



Questions & ----- Answers

**about the
American
Postal
Workers
Union**



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What is the APWU?

The APWU – American Postal Workers Union – is a national organization of employees of the United States Postal Service dedicated to advancing the interests of its members and their families. Representing more than 250,000 current and former postal employees in every state and territory in the United States, the APWU is the largest union of postal workers in the world. It is the exclusive collective bargaining agent for USPS employees in the Clerk, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Service crafts. In addition, the APWU represents employees in Support Services, Material Distribution Centers, Information Services Centers, Mail Equipment Shops and Operating Services Facilities.

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What does a union do?

One of the primary functions of the APWU is to negotiate, interpret, and enforce a National Agreement with the Postal Service. This is a contract that establishes wages, working conditions, and other benefits for all workers under its jurisdiction. We

strive to protect workers' rights by representing our members in day-to-day problems on the job such as: discipline, violations of seniority, harassment, discrimination, or other management abuse. Additionally, the APWU addresses workplace concerns such as: safety and health, and the impact of technological change.



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What are some of the benefits of belonging?

Membership in the APWU gives you a voice in determining your future. Members have the right to participate in local meetings, vote for local and national officers, vote on the contract, to run for office, and to petition for change in the APWU.

Other membership benefits include: "The American Postal Worker", a bimonthly magazine that reports on issues and programs affecting you, a safety and health program that educates workers about possible hazards in the workplace and provides technical assistance. Members are also eligible to enroll in the APWU Health Plan, which provides comprehensive coverage at a very reasonable cost. In addition to all of the collective bargaining rights that you rely on, you will have the opportunity to participate in the following programs: APWU Scholarships (college and vocational), APWU MasterCard, Voluntary Benefits Plan, Union Plus, Accident Benefit Association, and Aflac.

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Who can join?

Regardless of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, political affiliation, age or religion, any non-supervisory USPS employee, regardless of level or grade, who is within the jurisdictional claim of the APWU is eligible for membership. Those in supervisory or management positions, or represented by other postal unions can only join to participate in the APWU Health Plan.



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Who is responsible for how the APWU runs?



You, the members are! Every level of the APWU operates democratically on the principle of majority rule. Mem-

bers have a free voice and vote to express their views. All local, regional, and national officers are elected by the members.

This includes business agents in each craft/division. Members also ratify the National Agreement and elect delegates to the National Convention. The convention, which convenes every two years, is the highest governing body of the APWU. Between conventions, the National Executive Board directs union policy and programs.

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How are officers elected?

Local and State organizations have constitutions that dictate how their leaders are elected. National union officers are elected by mail ballot of the membership every three years. Craft officers and national business agents are elected by the members in each specific division. Additionally, regional coordinators are elected by the members in each region. Any member may become a candidate for national office by filing a petition in accordance with the requirements spelled out in the APWU Constitution and Bylaws.

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How much are dues?

Dues vary from local to local. They include national dues established by the National Constitution and local dues determined by the local union. After you have joined the APWU, dues are automatically deducted from your paycheck. Your steward or local officer can tell you the amount of dues; they will, of course, appear on your pay stub.

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How are my dues spent?

As with any organization, a portion of the dues are spent for operating expenses, including: contract negotiations, grievance handling above the local level, and the cost for arbitration at the regional and national levels. Members' dues also cover the cost of publications, legal fees, legislative activities, education, training and community service programs.



How do we negotiate the National Agreement?

The APWU has a National Negotiating Team composed of the President, Executive Vice President, Director of Industrial Relations, as well as the directors of each craft. This team meets with Postal Service management several months before the contract expires. The team proposes contract language, the Postal Service responds, and through the give and take of negotiation, they try to reach an agreement.

Do I get to vote on the contract?

Yes. A negotiated National Agreement becomes valid only with approval by the membership through a mail ballot. After the National Negotiating Team reaches an agreement with the

Postal Service, a Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee reviews the proposed contract. If they approve it, the contract is sent to the entire APWU membership for ratification. If the committee is not satisfied, it can return the contract to the National Negotiating Team to reopen negotiations.



What about strikes?



The APWU believes that the right to strike is an undeniable right of all American workers. However, federal law prohibits strikes by postal and federal employees, and requires that if contract negotiations do not result in agreement, unresolved disputes are to be submitted to arbitration – to an impartial third party – for resolution. While our position is “no contract, no work,” the 1982 APWU National Convention authorized our national leadership to continue negotiations past the contract deadline if they feel this is necessary to reach an agreement, but only as long as postal workers continue to be covered under the previous contract.

