

The Philadelphia POSTAL WORKER

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A Member of the APWU Postal Press Association

October 2010

President's Report



*Gwen Ivey,
President*

Hello members! I hope you enjoyed your summer. The war is still going on. We are in the midst of the greatest financial strain ever on the Postal Service during this economic crisis. But are the financial

troubles of the Postal Service caused solely by the recession? Management cries we are losing money because of lower mail volume, which is true; however, the Postal Service has reportedly overpaid an estimated \$75 billion into the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) over the last ten or so years.

If management could correct the greater than cost discounts it gives to large mailers the Postal Service would increase its revenue. If the government would correct the formula for figuring the payment the Postal Service must make into CSRS and return even half of the money the Postal Service overpaid it would eliminate the debt of the Postal Service completely.

But no, instead the Postal Service is using this economic hardship as a battering ram to try to force its ill thought plans to go to five day delivery through Congress. It uses the recession as a shield to justify its attack on the

workforce; to close facilities, relocate workers and disrupt the lives of workers and customers alike. This deliberate Postal Service mismanagement, such as short staffing stations, what they are trying to achieve is to make our workforce look bad in the public eye.

The workforce is the backbone of the Postal Service. We have been successful in getting the word out to the public, and we will continue to do so.

When the Postal Service wanted to close city stations we got the word out to the community and local politicians. The results, no city stations in Philadelphia have been closed and City Council passed a unanimous resolution to go on record to keep all city stations open. And most recently we took our fight to maintain six-

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OSHA Zaps Postal Service



*Mark Reeves,
Vice
President*

The U.S. Department of Labor filed a worker safety complaint against the Postal Service. The complaint requests an enterprise-wide remedy. On July 6, 2010, it was reported that the U.S.

Department of Labor's solicitor filed a complaint against the U.S. Postal Service for electrical work safety violations. The complaint, which asks the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission to order USPS to correct electrical violations at 350 postal facilities, marks the first time the department has sought enterprise-wide relief as a remedy.

The request for enterprise-wide relief is based upon the discovery of numerous similar electrical work safety violations in the course of investigations conducted by the department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration of USPS mail processing and distribution facilities across the country. These violations increase the risk of injury from electrical shock, including electrocution. While the July 6, 2010, complaint arises from violations discovered in the Providence, RI, facility, the requested remedy would apply to all 350 USPS processing and distribution centers, all of which contain similar equipment.

"When the same safety violation is discovered in multiple locations of an organization, we need an enterprise-wide remedy to protect workers from the hazard," said Solicitor of Labor M. Patricia Smith. "The Department of Labor will seek other opportunities to utilize this remedy."

OSHA's inspections have revealed numerous violations of similar worker safety standards at USPS facilities throughout the nation. The complaint alleges that USPS's actions demonstrate an enterprise-wide policy that resulted in ongoing systemic electrical work safety violations. USPS failed to adequately train workers in recognizing electrical hazards and how to work safely around such hazards, and did not provide workers with the appropriate tools and personal protective equipment to avoid

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Articles must be submitted by the second Thursday of the month. They must be typed. Letters must be signed. Name withheld upon request.

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www.phillyapwu.org

President's Report

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day delivery to our local politicians to ask for their support. I am happy to report that on September 16, 2010, Councilwoman Blackwell introduced a resolution that the City of Philadelphia go on record to support the continuation of six-day delivery, and that it passed unanimously.

We must continue to work together if we are to survive. We must stay strong and committed. We must be unified and when called on, we must turn out in force to support our cause.



Our members cheer the unanimous passing of the City Council resolution on six-day delivery.



Councilwoman Blackwell meets with President Ivey and Local members.

Contract Negotiations Open

Negotiations for a new national agreement between the APWU and the Postal Service opened up on September 1, 2010. Our current contract will expire on November 20, 2010. "The right to bargain for improvements in wages and working conditions is not a birthright. It is the result of union activity," President Burrus said.

