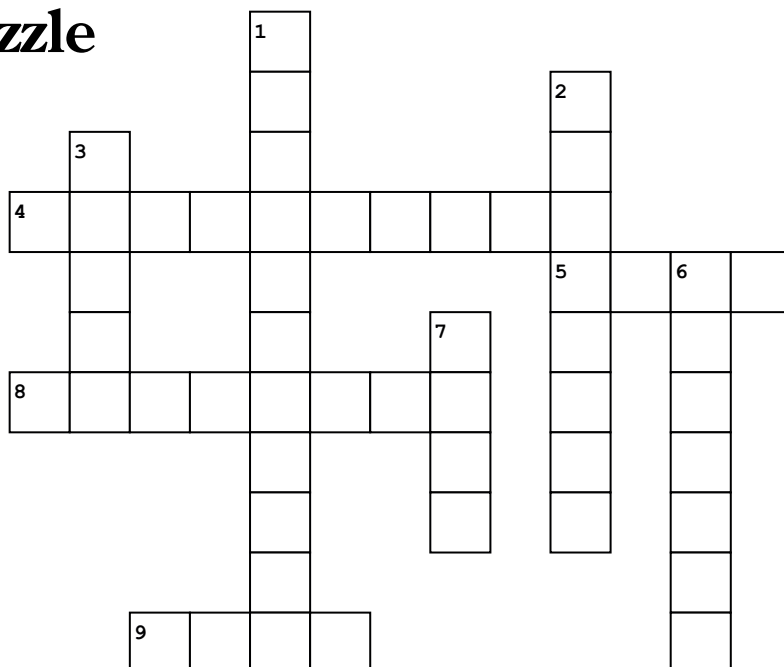
APWU Crossword Puzzle

Across

4. The Postal Regulatory _____ is currently reviewing a USPS proposal to change service standards.
5. One sign of suspicious mail is excessive _____.
8. Leading up the 1892 General Strike in New Orleans, three unions, known as the Triple _____, were negotiating for shorter workdays and overtime pay.
9. Payment Processors are charging fees or "_____ fees" to parents, when adding lunch money to student accounts."

Down

1. Stop the Clock is a tactic to keep negotiations out of interest _____.
2. The current _____ was set to expire at midnight on Sept. 20, 2024.
3. The APWU wants to keep "local mail" _____.
6. What kind of discount did the Postal Service eliminate that many package consolidators took advantage of?
7. What is the acronym for the fund that provides financial relief to postal employees who are victims of a natural disaster?"



Crossword Answers:
Across: 4. Commission 5. tape 8. Alliance 9. junk
Down: 1. arbitration 2. contract 3. local 6. presort 7. PERF

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 copy of the current 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 December 3, 2024 and we'll send you a promo code worth \$50 to use towards gear at apwustore.org.

Jesse Bahena (CA)
Gennady Kurbat (WA)
Labinot Dervisholli (NY)

Open Season Hotline

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

Email: openseason@apwuhp.com

Website: www.apwuhp.com



About PSHB and Auto Enrollment:

Good news! You get to keep your current APWU Health Plan. The Health Plan is officially confirmed as a PSHB carrier for 2025.

As part of PSHB implementation, OPM will automatically enroll you in the plan you have today. If you don't have the APWU Health Plan, now is a great time to consider your Union's plan.

If you have questions about PSHB, contact the PSHB Help Line by calling **844-451-1261** or emailing pshbhelpline@opm.gov.



ENROLL DURING OPEN SEASON

November 11 - December 9, 2024

High Option

With low copays and low deductibles, the High Option is a premier plan in the Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program.

100% coverage for in-network services

- ✓ Preventive care and screenings
- ✓ Lab tests (covered blood work performed at LabCorp and Quest Diagnostics)
- ✓ Maternity care and support
- ✓ Quit for Life® tobacco cessation program
- ✓ One Pass Select fitness and gym discounts
- ✓ Maven maternity program
- ✓ Accidental injury outpatient services within 72 hours
- ✓ Generic oral diabetes medications
- ✓ Visits to a registered dietician/nutritionist
- + No primary care provider (PCP) requirement
- + Freedom to use network and out-of-network providers

APWU Health Plan benefits are created and designed for APWU families. In 2025 you can rely on:

- Reduced High Option rates
- Low APWU Consumer Driven Option rates
- Benefits that have either stayed the same or enhanced the member experience
- A personalized touch from people who care

In-network copays

- \$10 for a Virtual Visit
- \$25 for office visits, including specialists
- \$30 for urgent care
- \$10 for retail non-specialty Tier 1 drugs

High Option 2025 Premiums

★ High Option members will pay a lower premium in 2025. ★
A yearly savings of up to \$829!

Self

PSHB enrollment code 23A

Biweekly	Monthly
\$109.86	\$238.03

Self Plus One

PSHB enrollment code 23C

Biweekly	Monthly
\$213.05	\$461.61

Self & Family

PSHB enrollment code 23B

Biweekly	Monthly
\$277.28	\$600.77



Sarah J. Rodriguez
Director, APWU Health Plan

I was elected as director of APWU Health Plan in 2019 to help create and foster the kind of health insurance benefits and services you and I would want for our families — and to keep your best interest at heart. I'm not only the Health Plan director, I'm also a member and feel a huge sense of security knowing my family is protected from high-cost healthcare bills.

I am APWU Proud!

Consumer Driven Option

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

100% coverage for in-network services

- ✓ Your own Personal Care Account (PCA) helps pay for medical expenses
- ✓ Preventive care and screenings
- ✓ Maternity care and support
- ✓ Breast cancer screenings
- ✓ Quit for Life® tobacco cessation program
- ✓ One Pass Select fitness and gym discounts
- ✓ Maven maternity program
- + No primary care provider (PCP) requirement
- + Freedom to use network and out-of-network providers

Access care from an extensive nationwide network of providers and facilities

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

You also have access to:

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

As of August 1, 2024



APWU Career Special Rate:

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

Scan the QR code to learn more about the APWU Health Plan and its competitive premiums and comprehensive benefits!



★ Consumer Driven Option 2025 Premiums ★

Get more and pay less!

APWU special rates biweekly

For APWU career bargaining unit employees with more than 1 year in PSHB/FEHB.

Self PSHB enrollment code 23D		Self Plus One PSHB enrollment code 23F		Self & Family PSHB enrollment code 23E	
APWU career less than 1 year and PSE	APWU career more than 1 year	APWU career less than 1 year and PSE	APWU career more than 1 year	APWU career less than 1 year and PSE	APWU career more than 1 year
\$80.62	\$16.12	\$175.23	\$35.05	\$191.16	\$38.23



Voting: Your Voice and Opportunity to Make a Difference

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT DEBBY SZEREDY

Let's hope that we delivered for democracy in our General Election and elected candidates who support the people's Post Office up and down the ballots.

I also hope for our Postal Service, our workers, our communities, and our world, that we were able to successfully elect Harris and Walz. I hope I woke up to the election results the next morning, and I was able to cry tears of joy instead of sadness.

Electing the right people to make our work and our world a better place means everything. General elections aren't the only important elections. We need like-minded people, not only in the House and Senate, but in all city and state positions. It is also important to vote in your local and national union elections. It breaks my heart when I see the small number of members who have taken the time to vote for candidates running for National APWU positions. Sure, you can say, "I don't know those people running," but like everything in life, you must read up on each candidate and make the better choice. We must do the research and make an informed decision.

I know it can be hard to understand how important your vote is, but we all need to step up for our families, coworkers, and communities. Your vote is your voice. Some may even decide to choose to run for office, whether in a union or publicly.

My Hopes for Negotiations

I have some thoughts on negotiations, keeping in mind the song from Bob Dylan, "Times Are A-Changing." Our Postmaster General (PMG) should settle with the APWU, the Letter Carriers, and the Rural Carriers before Election Day. The Postal Service should provide a great economic package, fix toxic work environments, end short staffing, and devote more time towards improving training, job protection language, insourcing, and a work-life balance that includes considering child/adult care benefits - similar to health care benefits, and work on better ways to effectively communicate with all its employees. Lastly, the PMG should pause Delivering for America (DFA) and build on the inside with input from the unions.

The PMG can make the needed changes to his DFA plan, such as returning to 2012 Service Standards so that all mail processing facilities, including their surrounding areas, can provide the good services the public was accustomed to, and expand community services like postal banking to bring in new revenue. The Postal Service should provide excellent public service to all communities across this country, no matter where they live. The Postal Service can be the best government "model," providing a productive environment where employees are highly motivated, valued, and well rewarded. The Postal Service is a unionized workplace, and when the union and management work closely together, we can reduce turnover, attract dedicated employees, and perform better services, building the trust, experience, transparency, and empowerment that will allow the Postal Service to thrive!

To be a leader of the future, organizations should transform their unionized workplaces into places where all stakeholders, including employees, prosper, and where all interests are balanced and aligned to win. We should take that leap forward, together, in these negotiations.

I pray that all of you are given strength to get through the holidays safely, and with the important time to spend with your family and friends. Thanks for your dedication to making our workplace better. ■



Brooks Daniel, son of Southern Oregon Area Local President Jeremy Schilling, rallies for the People's Post Office.

APWU Welcomes Reversal of Some USPS Consolidation Efforts Keeping Local Mail Processing Local at More Facilities

The APWU and the 200,000 dedicated postal workers we represent, stand with the people of this country for improved postal services. There is too much delayed mail resulting from too much short staffing and the chaotic implementation of changes to the postal network.

The union has consistently opposed local mail being consolidated and sent hundreds of miles away for sorting, only to then be returned to the local area. Such a process only further delays mail.

The union has consistently advocated that mail generated in a local area, for delivery in that local area, should stay and be processed and sorted in that same local area.

Management has recently announced a reversal of some of its previous consolidation efforts, and now plans to keep the processing of “local mail” local in some locations

previously expected to have that work moved long distances as part of management’s network modernization plans.

“While the union is still assessing these newly announced changes and seeking more clarification and details, we welcome what appears to be some positive steps in the right direction,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “Postal workers, elected representatives, and communities across the country have made their voices heard to keep local mail local and to avoid any further slow-down in the mail.”