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Suppose I have a grievance?

If you have a grievance – if you believe that management has violated your rights or subjected you to harassment or discrimination – you should immediately talk to your steward about the problem. The steward, who is your union representative on the work floor, will determine whether a violation has occurred and will try to reach a settlement with your immediate supervisor. If this effort fails, we can appeal management’s action to a higher level. If all these efforts fail to result in a satisfactory solution, we may insist that an impartial arbitrator settle the dispute.

How is APWU fighting privatization?

Privatization is the Postal Service's attempt to contract-out postal work – your work – to private companies that hire low-wage, non-union workers. The APWU has been successfully fighting efforts to privatize postal services for decades. The APWU monitors all management attempts to contract out work that belongs to our bargaining unit and makes sure that the National Agreement is upheld. In May 1993, APWU won an important privatization dispute at the national level when an arbitrator ruled that Remote Bar Code Sorting (RBCS) work should have been offered to bargaining-unit workers. The Postal Service had contracted the work out to several companies that hired non-union workers at sub-postal wages. As a result of the subsequent negotiations between the APWU and the USPS, Remote Encoding Centers are now staffed by APWU-represented postal employees.



Is the APWU affiliated with other organizations?

Yes. The APWU is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), a federation of 60 national and international labor unions with a combined membership of 12.5 million workers. The APWU is also affiliated with United Network International (UNI), an organization of labor unions representing workers in the field of communications in nations throughout the world.

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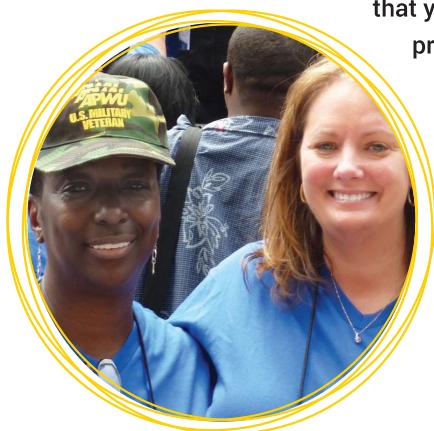
Is the APWU involved in legislation and politics?

Because legislation has an important impact on our members, we are actively involved in legislative matters. The APWU maintains an effective program to monitor legislation being considered by Congress that will have an impact on postal workers and their families. APWU – The Committee on Political Action (COPA) – raises voluntary contributions to assist the campaigns of legislators who support working families, and to defeat those who consistently oppose us.

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How can I find out what's going on in the union?

You can stay informed by attending union meetings and participating in the activities of your local or state organization. Remember, you have an equal voice and vote with all other members. Your steward and local officers can answer any questions that you may have about specific union programs and policies. Additionally, you can stay informed about union activities by reading local and national union publications such as *The American Postal Worker* magazine and periodic APWU News Bulletins, and by staying tuned to our website, www.apwu.org.



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I'm not a member yet. How do I join?

Ask your steward or a local officer for a Membership Application Form (1187) and fill it out or visit APWU.org/join. Your union dues will automatically be deducted from your paycheck. If you work in a very small office where you have difficulty getting information, contact the Organization Department for assistance at **(202) 842-4227**.

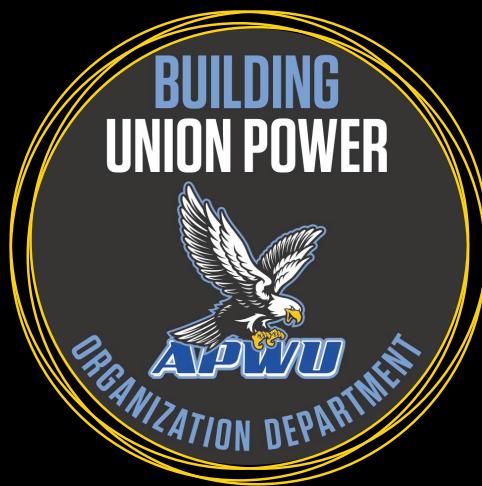
I'm already a member, how can I help?

It's important to keep in mind that you are the union; members are the lifeblood of the APWU. The best way to improve the APWU is to get involved. In addition to attending union meetings, consider joining a committee, working to organize non-members, becoming a steward and volunteering to help in union activities. Your union brothers and sisters will appreciate your participation.



APWU Organization





APWU

American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO

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