APWU NEWS Bulletin

JONATHAN SMITH, President JUDY BEARD, Editor Vol. 56, No. 07 • Sept. 24, 2026

MAKE A PLAN TO VOTE IN 2026

The 2026 midterm elections are around the corner, and it's time for every APWU member to make a plan to vote. Postal workers and union members have too much at stake to sit out this election. The people we elect at every level of government make decisions that affect our jobs, families, communities, and the future of the Postal Service.

For postal workers, voting is about making sure that working people have a voice in the decisions that shape our lives. The strength we have at the bargaining table is similar to the power we demonstrate at the ballot box. By standing together and electing the people who will represent us, not the billionaires, our collective voice is harder to ignore.

This November, make your voice count. Make sure your voter registration status is up to date and make a plan to vote: Find your polling place, apply for a mail-in ballot, get a sample ballot, and much more.

"This is not a moment to stand on the sidelines," said Legislative/Political Director Judy Beard. "Get ready to make your voice heard this midterm election!"

Check Your Voter Registration Status:

vote.org/am-i-registered-to-vote

Make Your Plan to Vote in 2026:

turbovote.org

Supreme Court Rules Against 2026 Midterm Election Rule Changes to Vote-by-Mail

APWU Statement on the Supreme Court Ruling

On Monday, Sept. 14, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that President Trump's executive order on Vote-by-Mail will not be in effect for the 2026 midterm elections, ensuring postal workers can continue to follow the procedures that have proven to work in the past. Postal workers will continue doing what they have done for more than a century: moving election mail and ballots in a timely and secure manner.

"This decision is a victory for every American and a relief for postal workers who are committed to serving them," said APWU President Jonathan Smith. "Once again, the public can count on postal workers to ensure their vote is counted."

Since the executive order was first issued, the APWU has argued that it was unprincipled, unlawful and unworkable.

It was unprincipled because Vote-by-Mail works. It has been a feature of American democracy since the Civil War and has helped hundreds of millions of Americans safely and securely access the ballot box for generations, including the last two election cycles of 2022 and 2024.

The APWU filed an amicus brief with the court arguing that the order was unlawful because it represented an unconstitutional power grab by the executive branch, interfered with states' authority to conduct elections, and created the false impression that postal workers should have a role in deciding who can and cannot vote.

Finally, the APWU argued that the rule was unworkable because of the rush to implement it before the election, without proper training or guidance for postal workers or the states that would be forced to comply with it.

"Postal management and the Board of Governors never should have allowed things to go this far," said Smith. "It is past time for Chairwoman McReynolds and the governors to stand up for the Postal Service's independence and ensure that this rule never sees the light of day. If they don't, we will be reliving this nightmare again in 2028. Our message to the board is simple: Vote-by-Mail works. Keep it. Protect it. Expand it."

The APWU is now calling on the Postal Service Board of Governors to put an end to this measure once and for all.

Write a letter urging the Postal Board of Governors to permanently end this unlawful and unprincipled attack on democracy. Scan the QR code or visit: *usmailnotforsale.org/action*

Watch and share APWU President Jonathan Smith's statement on the Supreme Court Ruling. The message is clear: Vote-by-Mail works. It is safe, secure, and reliable. We must continue fighting to "keep it, protect it, and expand it."

NEW TOP STEPS EFFECTIVE SEPT. 19

A Raise Won at the Bargaining Table, Not Handed Down — the Latest Ground Reclaimed in the APWU's Fight to Restore the Full Pay Scale

The pay schedule changes under the 2024-2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement were recently implemented on Sept. 19. For employees covered by the main agreement who are on the post-2011 pay schedule in Grades 4-7, a new top step has been added. Officially, the change applies to workers in Rate Schedule Codes (RSCs) P7, K7, and C7.

Employees in These RSCs Will Now Progress to the Following Top Steps:

- Grade 4 Top Step ➡ Step J
- Grade 5 Top Step ➡ Step L
- Grade 6 Top Step ➡ Step M
- Grade 7 Top Step ➡ Step M

"Starting with the 2015 national negotiations, the leadership of the APWU has always made reclaiming the top steps a priority in negotiations," said Industrial Relations Director Charlie Cash. "These new top steps are another example of the APWU working to claw back the full pay scale for our members."

"Every step we reclaim means more money in our members' pockets and higher lifetime earnings," said APWU President Jonathan Smith. "As we prepare for our next round of negotiations, the APWU will continue fighting to make sure postal workers get the wages and benefits they deserve."

Under the terms of the agreement, employees will reach the new top step after 36 weeks in the current step of the respective grade. Any time spent in the previous top step, including time in that step prior to implementation, will count towards the step waiting period calculation for advancement to the new top step.

This means that an employee who was in the top step for Grades 4-7 and had been in that top step for at least 36 weeks on Sept. 18, was moved into the new top step in their grade on Sept. 19.

What This Means for Annual Pay:

- Grade 4 Step I ➡ Step J +$1,196
- Grade 5 Step K ➡ Step L +$1,125
- Grade 6 Step L ➡ Step M +$1,062
- Grade 7 Step L ➡ Step M +$1,004

The Industrial Relations Department has identified about 1,125 employees who moved to a new top step on its implementation date.

For these employees, the most recent COLA of $1,414, the additional step, and the 1.5% pay increase due on Nov. 14, will result in overall increases of approximately $3,500 to their annual pay in just under two months. Depending on the grade, this equates to annual salary increases of between 4.5% and 5.1%.

This change does not just apply to employees who were in the previous top steps. Any employee who is currently in these grades, is converted to a career position in these grades, or is hired directly into one of these grades, will benefit from these changes as well.

These employees now have a new top step they can reach, providing additional lifetime earnings.

The Industrial Relations Department has identified over 109,000 employees who will eventually progress to one of these new top four steps.

> **"Starting with the 2015 national negotiations, the leadership of the APWU has always made reclaiming the top steps a priority in negotiations. These new top steps are another example of the APWU working to claw back the full pay scale for our members."**
>
> **- Industrial Relations Director Charlie Cash**

Over the years, the APWU has successfully made significant changes to the pay provisions of the employees in the new pay schedule.

Grade 3 was completely eliminated in the 2024-2027 contract. Grade 8 saw the elimination of all the lower steps, and new top step P was added in the 2021-2024 contract, putting all Grade 8 employees on the same pay scale.

In the 2010-2015 contract, the new pay schedule's top step was five steps below the top step of the old pay schedule in Grades 5-7 and six steps below the old pay schedule's top step in Grade 4.

Because of the implementation of the new steps this year, the APWU has reclaimed—with no concessions on full COLA for all career employees—three steps in Grades 6 and 7, two steps in Grade 5, and one step in Grade 4, as well as eliminated the lowest step in grade 4.

> **"Every step we reclaim means more money in our members' pockets and higher lifetime earnings. As we prepare for our next round of negotiations, the APWU will continue fighting to make sure postal workers get the wages and benefits they deserve."**
>
> **-APWU President Jonathan Smith**

These changes can mean tens of thousands of dollars in additional pay over the lifetime of an employee. With each pay increase, COLA added to the annual salaries, or additional step reclaimed, further general wage increases in the next round of bargaining will be calculated on a higher dollar level than before. Each increase in the annual salary, no matter how small, adds up for each general wage increase.

As the APWU moves into negotiations in 2027, we will be prepared to negotiate an economic package that benefits all those we represent. Reclaiming more top steps will remain a continued demand in negotiations.

For information on pay and benefits, including pay scales, COLA, promotion charts, and leave allowances, visit: ***apwu.org/pay.***