However, along with some positive developments, there are also negative ones. Postal management and the Postal Board of Governors are also filing a case with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) that we believe will further slow mail service for many areas of the country, particularly in rural America.

“The APWU believes that USPS must modernize its network in a way that speeds up and improves service,” said Dimondstein. “While we are pleased that more facilities will keep their local mail local, we have serious concerns about the latest service standard proposal. We are prepared to engage in the PRC review and to organize in our communities to defend the quality mail service we all deserve.” ■

APWU Headquarters Activists Honored at Metro DC Coalition of Labor Union Women Awards Ceremony

On September 25, 2024, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) DC Metro chapter honored two activists in the APWU. Retirees Department Director Nancy Olumekor received the Metro DC CLUW Woman of Labor Award and APWU National Digital Communications Specialist Marilyn J. Wiley (TNG-CWA) received the Donna Brockington Activist of CLUW Award.

CLUW is a national organization that works to empower women for greater participation at all levels of the labor movement, advocates for policies that protect women in the workplace, supports worker organizing, and helps connect union women to each other.

The Metro DC CLUW Woman of Labor Award, which Olumekor received, honors labor union women who have made impactful strides in advocating for workers on the jobsite, or have demonstrated a profound dedication to their labor union. Director Olumekor was recognized for her work expanding retiree chapters, encouraging retiree activism, and preparing them not only for retirement but continuing activism in the labor movement. She continues to be an outspoken representative for retirees within the APWU, collaborating with other organizations like the Alliance for Retired Americans, the WEP-GPO Repeal Task Force, and more.



Retirees Director Nancy Olumekor was honored with the Metro DC CLUW Woman of Labor Award



Wiley received the Donna Brockington Activist of CLUW Award, which honors the late Donna Brockington, an American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Local 32 activist. Brockington was the former Metro DC CLUW President and an ardent labor organizer. This award was a fitting honor for Wiley, who has dedicated her working life to advancing the labor movement as a graphic design and communications expert.

“I was proud to be a witness to APWU National Officer Nancy Olumekor and APWU National Employee Marilyn Wiley receiving leadership awards from the DC chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW),” said APWU Legislative and Political Director and CLUW National Treasurer Judy Beard. “They both carry exceptional leadership qualities of motivating others around CLUW’s vision of women one day achieving equality and are strong advocates of continuing our fight for justice. With leaders like this, we will not be going back!” ■



Preparing and Planning Ahead for 2025

SECRETARY-TREASURER LIZ POWELL

Local and state officers have multiple responsibilities, and it is always wise and prudent to plan for the new year. Whether it is gathering information in preparation for the next year's budget, planning ahead for important Department of Labor (DOL) and IRS deadlines, shredding financial documents that exceed the required five-year retention period, or attending various trainings, conferences, and state conventions, preparing and planning will ensure that these local and state goals are completed.

Secretary-Treasurer's Training April 8-10, 2025 - Miami, FL

The Secretary-Treasurer's Department is currently planning for the 2025 Secretary-Treasurer's Training. Information will be available on the event section of the APWU website. Trainings are scheduled simultaneously; therefore, you will need to select one of the following training opportunities: Fiduciary Responsibility, Beginner QuickBooks, or Refresher QuickBooks (must have attended Beginner QuickBooks). There will be a limited number of seats offered for both QuickBooks training classes. We recommend local and state presidents and treasurers attend at least one Secretary-Treasurer's workshop per year. When scheduling to attend, please plan to arrive and register on April 7 and depart on April 11.

The Secretary-Treasurer's Department is committed to providing tools and resources for officers in leadership positions to fulfill their responsibilities and stay in compliance with applicable regulations and laws. Whether you are a new officer or have been in a leadership position for some time, there is always something to gain from ensuring that you have access to correct fiduciary information. The Secretary-Treasurer's Department provides virtual training in the areas of Fiduciary Responsibilities of Union Officers, Trustee Training, Local Elections, and various other topics. To schedule virtual presentations, contact Annette August-Taylor 202-842-8538 or email aaugust@apwu.org.

2025 APWU Scholarships

The 2025 scholarship deadline for the E.C Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship, Vocational Scholarship, and Best Essay Award is May 31, 2025. The APWU Scholarship Program is one of the great benefits of being a member of the APWU. The E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship awards 10 recipients \$2,000 annually for four years to use towards an undergraduate program. Five Vocational Scholarship winners receive up to \$3,000 to be used for three years of study in a specific trade, technical, industrial, or vocational school. One "Best Essay" winner is selected from the applicant pool to receive a one-time \$2,000 award for their four-year tuition. The 2025 APWU Scholarship applications are accessible on the Secretary-Treasurer's page of the APWU website.

Renewal of Bond Coverage for 2025-2028!

The new bond coverage period begins July 1, 2025, and will provide another three years of bond coverage. Local and state presidents will receive correspondence informing them of their option to either increase or decrease the current amount of bond coverage or keep the amount of bond coverage the same. If the local or state decides to keep the current amount of bond coverage, no further action is required, and the coverage will roll over when the new bond period of coverage takes effect. If the local or state decides to increase or decrease the amount of bond coverage, upon completion of the Request to Change Bond Coverage form, the new coverage will be administratively processed, and the bond premium will be deducted from the Dues Check Off (DCO). The APWU provides \$5,000 in bond coverage at no charge to the local. **While the Department of Labor requires a fidelity bond covering a minimum of 10 percent of the local or state's liquid assets, the APWU strongly recommends local and state affiliates bond 100 percent of the liquid assets.**

Finally, I want to wish everyone my sincerest Season's Greetings and blessings for you and your family. ■

Union Rally for Social Security Fairness Act Moves Bill to House Floor for a Vote

In November, members of Congress returned to Washington, D.C. Now is the time to pass the bipartisan *Social Security Fairness Act* (SSFA) (H.R. 82, S. 597)!

If passed, this bill would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO), which are parts of Social Security law that unfairly reduce, or sometimes eliminate, Social Security benefits for almost three million civil servants. That includes postal workers, many state employees, and federal annuitants, as well as their survivors. The GPO and WEP penalize postal and federal Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) retirees who meet the requirements for Social Security benefits and have paid their fair share into the program.

On the morning of Sept. 19, 2024, APWU President Mark Dimondstein, Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard, Retiree Director Nancy Olumekor, and other public-sector union leaders joined Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA-06) and Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07), the

sponsors of the bill, for a press conference on Capitol Hill in support of the SSFA.

Although the bill has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, it had not been able to move out of committee to the House floor for a vote. As a result, Rep. Graves and Rep. Spanberger supported an accompanying discharge petition. A discharge petition is a process to bring any bill sitting in committee to the House floor for a vote as long as at least 218 members of Congress sign the petition.

The APWU held a “Call Congress Day of Action” on Sept. 9, and thanks to the hard work of our members and allies from all 50 states who made phone calls to their representatives, we were only 13 signatures away from a successful discharge petition by the morning of the rally on Sept. 19. Later that afternoon, the discharge petition received the needed signatures and successfully moved the SSFA to the House floor, allowing for a vote. Since Congress has just returned from its recess, the finish line is in sight; we must focus on the passage of H.R. 82 on the House floor later this month!

“We are really proud and pleased that we are at the cusp of finally righting this wrong and getting some real justice moving forward - stopping the theft, stopping the raid on our pensions, and letting those civil service retirees live their retirement [with] the dignity and the financial security that [they’ve] earned,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.

“We thank Rep. Graves and Rep. Spanberger for their support in this fight for justice. Regardless of party, each speaker at the press conference said the same thing – GPO and WEP are wrong, and they must be repealed now,” said APWU Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard. “Due to the hard work of our members, along with other unions and affected organizations, we have built a strong movement that [has moved] this bill to the House floor!” ■





APWU and USPS ‘Stop the Clock’ – What Does This Mean for You?

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DIRECTOR CHARLIE CASH

At midnight on Sept. 20, 2024, the APWU national agreement was set to expire. But, late in the evening, the National Negotiations Committee (NNC) made the unanimous decision to “stop the clock” so that our contract remains in effect, and we can continue negotiating with the Postal Service.

What does this mean? Since we have made progress in negotiations, your negotiating committee decided that it was in our best interest to *not* declare that the negotiating parties had reached an impasse, and we would continue to bargain with management.

Since the parties agreed to stop the clock, it allowed the provisions of the 2021-2024 national agreement to remain in effect. All contract articles and all Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in the back of the contract remain in full force and effect. Our grievance-arbitration process is still in effect. The no-layoff clause is still in effect. Management will still convert Postal Support Employees to career when they reach 24 months of relative standing in the same installation, the 50-mile limitation on excessing is still the standard, and those who are still progressing through the various pay-schedule steps will still earn additional steps. In simple terms—nothing has changed. Unfortunately, no additional general wage increases or cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) will occur until we reach a successor agreement. The NNC is still attempting to negotiate further work rules and our economic package. The work towards reaching a voluntary agreement has not stopped.

We have two tracks moving forward. The first is to continue negotiating and preparing an agreement to present to the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee, and the second is the focused and intense preparation for interest arbitration.

At the time of publication, we are continuing to negotiate, because we still have the hope and expectation of reaching a voluntary agreement. My staff is working on preparing a new written version of our next contract. This is the first step in being able to present a package to the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee, and my department needs to have it ready in case we reach a voluntary agreement with management.

If we reach a voluntary tentative agreement, we will present the language, questions and answers, and other information, as needed, to the Rank-and-File Bargaining Advisory Committee who make the decision whether or not to send it to the general membership for a vote on ratification. If the committee determines the contract should go out for a vote, we will send a package to every individual member with an explanation of the changes and a copy of any tentative contract language. We will include a simple “yes” or “no” ballot so members can decide whether to accept or reject it. If a majority votes “yes,” the contract will go into effect. If the membership votes “no,” we go back to the negotiating table.

WE HAVE TWO TRACKS MOVING FORWARD. THE FIRST IS TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATING AND PREPARING AN AGREEMENT TO PRESENT TO THE RANK-AND-FILE BARGAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE, AND THE SECOND IS THE FOCUSED AND INTENSE PREPARATION FOR INTEREST ARBITRATION.

If we declare “impasse,” we would put the contract into the hands of an arbitrator. Each party selects one advocate/arbitrator, and we must agree to a third neutral arbitrator to create the interest arbitration panel, who will then hear arguments from both sides and impose a contract. Even though the panel is three members, the neutral arbitrator ultimately makes the final decision on our contract.

It is always better for us to reach a voluntary agreement than to let one person decide our contract. But this is the process we have under our contract and the law. No matter what happens, your NNC is fighting to get you the contract you deserve. If the negotiating parties can’t reach it voluntarily, we will make the best case we can to influence the neutral arbitrator to impose the best contract possible.

Solidarity! ■



Stay Vigilant About Suspicious Mail and Packages

As election mail season comes to an end, the Postal Service has now begun processing “peak season” mail. This is not the time to let your guard down to suspicious mail pieces and powdery substances in the mail stream. We still live in a politically-charged atmosphere, and the threats, no matter the season, are real. First and foremost, postal workers must be on the lookout to protect ourselves in the workplace from these types of mail pieces and the public we move the mail for each day.

Per USPS Poster 84, remember to look out for:

- No Return Address
- Misspelled Words
- Excessive Postage
- Possibly Sent from Foreign Country
- Excessive Tape
- Oily Stains, Discolorations, Strange Odors, or Protruding Wires
- Powdery or Suspicious Substances Coming from the Mail Piece

If you come across a suspicious mail piece, according to USPS Publication 167-B, you should leave the mail item or suspicious substance where it was found and notify your manager(s). According to this USPS Publication, management is obligated to:

- Clear people from the immediate area and keep others away.
- Instruct anyone who may have had contact with the item or substance to wash hands and other exposed skin with soap and water. Direct them to wait in a designated area for further instructions.
- Cordon off the immediate area.



- Shut down all equipment in the immediate area.
- Shut down HVAC systems.

In addition, without disturbing the mail item or substance, employees should document all they can about the mail piece, like where it was found, addresses, markings, colors, smells, or substances coming from the mail piece. Pub 167-B allows you to write down what needs to be documented. Use PS-Form 1767 *Report of Hazard, Unsafe Condition or Practice* to document the incident and get management’s response to the incident. Management must follow the processes found in Pub 167-B, Poster 205-A, and Poster 84 for these incidents. If you find yourself in a situation where your supervisors and managers are not following the correct protocol, please contact your local stewards or union officers to file a grievance for possible escalation to your regional coordinators and regional safety and health representatives.

Remember—the life you save could be your own! Let’s all **Stand Up for Safe Jobs!** ■

MEMBERS



APWU Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell receives Coalition of Black Trade Unionists Region III's Labor Legend Award for her outstanding achievements in labor.



Iowa APWU members endorse U.S. House of Representatives IA-03 candidate Lanon Baccam and support his campaign with a COPA check.



APWU young members and headquarters staff text over 40,000 members to remind them to check their voter registration status and make a plan to vote in the 2024 General Election.



APWU Western Region Coordinator Omar Gonzalez (right) delivered APWU's message of solidarity with Reno Maintenance Director Jada Anderson (center-right) at a rally with National Rural Letter Carriers' Association (NRLCA) President Donald Maston (center left) and over 150 NRLCA and NALC members showing solidarity in support of the Protect Our Letter Carriers Act.



Florida State President Joe Paul (center left) responds to the call from APWU National and brings new stewards to the AT&T Strike (see Sept/Oct 2024 issue) to show support for striking workers.

IN ACTION



APWU President Mark Dimondstein, Secretary-Treasurer Liz Powell, and Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard join members (L-R) Mark Jennings, Tina Bell, John Edwards, and Thomas Brown at the APWU booth at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. They encouraged visitors to make a plan to vote by scanning the QR code attached to their photos taken at the booth.

The APWU Legislative Department had a booth at the 2024 Biennial Convention and Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference for members to take photos with signs about the importance of voting and Vote-by-Mail. The photo prints included a QR code to share photos with friends and family and encourage them to vote!



APWU Local 472 Stewards Elias Hogan and Joshua Lynd join President Brendan Buettner and Associate Office Chief Steward Cameron Plumlee in organizing future members and providing updates on contract negotiations.

General Expeditors/Dock Clerks and the Dispatch Coordinator Position Myth



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

The Dispatch Coordinator position myth is just another example of the Postal Service's attempts to not only divide postal unions, but crafts within the APWU, pitting members of one craft against the other. **Our fight is against the Postal Service.**

In 2021, under the USPS Realignment, management tried to separate General Expeditors (working on the dock) and Dock Clerks from the General Expeditors, who worked exclusively within the facility. They wanted to place these specific employees under Logistics, answering to a Motor Vehicle Service (MVS) supervisor. We prevailed.

In a letter to the APWU, dated Dec. 23, 2022, the Postal Service proposed to update the General Expediter P7-07 (Occupation Code 2315- 11XX) job description. Additionally, the Postal Service was proposing the creation of a Clerk Dispatch Coordinator (P7-07) senior qualified position.

The Postal Service stated that the proposed changes to the General Expeditor job description were necessary to reflect the work more accurately, as it is currently performed, **add national qualification standards**, and clearly differentiate responsibilities from the newly proposed dispatch coordinator position.

The new Clerk Dispatch Coordinator P-07 position was proposed as a senior qualified job to coordinate arrivals and departures, ensure adherence to dispatch schedules, and ensure transportation is available in accordance with the operational plan.

The APWU filed an Article 19 National Dispute (APWU No. A19C20230125) in March 2023 contesting these proposals and revisions, to include the addition of a new qualification standard.

After the Clerk Division filed our national dispute, the Postal Service revised the proposed Clerk Dispatch Coordinator, senior qualified position and replaced it with a proposed, newly-created position in the MVS craft as a level-8 best qualified position open to all crafts.

In our 15-Day Statement, we amended our position to include the following issue:

Did the Postal Service violate the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) when it first proposed to revise and

delete duties of the General Expeditor and create a senior-qualified Level 7 Dispatch Coordinator position, which was assigned to the Clerk Craft but was required to report to Function 3 – Logistics supervision?

Secondly, was the CBA violated when, after meeting with the Clerk Division, the Postal Service subsequently assigned the Dispatch Coordinator position to the Motor Vehicle Craft, changing it to Level 8 best-qualified, and maintaining the minimum qualification Virtual Entry Assessment (VEA) Entrance Test – Mail Processing (MP) 476 Examination Requirement? If so, what is the appropriate remedy?

Note: Bulk Mail Dock Clerks are also included in the issue and remedy as they exist at Bulk Mail Centers and Network Distribution Centers.

We have shared a full detailed copy of the APWU Clerk Division's 15-Day Statement with the field.

The minimum qualification for the newly-created MVS dispatch coordinator position still requires a minimum qualification for a mail processing clerk. They are still treating this job as a clerk craft position. This will only lead to the reduction of Bulk Mail Dock Clerks and General Expeditor positions in the long run, when the jobs should be increasing within the new Regional Processing Centers. This is the Postal Service's end-around effort to circumvent the national agreement. It is still the Clerk Division's official position that the Postal Service must remove the exclusive MVS craft duties that were later added from the position, once properly returned to the Clerk craft. This position was created in lieu of the Clerk Dispatch Coordinator, which was already the subject of a pending national dispute.

The MVS craft also filed their own national dispute once the Postal Service created the newly proposed MVS Dispatch Coordinator position as a MVS best qualified position. MVS took the position that the revised standard position descriptions and qualifications created a hybrid position comprised of work from already established positions, which would also undoubtedly shift bargaining unit work to supervisors in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. ■

APWU Maintenance Division Secures \$15 Million Part-Time Regular Settlement Agreement



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

In 2021, the APWU Maintenance Division filed a National Dispute (USPS # 6X 18T-6X-C 21354335) regarding the Postal Service's violation of Article 7, Section 3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), specifically concerning the 2.5 percent cap on the total number of Part-time regular (PTR) employees in the Maintenance Division. According to the CBA, the total number of part-time employees who "may be hired" should not exceed 2.5 percent of the total number of Maintenance Craft employees covered by the agreement.

On Sept. 20, 2024, the APWU and the USPS reached the following agreements:

- **Conversion Opportunities:** The USPS will offer 50 Part-Time Regular employees conversion to full-time positions.
- **Financial Compensation:** The USPS will distribute a total of \$15 million to Maintenance Craft Part-Time Regular employees, covering the Fiscal Years 2018-2024, which they will pay in two installments. The USPS will make the first payment no later than December 31, 2024.
- **Future Conversions:** Future Part-Time Regulars may be eligible for conversion to full-time positions around March of each year.
- **Resolution of Grievances:** This settlement resolves all outstanding local, regional, and national grievances and disputes from 2018 to 2023 relative to the PTR Cap Violation.

"We extend our special thanks to the Maintenance Division Officers, the Office of Industrial Relations, and President Mark Dimondstein for their support in reaching this agreement," said Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun.

"Hats off to Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun and his team for leading the way in securing justice for our part-time regular maintenance members," said APWU President Mark Dimondstein.



If you were a Part-Time Regular from January 2018 to December 2023, please visit apwu.org/2024-maintenance-ptr-settlement, or scan the QR code to complete the APWU Maintenance PTR Settlement Questionnaire. Please direct any inquiries to: maintwebinar@apwu.org.

Josh Montgomery Appointed Maintenance Division National Business Agent, Southern Region

In accordance with Article 21 of the APWU Constitution and Bylaws, Maintenance Division Director Idowu Balogun has appointed Josh Montgomery to serve as Maintenance Division,



NBA Josh Montgomery

Southern Region National Business Agent (NBA) "C", with an effective date of Sept. 09, 2024. Brother Montgomery received unanimous consensus in a vote by the Maintenance Council on Thursday, Aug. 22, 2024.

In 2010, The Postal Service promoted him into the Maintenance Craft as a Mail Processing Equipment (MPE) Mechanic at the Lafayette Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC), where he was quickly promoted to an Electronic Technician position.

Montgomery became a union steward in 2012 and has been the Lafayette Local President since 2014, and Louisiana State President since 2019. Brother Montgomery attended APWU Arbitration Advocacy Training in 2017 and has since been actively handling regional arbitrations for the Maintenance Craft for his local and the entire Southern Region. He received a bachelor's degree in general studies at the University of Louisiana. "Brother Josh is a very seasoned arbitration advocate," said Maintenance Division Director Balogun.

Constitutionally, all three NBAs are responsible for the Southern Region, which encompasses eleven states. The Maintenance Division has now assigned each NBA with specific states that they will have exclusive responsibility for meeting with management on matters related to Step 3, direct appeals, pre-arbitrations, and all other correspondences. With the introduction of a third NBA, changes to the coverage areas will be implemented as follows:

- NBA John Gearhard (A): **Florida, Georgia, South Carolina**
- NBA Carlos Paz (B): **Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas**
- NBA Josh Montgomery (C): **Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee.**

Please note that all Maintenance Step 3 appeals, Step 3 decisions, and other Maintenance related appeals and correspondences will continue to be directed and processed at the Irving, TX office. ■

Changes Are Coming



Director Michael Foster and Assistant Director Garrett Langley

There are a significant number of changes taking place in the Postal Service, which include the Motor Vehicle Service. As usual, the determination of whether they are positive or negative remains to be seen. We recently have been notified about changes to the Postal Vehicle Service (PVS) scanner, including the timekeeping function. This function mandates PVS employees clock in and out on the PVS scanners instead of using the Hyper Electronic Badge Reader (HEBR) that most employees in the Postal Service have been using for years. This function has been in place for some time in other crafts, but it has now been introduced in the Motor Vehicle craft. Employees could experience scanner connectivity issues or even waiting for scanners to become available, while being expected to clock in. If this is happening in your location, request a steward.

The PVS Scanners have also been updated to include a “Push to Talk” feature that is similar in nature to a two-way radio. The Postal Service issued a warning in the “stand up” talks that indicates this function should **NOT** be used while driving. We have been informed that management intends to have supervisors communicating with and giving instructions to the operators in the performance of their duties.

When Postal Service management uses the “push to talk” function to re-route drivers from their normal route to other pick-up locations, or to give other instructions, it is a violation of Article 1.6; it is bargaining unit work that must be performed by craft employees.

The Postal Service is also moving forward with a plan to pilot test a turn-by-turn navigation function at a PVS site. This is similar to other active navigation programs commonly found in applications for cell phones, such as Google Maps.

The Postal Service added a statement to the scanners requiring each operator to agree that the scanner is an accountable item. If the user refuses to accept the accountability statement, the scanner will not allow any further activity. This requirement is a direct violation of a Step 4 settlement, (USPS # Q10V-4Q-C 16466169/APWU # HQT20160275), signed in 2017 regarding scanner training, usage, and accountability.

We are currently in discussions on all these changes to the PVS scanners and have requested additional information and meetings for further information.

Vehicle Maintenance Facilities and Fleet Management Information System

All of the employees in the Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs) are now becoming familiar with the Fleet Management Information System (FMIS). This new program has taken the place of System Enterprise Asset Management (SEAM). This new program was a commercial “off the shelf” product purchased by the Postal Service and modified to meet their needs. There are many process changes that are a part of this new program. However, some of these new processes are in addition to FMIS.

THE POSTAL SERVICE IS ALSO MOVING FORWARD WITH A PLAN TO PILOT TEST A TURN-BY-TURN NAVIGATION FUNCTION AT A PVS SITE.

The Fire and Safety Inspections began to take place prior to the FMIS implementation. However, we have received reports that the frequency has increased, or substitution of Preventative Maintenance Inspections may be taking place. We have requested additional information and are in discussions regarding the FMIS program and the changes that are being made to the current VMF processes, including these inspections, and the levels of work this is being assigned to, consistent with the Questions and Answers on the Lead Automotive Technician and Mechanic Upgrade in the 2022 Joint Contract Interpretation Manual (JCIM).

We need everyone to be mindful that some of these changes in both PVS and VMF appear to be in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), and we must continue to monitor and enforce the agreements entered into by the parties.

As we go to press, we continue to negotiate the next CBA, consistent with the resolutions adopted by the delegates at the National Convention.

When We Fight, We Win! ■

Negotiations Updates



Director Arrion Brown

As the holiday season is upon us, the Support Services Division wishes you, your family, and friends a happy holiday season filled with joy. As you celebrate the holidays, please share with others what your union means to you. Having a casual conversation about the “union difference” in your life with someone who you know in a non-unionized workplace could be what it takes to encourage them to organize. If that happens, the APWU will support those organizing efforts in any way we can, and you can reach out to my office for advice. Whether it be unionizing with the APWU or another union, we believe all workers deserve the gains, protections, and voice that a union provides.

As the industrial division of the APWU, the Support Services Division negotiates on behalf of organized workers in the postal industry and is their voice to pursue the gains and protections that they deserve. We are proud to give an update about the United Drivers of Peoria who, after long and intense negotiations, ratified their first collective bargaining agreement with 10 Roads Express on Aug. 30, 2024.

These negotiations were tough. The relationship between the APWU Peoria unit and 10 Roads Express began in 2022 with a strike against the company for terminating the lead union organizer soon after the drivers voted in favor of unionizing. Soon after, the drivers held an informational picket protesting the company’s proposed changes. These events occurred prior to the first round of negotiations. The workers’ actions let the company know the union was willing to stand up and stand together to improve their working conditions.

The bargaining unit remained committed through the negotiations process. Their dedication helped achieve a contract, meeting demands that included seniority for bidding, “just-cause” protections, and protection from attendance-related discipline when they call out of work sick, among other improvements. While we never get everything we propose in negotiations, these achievements create a monumentally better work environment for the United Drivers of Peoria.

In other current negotiations, we continue to negotiate for the Support Services Division under the main agreement. Although the contract expired on Sept. 20, the National Negotiating Committee (NNC) unanimously decided to continue bargaining with the Postal Service to achieve a mutually decided contract between the two parties. Although progress has been slow, the NNC has made progress worth building upon to avoid interest arbitration.

AS THE INDUSTRIAL DIVISION OF THE APWU, THE SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION NEGOTIATES ON BEHALF OF ORGANIZED WORKERS IN THE POSTAL INDUSTRY AND IS THEIR VOICE TO PURSUE THE GAINS AND PROTECTIONS THAT THEY DESERVE.

We have also begun negotiating the second contract for the Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC). Management has been receptive to our proposals, and we look forward to continuing negotiations for a new HRSSC contract that reflects the improvements that our members are demanding.

Our negotiations with Albuquerque Mail Service (AMS), on behalf of the private-sector drivers from Albuquerque Local 380, continue as they seek their first collective bargaining agreement. It has been very productive. In May, the union submitted our full proposal to AMS and the Jackson Lewis law firm, which represents them. We have made significant progress towards an agreement in our follow-up bargaining sessions.

As we continue negotiations, we encourage all our members to continue your support for a good contract. The process can be slow, but the successes and improvements are always worth the efforts to improve our wages, benefits, and working conditions. ■



AJ Jones, Eastern Regional Coordinator

Getting More Involved

Brothers and sisters, during the fall season we find ourselves looking forward to celebrating the holidays that come this time of year, and the opportunity to reflect and enjoy time with family and friends.

While reflecting, I ask each of us to consider being more involved with the APWU. Reach out to your local and offer to get involved. Not everyone has the time to be a steward or officer. Some folks have limited time to be involved. If that is you, consider helping a committee or participating in a day of action, like we did on Oct. 1, 2024, when we rallied for a better contract, better staffing, better service, Vote-by-Mail, and public comments. Help with organizing drives to increase membership, keeping the union movement strong. Everyone has something to offer; the job of a leader is to find that special skill in a person and let them excel. We must enhance our bench, ensuring the transition of officers is as smooth as possible.

Local Memorandum of Understanding Negotiations

Opening Day for contract negotiations began on June 25, 2024. The APWU and management entered a lockdown period starting Sept. 14 through Sept. 20, 2024, when our contract was set to expire. In a final attempt to secure an agreement, the parties agreed to “stop the clock” at midnight on Sept. 20 to allow for continuing discussions. Whether we achieve a voluntary agreement, or an arbitrator awards a contract through interest arbitration, it will lead to an opportunity to open local negotiations. Both the union and management have the equal right to open negotiations, so don’t get caught off guard!

Begin preparations now by reviewing your Local Memorandum of Understanding (LMOU). Make notations of items that present issues in a current copy of your LMOU, and how you would like to address them. Perhaps you may find items that are in conflict or inconsistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Give members an opportunity to provide input for proposals by engaging them in the process. Use this as an opportunity to get your members involved.

Education, Training, Communication, and Networking

Education, training, good communication, and networking all create a solid foundation to provide the best representation and leadership. We can learn from each other, but it takes everyone getting involved to make a better union. We must embrace this methodology to achieve the best results.

Effective communication is key to being a good leader. Quick, easy, and least-effective communication leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Communicating well means to understand and to be understood. Listening and hearing are more important than speaking. Engage your members and get more involved in our union and the labor movement.

Life as a Postal Worker Under ‘Delivering for America’

Life is not easy these days, especially for postal workers, as we navigate the many challenges in the workplace: Understaffed facilities, dealing with the ‘Delivering for America’ (DFA) plan that management is shoving down our customers’ throats, all while asking us to do just a little bit more.

Changes resulting from the DFA plan have failed to demonstrate that they are in the best interest of our customers, and have already negatively impacted our communities, especially rural America. The DFA plan can only be successful if it delivers reduction in productivity goals, degradation of service, and increases costs related to expanding transportation. Continue reaching out to your representatives to join us and stand up for the people’s Postal Service.

Be kind to each other, you never know what a person is dealing with in their life.

I, along with my colleagues: Central Region Coordinator Amy Puhalski, Northeast Region Coordinator Tiffany Foster, Western Region Coordinator Omar Gonzalez, and Southern Region Coordinator Yared Wonde, wish you the best, and are here to help in any way we can.

In Solidarity,
AJ Jones ■



Judy Beard, Director

Staying Engaged Beyond the Election

This edition went to press prior to Election Day 2024

As the 2024 election season has come to a close, it is important to stay engaged. Right after any election, it is common for people to pay less attention to politics. If this applies to you, I recommend that you stay vigilant and take nothing for granted. At all levels of government, we must continue to fight back against attacks on our rights and fight for working families across the nation. The only way we can improve our lives is by staying engaged.

How Do I Stay Engaged?

By keeping up with current events and paying attention to your elected officials. You have the power to elect your federal, state, and local officials, so be sure you learn about their positions on the issues that matter most to you and your family. Aside from their stated policies, listen to what they say and watch what they do. It is easy for a politician to make promises during an election season, but it is how they vote and what they accomplish in between elections that we must pay attention to.

One easy way to stay involved is by developing a relationship with your elected officials. The more you get to know the elected official over time, the easier it will be to ask them to support your positions. Participate in town hall meetings, schedule appointments, send letters, and other volunteer activities to show your engagement. The more active you are, the more likely you are to be heard.

The Final Days of the 118th Congress

Every two years, after the November Congressional elections, there is a period of time known as the “lame-duck session.” This session occurs after the election votes have been counted, but before the members have been sworn in for the new term in January. This time is crucial since some members of Congress in both the House and Senate will soon move on. Therefore, their decisions are no longer influenced by any one election. For example, the *Respect for Marriage Act*, which requires all states to recognize same-sex marriages, passed just two years ago during the lame-duck session.

Since Congress can still pass consequential legislation before January, we must stay engaged during the final days of this session. One bill we are paying close attention to is the *Social Security Fairness Act* (H.R. 82, S. 597). APWU members from all 50 states called their representatives during our September “Call Congress Day of Action” to urge them to support this bill and sign a petition to move the bill to the House floor for a vote. Our calls were successful in obtaining enough signatures to get the bill to the House floor. After the signature requirement was met, Congress went on recess, and we are hoping the bill goes to the floor upon their return.

This is where the legislation currently stands as this edition of the *American Postal Worker* goes to press. For an update on the status of this bill, please visit apwu.org.

Although it may seem daunting to stay engaged, information is power. If we choose not to stay informed and actively engaged, others will decide our future for us. ■

Postal workers are always valuable to the people of this country, not just during elections or the holiday season. I would like to extend my gratitude to all for a job well done in advancing the APWU's legislative priorities this year. On behalf of the Legislative & Political Department, have a happy new year in 2025!



APWU members show support for Congressman Bennie Thompson (D-MS) (center right), at APWU's 2024 National Convention.



Anna Smith, Director

The Myth of the ‘Holiday PSE’

It's that time of year again when the Postal Service increases its hiring of new employees. The Organization Department fields a lot of questions during this time regarding new employee orientations. One issue that seems to come up year after year is that the Postal Service informs local leaders that employees have been hired as holiday Postal Support Employees (PSEs) and do not need to have union orientations.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), our union contract, 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 Season PSE” or “360-PSE.” The postal Service hires PSEs for a term not to exceed 360 calendar days per appointment. A PSE is not a Holiday Clerk Assistant. Annuitant Holiday Clerk Assistants (HCA) are retirees that can be rehired temporarily and work during a specific period.

Regardless of what time of year the Postal Service hires a PSE, when the Postal Service separates PSEs due to lack of work, they must make reappointments by 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 in 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/pse-brochure or sending a request to organization@apwu.org.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT TIME OF YEAR THE POSTAL SERVICE HIRES A PSE, WHEN THE POSTAL SERVICE SEPARATES PSES DUE TO LACK OF WORK, THEY MUST MAKE REAPPOINTMENTS BY SENIORITY.

What's Your 2025 Organizing Goal?

As we close out another successful year in organizing, if you haven't already set goals for union organizing in 2025, now is a great time. Union organizing is a critical process that empowers us to come together to improve our working conditions, wages, benefits, and workplace democracy. As many of you who participated in our successful organizing drive this year know, organizing our non-members isn't going to happen by accident. Organizing takes a lot of work, dedication, and requires commitment to not ever be complacent.

Thank you for all that you do each every day. Best wishes to you and yours for a safe and happy holiday season! ■

Take a moment and send in your 2025 Organizing Goal today. Go to apwu.org/2025-organizing-goal to find the submission form. Each person who sends



in their goal will be entered into a drawing to win APWU merchandise. We will publish the winners in the next edition of *The American Postal Worker*. Set a clear achievable goal today, as no goal is too small!

Scan the QR code to submit your organizing goal for 2025!



Joyce B. Robinson, Director

Understanding Your Rights

Many employees accept unwarranted discipline because they are unaware of their rights under the Collective Bargaining Agreement, or union contract. Out of fear of losing their job or being harassed, an employee may just let the incident drop and hope things will get better. Actually, things often get worse, and the employee finds themselves in serious trouble.

File a Grievance

If you are issued a letter of warning, face suspension or removal, or when management violates the contract, file a grievance within 14 days of the date of the incident. When your supervisor issues the discipline, it must be in writing with your right to file a grievance outlined. Contact your union steward or representative immediately to file a grievance. *Never wait until the fourteenth day to contact them.*

Share all facts, information, and documents with your union steward or representative. They need this information to successfully represent you. If a contract violation has occurred, the union will file a grievance on your behalf. If the grievance is not resolved at the local level, a National Business Agent is authorized to appeal the case to arbitration. Once arbitrated, an award is issued by an arbitrator, which is binding for both the union and the Postal Service.

Several locals are involved in pilot disciplinary programs. The processing of a grievance might be different in those locals.

Don't Ignore Harassment

If you feel your rights are being violated by a supervisor, consult your union steward or representative immediately, because harassment often leads to disciplinary action. If you are being sexually harassed, inform the harasser that you find their comments offensive and that you request that they cease at once. If it does not stop, notify postal management. If it persists, consult with your union steward or representative and request that they file a grievance against management, as the Postal Service must provide a workplace environment free from

harassment. Sexual harassment violates Section 673.4 of the Employee and Labor Relations Manual (ELM).

Dealing With the Office of Inspector General and Postal Inspectors

If questioned by an Office of Inspector General (OIG) agent or postal inspector, you should:

- Remain calm.
- Correctly identify yourself.
- Request a union steward, representative, or an attorney be present, as appropriate.
- Remain silent until you have consulted with your steward, representative, or attorney.
- Prior to any searches of your person or property, request to see a search warrant.
- If they do not have a warrant, inform them that you do not consent to the search, but do not physically resist arrest or the search.

Consult With a Union Steward, Representative, or Attorney First:

- Don't sign any papers waiving your rights.
- Do not admit to or deny any allegations.
- Do not make any typed, written, or oral statements.

Remember, the OIG agent or postal inspector will NOT inform you of your right to have a union representative present. You must request one. Beware of the good guy, bad guy routine. One OIG agent or inspector acts as the bad guy, while the other acts as the good guy in an attempt to con you into believing that they are trying to help you. What you say will definitely be used against you.

As this is the Department's last article of 2024, I extend my best wishes to you and your loved ones for a Happy Holiday Season and a New Year filled with Peace, Good Health, Happiness, and Prosperity. Be Blessed and Stay Safe! ■

Project 2025 Will Spell the End of Veterans' VA Health Care



In this edition, we will focus on making our APWU veterans' family aware of what "Project 2025" has in store for veterans. Project 2025 is a political blueprint for a conservative administration published by the right-wing Heritage Foundation in 2022.

It was written with the help of over 140 cronies from the 2016 Trump Administration. We must note that the *Trump-era VA MISSION Act* is the current law for veterans' VA Healthcare and is directly connected to the Project 2025 plan. Regardless of who wins the 2024 Presidential Election, the recommendations in this plan could be followed by any conservative politician.

Project 2025 calls for a 50 percent reduction in federal employees within a year, and a 75 percent reduction within four years. Veterans make up roughly 30 percent of the federal government workforce, or approximately 300,000, including more than 30,000 APWU Postal Service veterans, many of whom are disabled. Drastically cutting federal jobs would seriously affect veterans who rely on these positions, not only for employment, but for a sense of purpose in the community. Project 2025 aims to disband many federal government agencies, while privatizing others, and expand presidential control beyond the Executive Branch. In other words, Project 2025 is a plan to gut all of America's systems of checks and balances to enact an extreme agenda that would hurt all American veterans and their families. The Project 2025 plan proposes taking power away from veterans and everyday Americans, to give politicians, judges, and corporations more control over our lives.

Specific Ways that Project 2025 Harms our American Veterans:

- **Project 2025 proposes cutting benefits for disabled veterans**, making it harder for them to obtain disability benefits by reducing the number of medical conditions that veterans can claim to qualify for disability status. Veterans currently eligible for a disability rating, but who have not yet filed a claim, could be denied benefits entirely,

while those who have already filed claims, and been granted a disability rating, could see their VA disability benefits slashed.

- **Project 2025 also aims to automate all claims**, which would make it easier to increase denial rates, while cutting health care coverage for veterans and reducing the quality of care.
- **Project 2025 seeks to cut homeless veterans' programs and abolish the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB)**, which plays a critical role in protecting veterans from financial fraud and scams. Project 2025 advocates closing numerous VA clinics nationwide, replacing them with community-based outpatient clinics that provide less or a total loss of critical health care services for veterans, especially those in rural areas.
- **Project 2025 would not only call for the privatization of VA Health Care, but also the Department of Defense TRICARE system** for those on active duty in the military and their families. This will increase healthcare costs by forcing those with TRICARE Medical Benefits to use private health insurance providers. Privatizing TRICARE would cut more than \$59 million in military health care services. Project 2025 also has Medicare and Medicaid Social Security Health Care Benefits on the privatization chopping block as well.

If this Project 2025 plan is implemented, it would spell the end of Veterans VA Health Care and cause a dramatic increase in veteran homelessness and suicides. Veterans put their health and lives on the front line to protect all Americans. There are only 18 to 20 million living American veterans - that's just 6 percent of the entire U.S. population who has ever served in America's military. So, attention APWU veterans and civilians, Project 2025 is not our friend; Project 2025 seeks to destroy us. "Hands Off Our Veterans' Health Care Benefits!"

For more information, visit the Veterans Health Care Policy Institute (VHPI) at: veteranspolicy.org. ■

Source: Analyzing the Impacts of Project 2025 on the Veterans Health and Benefits Administrations (VHPI)



Daleo Freeman, Director

Year-End Review

I am pleased to report that our Human Relations initiatives have been successful, due largely in part to our close work with APWU leadership and each of you. This collective effort is a priority and represents a key goal that I have wanted to achieve since taking office. Many of you already know that the foundation for the work of this office is inclusion, education, and action. Together, we have completed the initial phases of the plan.

With another successful year in the books, I'd like to highlight the accomplishments that we have made in 2024. Although we faced challenges, we were able to use the framework constructed in previous years to build on the successes, and find solutions for some of the challenges, outlined below.

Coalitions

We continued to fortify the coalitions that we work with, which are comprised of groups that have diverse interests. We are satisfied to have established and enhanced our relationships with them.

One of our partnerships is with the Civil, Human and Women's Rights Director and affiliate union directors at the AFL-CIO. The development of this coordination and unified approach around civil rights is promising, and a step in the right direction to set the stage for APWU to continue our involvement in ongoing civil rights issues. We look forward to working together with these groups in 2025.

Training on Office of Workers' Compensation Programs

Some of you have requested trainings in your areas, and this office welcomes the opportunity. Across the country, we were able to provide informative training sessions on the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP). The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. I want to thank all locals and states for the willingness to participate and help facilitate the trainings, which were a huge success.

We have trained over 1,600 members and officials in 2024 alone. Knowledge is power. We hope that members who attended our training will use that knowledge to help members navigate the OWCP process successfully. We will continue to build on the momentum and strive to train and educate all members, no matter where they are.

Employee Assistance Program

As many of you know, many challenges exist within the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). However, the challenges do not outweigh the benefits. We must push to make the program work for our members.

We worked hard to ensure locals have representation in the EAP. We made efforts to ensure that District Advisory Committees included representatives from the APWU. We also made efforts to ensure that the Joint Committee included APWU representatives. We have made progress and have seen an increase in representation, but we do not have 100 percent participation across the country yet. The additional representation has been a benefit to our members. This office will continue our efforts in this area and other strategies to strengthen EAP initiatives.

Veterans' Rights and Benefits

I thank all of you around the country who have taken the time to sign up our veteran members for the communication network, an invaluable resource for our membership to receive information regarding all veteran issues. So, we encourage those who have not yet joined to join by logging onto Members Only at apwumembers.apwu.org, and designating your branch of service, as well as committing to receive veteran information from the department. Thanks again to all who are serving and who have served here and abroad.

We look ahead to a prosperous 2025, as we continue to tackle the issues of the day as we move forward. In solidarity, we are guaranteed victory!

Thanks everyone, and have a great holiday and a highly successful New Year. ■



Nancy Olumekor, Director

Your Union Dues Stop When You Retire from the Post Office

Whether you're a local, state, or national officer, or a shop steward, once you retire you must continue to be a full dues-paying member of the APWU in order to remain an officer of the APWU. You can do this by joining the Retirees Department and selecting "Option 2" on the Retirees Application.

There are three parts to your dues as a full dues-paying retiree member. These include: the national dues, the local dues, and the retiree dues. The APWU Secretary-Treasurer's office will send you an invoice for your national dues. Your local's treasurer or financial secretary will give you an invoice for your local dues. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) can directly deduct your APWU national retiree dues of \$3.00 per month from your retirement check.

You can join the APWU Retirees Department by one of several ways once you are off the USPS rolls. Join online through "Members Only" by visiting apwumembers.apwu.org; download a Retiree Application from the Retirees Department webpage (apwu.org/retirees), or complete and return the Retiree Application by mail, which we will send to your address of record. Every pay period, as APWU members retire from the Postal Service, we automatically mail Retiree Applications to new retirees. If you have questions about joining the Retirees Department or continuing your APWU membership after you retire, contact the Retirees Department by email at Retiree2@apwu.org, or call the Retirees Department at 202-842-8584.

Celebrating National Employ Older Workers

"Embracing Experience, Empowering Futures" was the theme for 2024's National Employ Older Workers Week, held annually the last full week of September. This was the time to recognize the vital role of older workers in the workforce, increase awareness of this labor segment, develop innovative strategies to tap it, and showcase the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which provides on-the-job skills training to individuals 55 or older with limited financial resources.

In recognition of *National Employ Older Workers Week*, The U.S. Department of Labor awarded \$203 million in grants through the SCSEP.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program is a community service and work-based job training program for low-income older individuals who are looking to enter or re-enter the workforce. Participants gain work experience in a variety of community service activities at non-profit and public facilities, including schools, hospitals, daycare centers, and senior centers. Participants work an average of 20 hours a week and are paid the highest of federal, state or local minimum wage. For more information on the SCSEP in your area, use CareerOne Stop's Older Worker Program Finder by visiting: careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/EmploymentAndTraining/find-older-worker-programs, or call the toll-free help line at 1-877-USA-JOBS (1-877-872-5627).

Thank You!

Thank you to our veterans and all active military personnel for their service on behalf of all of us. Thank you to my sister and brother postal workers for showing up and moving the mail in service to America. Thank you APWU family for continuing to support me, and for allowing me to serve you.

As another year passes, I am mindful of the many great unionists that APWU members and retirees have lost. The women and men who help to build this union - without their great work and commitment, we would not be here.

In closing, I wish each of you Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Good Health, and Happiness in the New Year!

Solidarity Forever. ■

On October 10, 2024, The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2025 COLA was announced. The COLA for CSRS annuitants and Social Security recipients will be 2.5%. FERS annuitants will receive a "diet" COLA of 2% for their retirement benefits beginning January 2025.



Sarah Jane Rodriguez, Director

Retirees Can Save on Medicare with the APWU High Option.



The APWU Health Plan High Option now offers a Medicare Advantage plan enhancement. High Option members over 65, retired, and enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B, can opt in to this program at no additional cost. Below are some of the benefits of this program.

Get a collection of benefits you won't find anywhere else:

- ✓ No copays or deductibles for covered medical services
- ✓ **NEW for 2025:** A \$100 monthly Part B premium subsidy
- ✓ **NEW for 2025:** Eyewear allowance offered every 24 months: \$130 for glasses or \$175 for contacts
- ✓ \$60 quarterly over-the-counter item allowance
- ✓ \$1,500 hearing aid allowance
- ✓ Dental coverage
- ✓ Prescription drug coverage (Part D)
- ✓ Nationwide provider network
- ✓ One plan with no need to coordinate primary and secondary payers

To learn more about the Medicare Advantage plan, go to retiree.uhc.com/apwuhp.

To qualify for enhanced Medicare Advantage benefits you must be:

- Enrolled in the APWU Health Plan High Option
- Retired
- Enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B

Find out if you're eligible to enroll in the Medicare Advantage plan:

Call **855-383-8793 711** (TTY)
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. CT
Monday – Friday

-- Testimonials --

Hear from our Medicare Advantage members!



Diane North
Editor at Florida State APWU

"APWU Medicare Advantage Plan is all this retiree needs to remain healthy! Best benefits ever!"



Joseph McCrary, Jr.,
President of Local #3434
Vice-President of Georgia
Postal Workers Union

"I am happy with the provider network. I have been able to see the same doctors. It has really been a blessing. I don't take a lot of medication, but I have not had any problems with the cost of the ones that I do take. I use the mail order program and that has been really good."

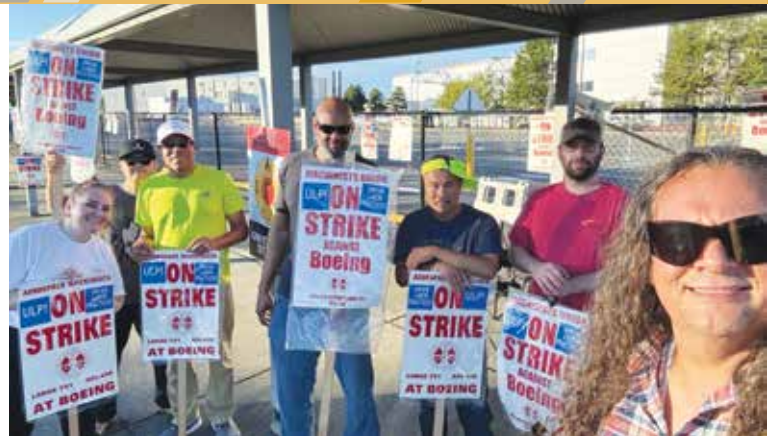
LABOR NEWS

India: Healthcare Activists Rally for Better Pay, Benefits, Conditions



Calling on their government to improve their pay, benefits, and working conditions, more than 20,000 community health workers, rural childcare workers, and social health activists from across the Indian state of Jharkhand, rallied in Ranchi on Sept. 23. The organizers of the rally, the Jharkhand State Anganwadi Sevika-Sahayika Sanyukt Sangharsh Morcha, with support from UNI Global Union affiliate Jharkhand State Non-Gazetted Employees Federation (JSNGEF-IN), presented their eight-point list of demands to avoid calls for a state-wide strike.

“These care workers are the backbone of their communities, and the improvements they’re asking for are fundamental to their well-being, their livelihoods and their ability to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities,” said Rajendra Acharya, Regional Secretary for UNI Asia & Pacific. “They’re demanding the respect and fairness they’ve earned through their essential work.” ■



Boeing Workers Continue Strike as Company Announces Layoffs

Nearly 33,000 Boeing workers on the West coast, on strike since Sept. 13, continue to demand a fair contract that includes better wages. After Boeing rescinded its latest contract offer, the striking workers, represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), essentially halted production of several of Boeing’s best-selling airplanes.

Boeing announced in October it intends to lay off 17,000 workers, or 10 percent of its workforce, in the commercial aviation division, which includes both union and non-union workers. It’s “corporate greed at its worst,” said IAM International President Brian Bryant in a statement about the proposed job cuts. “Boeing just turned its back on 17,000 of its own workers – the same people who carried Boeing through crisis after crisis, year after year.” ■

Dockworkers Suspend Strike, Continue Negotiations



On Oct. 4, more than 45,000 workers represented by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) suspended a three-day strike of 14 ports along the East and Gulf coasts until January 2025, after reaching a tentative agreement on wage increases over the next six years with the U.S. Maritime Alliance, which represents the port and shipping companies. The ILA will continue negotiations on other provisions, such as language to protect workers from automation, one of the main reasons for the employee walkout.

Italy: Striking Video Game Workers Reverse Planned Layoffs

Video game workers at Keyword Studios in Italy walked off the job for a two-day strike on August 5 and 6 that resulted in the studio revoking its “collective redundancy plan,” that would have eliminated the positions of 31 employees in a short period of time. The studio announced its plan on June 27, 2024, but workers and their supporting trade unions, Filcams, Fisascat, and Uiltucs, swiftly organized actions that sent a strong message to management, leading to the rescinding of its plans.

“This victory exemplifies the power of collective action and should inspire other video game workers to unionize and fight for their rights,” said Uiltucs union representative Mario Grasso.



AT&T Workers Reach Tentative Agreement, End Month-Long Strike

More than 17,000 Communications Workers of America (CWA)-represented workers in nine southeastern states between Kentucky and Florida returned to work on Sept. 16, after reaching a five-year tentative agreement, following a month-long unfair labor practice strike that began on Aug. 16 due to management’s bad faith bargaining practices.

The tentative agreement applies to technicians, machine operators, call center workers, and other workers in customer service roles in AT&T Southeast District 3, and includes significant wage increases for all represented employees, and additional wage increases for wire technicians and utility operators. It also provides some relief towards workers’ healthcare premiums. ■

Union Power Strong at Tennessee, Pennsylvania Battery Manufacturing, Storage Plants

On Sept. 4, the United Autoworkers (UAW) announced that a majority of the 1,000 workers at General Motors’ joint-venture electric vehicle battery plant in Spring Hill, TN have signed union cards. Management has agreed to voluntarily recognize the union, which will fall under the UAW national contract negotiated in 2023, giving the newly organized workers automatic raises. The union and management must still bargain over local contract provisions.

Meanwhile, workers at Eos Energy Enterprises, a battery storage plant near Pittsburgh, PA, voted 88 to 39 to join the United Steelworkers (USW) on Sept. 5, creating a bargaining unit of 160 production and maintenance workers. However, union-supporting workers faced retaliatory measures leading up to the election for their organizing activity, prompting the union to file multiple unfair labor practice charges against the company. ■

Amtrak Conductors Ratify New Contract, Securing Overtime Pay, Among Other Victories

After more than two years of negotiations, conductors and assistant conductors at national passenger railroad company Amtrak have agreed to a new seven-year contract, which is retroactive to July 2022. The agreement, approved by more than 75 percent of voting members, covers more than 2,100 workers and includes general wage increases, paid parental leave, overtime pay, and the addition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a paid holiday. ■

Las Vegas Successfully Completes Campaign for Fully Unionized ‘Vegas Strip’

After a nearly 25-year long campaign, Las Vegas Culinary Union Local 226 has successfully organized The Venetian Las Vegas and its sister resort The Palazzo, negotiating a contract ratified by 99 percent of its workforce of more than 4,000 hospitality workers. The members’ ratification of the contract has effectively ended the union’s longest running campaign to date for a unionized Venetian and a 100 percent unionized Las Vegas Strip. Every hotel-casino on Las Vegas Boulevard between Russell Road and Sahara Avenue is union-organized and has a contract with Culinary Union Local 226.

Postal Service Eliminates Deepest Presort Discounts for Package Consolidators

Since the creation of a Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service, the Alliance and our allies have opposed postal privatization in all its forms. One form of privatization that had largely gone unnoticed by the public is the Postal Service's long-standing reliance on the "presort discount system." That system effectively allowed large sections of the Postal Service's transportation and processing work to be performed by private-sector companies for private profit, with the Postal Service accepting mail and packages "downstream" for last-mile delivery.

This system incentivized private sector consolidators to aggregate mail and packages from many shippers into larger drop-offs into the postal network. They would bypass all or most of the postal processing network and rely on the Postal Service for last-mile delivery.

In September, the Postal Service announced it was eliminating the deepest presort discounts that many package consolidators used (or abused) before turning their packages over to the USPS. The USPS estimates that as many as two billion packages enter the mailstream each year after being processed and transported by consolidators, which is roughly 25 percent of the Postal Service's total package volume.

By ending the presort discount for package consolidators, it is likely that much of that package volume will be returned to the USPS for end-to-end acceptance, transportation, processing, and delivery, which would increase the Postal Service's overall revenue for shipping products. For too long, mail and package consolidators have relied on low-wage workers, and the steep discounts offered by the USPS to turn a profit from work that postal workers can rightly perform.

The end of the discount program is shaking up the postal industry, with FedEx poised to eliminate its FedEx SmartPost product. Pitney Bowes has filed for bankruptcy for its ecommerce division, and other package consolidators are likely to feel the impact soon.

Supporters of a Grand Alliance to Save our Public Postal Service should welcome the change as an opportunity for the public Postal Service to claw back more of the work that the Postal Service was created to do, serving 167

million addresses, six days a week, with a commitment to quality, public service to the entire country.

BY ENDING THE PRESORT DISCOUNT FOR PACKAGE CONSOLIDATORS, IT IS LIKELY THAT MUCH OF THAT PACKAGE VOLUME WILL BE RETURNED TO THE USPS FOR END-TO-END ACCEPTANCE, TRANSPORTATION, PROCESSING, AND DELIVERY, WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE POSTAL SERVICE'S OVERALL REVENUE FOR SHIPPING PRODUCTS.

Upcoming Fight to Preserve Service Standards

As this edition of *The American Postal Worker* was going to press, the Postal Service had just submitted before the Postal Regulatory Commission its proposals to once again change service standards. As we did in the 2021 service standards case, A Grand Alliance (AGA) will once again organize community resistance to the Postal Service's proposal to slow down the mail. While this year's proposal appears to be more complicated than the 2021 case, postal workers and AGA allies should stay alert for opportunities to promote the quality mail service that we are promised under the law. The proposal from the USPS appears to lengthen the delivery time for First-Class mail based on how far the destination address is located from a sorting facility; this is likely to have an outsized impact on customers in rural America. Readers should stay tuned to the APWU website and AGA channels for more information. We will analyze the Postal Service's proposal in the weeks ahead, plan our response, and engage with postal workers and our allies to promote our vision for robust, quality postal services. ■

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.



School Lunch Junk Fees Hit Working Families' Wallets

Our public schools, just like our public Postal Service, should operate as a public service, to educate and develop the country's children, and not as another cash cow to enrich Wall Street investors. But, like so many other cherished public institutions, our schools and the families they serve are falling victim to predatory financial practices established to rob the working class of our hard-earned money.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) recently released a report that showed alarmingly high fees associated with digital payments for school lunches across the country. As more of the country's school systems have moved to cashless cafeterias, schools are relying on outside vendors to process payments for meals purchased at school. These outside vendors have charged families more than \$100 million each year in fees associated with depositing money into student accounts to pay for meals.

JUNK FEES, LIKE THE ONES FOUND IN OUR COUNTRY'S SCHOOL CAFETERIAS, ARE ROBBING HARD WORKING FAMILIES OF THEIR HARD-EARNED DOLLARS WHILE ENRICHING SHAREHOLDERS AND EXECUTIVES AT THE LARGE FINANCIAL SERVICE COMPANIES THAT OPERATE THESE PAYMENT PROCESSORS.

The CFPB found that on average the payment processors "charge transaction fees of \$2.37 or 4.4 percent of the total transaction" when parents or guardians add money to a student account. The report estimated that a typical family receiving reduced-price lunch and making two deposits per month would pay more than \$42.00 in fees during the school year. For every dollar spent on food, payment processors would receive \$0.60, an outrageous waste of many working-class families' modest resources.

"These fees are widespread, regressive, and may be burdensome for families and districts, who have little control over fee rates and few opportunities to shop around," the report noted.

More than 30 million children receive low-cost or no-cost school lunches each day with federal assistance under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). The CFPB report underscored that, while the law requires that dis-

tricts participating in the NSLP provide fee-free options to pay for lunch, these options are often not easily accessible to many families, leading families to pay more than they should just to feed their children at school.

Parents facing these outrageous fees are often powerless to do anything about them. The CFPB report notes that while there are 20 such payment-processing companies active in the country, there are three large companies that dominate the market. School districts have been largely unsuccessful in attempts to negotiate more modest fees, and have found that they save overall by going cashless in their food-service operations.

The CFPB itself does not have the authority to crack down on such abusive fees that companies are imposing on working-class families but is using its investigatory abilities to shed light on this problem affecting millions. What the report underscores however, is that a large network of for-profit companies has increasingly inserted themselves into our public spaces.

Junk fees, like the ones found in our country's school cafeterias, are robbing hard working families of their hard-earned dollars, while enriching shareholders and executives at the large financial service companies that operate these payment processors.

The Campaign for Postal Banking does not only support efforts to expand financial services available at the country's 31,000 post offices, but also works together with our allies in a Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service to promote the common good. Winning postal banking and other important financial reforms would be a counterweight to the greed of the Wall Street interests that extract their profit from the hard-earned livings of working-class people across the country. ■

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



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.

"Because of all the hardwork our National Officers have done over the years is the reason our wages, hours and benefits continue to improve each contract. The APWU's leadership is always striving to protect and enhance what we have."

Art Campos, President,
Louisville Local 4 APWU
(The Louisville FED)

"We are currently in negotiations for our next Collective Bargaining Agreement. I am confident that our negotiating team will do the absolute best on behalf of all. I encouraged everyone to stay updated by visiting our union website at apwu.org."

Teresa Hable, Local Business Agent,
Minneapolis Area Local
(Northern Light)

"We are responsible for our future. It is our choice to vote. It is our right to vote. We must vote for our future, the future of our family, the future of our jobs, the future for our country, and all the future of the world. The choice is clear, but it is your choice. Vote!"

Jacque Childs, Secretary/Treasurer,
Auxiliary to the APWU of Wisconsin
(Badger Views)

"An atmosphere where management uses intimidation and threats towards workers on an everyday basis is exactly the atmosphere their, Zero Tolerance, policy was issued to eliminate. And when the status quo of accepted misconduct erupts in an event between a supervisor and worker on the workroom floor, what does management do? They obfuscate with false equivalence, place the onus upon the employee that results in discipline up to and including removal."

Glenn Griggs, President,
Milwaukee, WI Area Local APWU
(The Hi-Lites)

"Management is continually making last-minute changes that affect wages, hours and working conditions of the employees we represent...We believe this is a complete disrespect towards the hard-working members we represent. The APWU will continue to fight on behalf of our members and force management to comply with our CBA through negotiations and grievances."

Dave Cook, President,
St. Paul MN Area Local APWU
(APWU Postmark)

IN MEMORIAM

HONORING WILLIAM “BILL” LUCY, 1933 - 2024

APWU mourns the passing of William “Bill” Lucy, who died at age 90 on Sept. 25, 2024. Lucy was born in Memphis, TN and his career as a labor activist spanned decades, becoming one of the most influential Black leaders in organized labor.

Brother Lucy’s name was thrust in the national spotlight in 1968, when American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) sent him to Memphis to learn more about the striking Black sanitation workers. He offered guidance and support for the two months that he marched alongside the workers, who rallied for better pay, working conditions, and an end to racial discrimination following the death of two colleagues in a work-related incident. Working with local activists, he coined the iconic slogan, “I Am a Man,” and helped the workers bring their strike to a victorious end, successfully negotiating a unanimously ratified agreement that secured wage increases and union recognition for the workers.

He served as AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer from 1972 to 2010, helping to grow union membership among the country’s most disenfranchised, such as women and minorities. Lucy was one of the founders of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, formed in 1972 to give Black workers their own independent voice in labor. He also served on the executive council of the AFL-CIO, was a NAACP board member, and was a dues-paying member of APWU. Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard spoke at his funeral on behalf of the APWU. In response to a call from South African labor unions, Director Beard traveled with Brother Lucy to South Africa to observe the first democratically held elections in 1994.

“Brother Bill Lucy was a true hero of the labor movement. Perhaps more than anyone else in our struggle, he embodied the vital connection between the labor and the civil rights movements,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “His life and contributions are an inspiration to us all, and we are so proud to count him as an APWU member for more than a decade.” Lucy will be remembered for his activism and determination to make the world a better place for all working people, and we will carry on his fight for justice. ■



William “Bill” Lucy with President Dimondstein and Secretary-Treasurer Powell

REMEMBERING PRINCELLA VOGEL, 1943 - 2024



APWU honors the life of Princella Vogel, a proud postal worker who dedicated her life to fighting for equitable treatment in the workforce. She helped pioneer the creation of Post Office Women for Equal Rights (POWER), the women’s committee within the APWU. From its inception to its official establishment in 1980, Vogel was involved, helping draft APWU POWER’s Statement of Purpose, structure, and logo.

In 2010, Sister Vogel was the first and only woman elected as APWU Southern Region Coordinator, completing one term as a national officer. She also served as President of the Houston Area Local for four terms, and was the first Southern Region APWU POWER coordinator.

A trailblazer, Vogel was admired and respected by her union peers. In 2009, she was awarded the Elizabeth “Liz” Powell Executive Award for her contributions to the labor movement.

“Our condolences go out to Sister Vogel’s entire family,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “We salute her contributions to postal workers, the APWU, and the labor movement.” ■

Looking Back: This Time in Our Labor History

Malbone Street Subway Wreck Shows Importance of Skilled, Union Labor

November 1, 1918 - Subway motormen from New York City's Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company (BRT) initiated a strike due to the company's refusal to recognize the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET).

Management used intimidation tactics on workers suspected of union organizing. When the BLET threatened a strike, the BRT responded by firing 40 drivers, accusing them of being "troublemakers" and "communists." Fed up with these tactics, workers walked off the job on Nov. 1, 1918.

Despite lacking skilled and trained conductors, the BRT continued running its rail service with strike-breakers and members of the company "union." One such employee was a 25-year-old crew dispatcher named Antonio Edward Luciano who had no previous training or experience driving trains.

During the evening rush hour, Luciano hit a sharp curve while travelling over 30 mph on a portion of the track that had a speed limit of only 6 mph. Of the 650 passengers on board, 93 people perished as a result.

Eventually the workers did win union recognition and the company-caused tragedy, resulting from their use of scab labor, led to new and needed subway regulations, such as the installation of speedometers, headlights, and automated safety measures on tracks and trains. ■



New Orleans General Strike Shows the Power of Cross-Racial, Cross-Trade Solidarity

November 8, 1892 - In an overwhelming show of cross-trade solidarity, nearly 25,000 workers backed by 49 unions walked off the job in a general strike consisted of half of New Orleans' workforce and defied racial divisions.

Leading up to Nov. 8, the Teamsters, the Scalesmen, and the Packers unions – known as the Triple Alliance – were negotiating for shorter workdays, overtime pay, and respect on the job, but the New Orleans Board of Trade bosses failed to take them seriously. With no agreement reached, the three unions started a strike on Oct. 24. Shortly after, the Board of Trade announced agreements with the Scalesmen and Packers unions, but not with the predominantly Black Teamsters union. Using a racial slur, the Board of Trade said they would never enter into an agreement with the union.

Despite attempts by the Board and sensationalist newspapers to stoke racial divides, the Triple Alliance remained united and declared they wouldn't end their strike until their employers signed agreements with all three unions. This was particularly notable given the inflamed racial tensions in America at the time. This event was no more than 30 years after the conclusion of the Civil War, which freed enslaved Blacks. Ready to turn up the pressure, five labor leaders organized a central body called the Workingmen's Amalgamated Council to unite workers of multiple nationalities and trades, and escalate the Triple Alliance strike to a city-wide general strike.

In total, 49 unions demanded union recognition and closed shops. Manufacturing stopped, food and beverage deliveries ceased, street cars and street sweeping services ground to a halt, and electrical and gas workers walked out, sending the city into darkness at night.

The strike ended after four days when both sides agreed to arbitration, ultimately granting the Triple Alliance the wage increases and reduction in hours they had been seeking. By uniting in solidarity and withholding their labor, these unions were able to defy toxic racism and ultimately win the pay and protections they deserved at work. ■

Join the 2024 Combined Federal Campaign **GIVE HAPPY**



The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is an annual charity drive that brings together federal employees, retirees, and government contractors to give back to our communities and foster a culture of giving.

While APWU does not advocate giving to any specific charity, we do encourage you to consider donating to the Postal Employees Relief Fund (PERF) through the CFC.

In light of recent natural disasters along coastal areas, we encourage APWU members who were displaced to apply for relief through the APWU disaster relief fund and the Postal Employees Relief Fund (PERF).



For eligibility, assistance, or to obtain an application, please visit www.postalrelief.com

You may also write to:

Postal Employees Relief Fund
P.O. Box 41220
Fredericksburg, VA 22404-1220

Please note that inquiries regarding the status of your application or relief grant must be addressed directly to PERF. If you have questions regarding PERF, please email perf@apwu.org.



Welcome

to the NEW 2025 Postal Service Health Benefits (PSHB) Program for eligible postal workers and retirees.

High Option

Consumer Driven Option

We give our pledge to protect and support you.

Enroll in your 2025 PSHB health plan during Open Season
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Scan to enroll



High Option 2025 premiums

★ Reduced premiums for 2025! ★

	Biweekly		Monthly
	PSHB enrollment code 23A	PSHB enrollment code 23B	
Self	\$109.86	\$238.03	
Self Plus One	\$213.05	\$461.61	
Self & Family	\$277.28	\$600.77	

Consumer Driven Option 2025 premiums

Your new Personal Care Account (PCA) helps pay for medical expenses.

★ APWU special rates biweekly ★

For APWU career targeting unit employees with more than 1 year in PSHB/FEI-BL.

	APWU career less than 1 year and PSE	APWU career more than 1 year
	PSHB enrollment code 23D	PSHB enrollment code 23E
Self	\$80.62	\$16.12
Self Plus One	\$175.23	\$35.05
Self & Family	\$191.16	\$38.23

Monthly rates

Self	PSHB enrollment code 23D	\$174.68
Self Plus One	PSHB enrollment code 23F	\$379.66
Self & Family	PSHB enrollment code 23G	\$414.17

Choose between two plans that feature a nationwide UnitedHealthcare network of 1.7+ million providers.

As of July 2023



Contact your local Health Plan Representative
Name:

800-PIC-APWU

openseason.apwuhp.com
openseason@apwuhp.com

Premiums for Tribal employees are shown under the monthly premium rate column. The amount shown is the maximum you will pay. Your Tribal employer may choose to contribute a higher portion of your premium. Please contact your Tribal Benefits Officer for exact rates.
This is a summary of benefits and features offered by the APWU Health Plan. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations, and exclusions set forth in the Plan's Brochure (PH-004).
The information provided is for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for professional health care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs and to determine whether making a lifestyle change or decision based on this information is appropriate for you. Some treatments mentioned may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage.
Health plan coverage provided by or through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company, UHC, of California and UnitedHealthcare Benefits Plan of California. Administrative services provided by UnitedHealthcare Services, Inc., Optum Rx or OptumHealth Care Solutions, Inc. Behavioral health products are provided by U.S. Behavioral Health Plan, California (USBHPCL).
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