I have the privilege of serving on our National Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee. We had our first meeting on June 16, 2010, where we met with our national officers. President Burrus stated, "This will not be a

giveback contract" and "Negotiations may be difficult, but it is our job to find a way around the obstacles we face."

In accord with the APWU Constitution, before a tentative agreement can be sent to the membership for a ratification vote it must first be approved by a majority vote of the Rank and File Bargaining Advisory Committee. President Burrus stressed the important role the committee plays in negotiations and said, "The union negotiating team will rely upon your views as we bargain." I will keep you updated on negotiations as they proceed.

National Convention

At the 20th Biennial APWU Convention the delegates vowed to escalate the fight to keep six-day delivery. A resolution to engage in "rallies, marches, and pickets" with other unions and public interest groups who support our fight to keep Saturday delivery was unanimously passed by the delegates. The resolution also denounced the forced relocation of postal workers and other employer attacks on our members.

All members and their families are

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General Membership Meeting

Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010

7:30 p.m.

**864 Main Street
Darby, PA 19023**

Shuttle Service from
Lindbergh
to the
Union Hall Available

Following Meeting:
November 18, 2010

Convention Report



**Stacey
Franklin,
Treasurer**

Hello brothers and sisters! The 20th Biennial National Convention was held from August 23 to 27, 2010, in Detroit, Michigan. The theme of the convention was 'Change'. The Philadelphia Local was

represented by 29 delegates consisting of officers and stewards representing various work areas and crafts, and dedicated craft members. I would like to thank all the delegates for being the voice of our members and embracing this important responsibility.

At the highest point of attendance there were a total of 2,427 delegates representing 361 locals from fifty states, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Also in attendance were 84 national officers and five retirees' department delegates. Delegates that represent their locals make up the highest governing body of our national union. Many locals submit resolutions which, if passed by the delegates, advise union negotiators on some of the key points that may be negotiated during contract negotiations with the USPS. There were resolutions submitted by all crafts and fervent and engaging discussion that ensued on many topics. One of the primary concerns of all crafts was job security. There was extensive discussion about how our members have been adversely affected by excessing and sub-contracting out our work. Sub-contracting our work and excessing in the clerk, maintenance and motor vehicle crafts is cause for great concern and minimizes the feeling of job security. Numerous resolutions were passed that consisted of adding strong contract language to assist in combating that feeling of insecurity.

Five Day, No Way

During the second day of the convention we had the honor of marching in a rally to save Saturday Service, with thousands of APWU delegates and members, supporting AFL-CIO representatives, union members from other unions such as AFSCME, Jobs For Justice, etc. This demonstration was led by National Presi-

dent William Burrus and the Reverend Jesse Jackson. Reverend Jackson stated that he supports and will assist in our fight, not only because it's time to save our jobs and service, but he also shares a personal connection to our plight because he is the son of a retired postal employee.

Saundra Williams, the president of the Metro Detroit Central Labor Council, informed us that over 200,000 working members of the Detroit AFL-CIO stand with us in our fight. It was truly a pleasure to participate in this demonstration and observe such solidarity, support and passion to help save our jobs and to witness first-hand that we don't stand alone.

Our national legislative department reported that the USPS has increased their efforts to reduce mail delivery from six days to five days. Postmaster Potter admitted at a previous subcommittee hearing that the USPS dire financial projection was "theoretical." House Resolution 173, which supports the continuation of six day mail delivery, has been supported by more than 220 House members. Although this resolution does not create law, it certainly demonstrates the feelings of the members. If Saturday service is eliminated the doors to privatization will be opened. If you haven't already done so, please contact your representatives and ask them to support the continuation of six day delivery. Additionally, talk to your family members and community and explain to them that if the USPS eliminates six day delivery their mail service will change drastically and begin the start of a harmful domino effect in reference to services provided to the community and the average consumer.

COPA

The Committee on Political Action (COPA) reported that over \$1 million was donated thanks to contributions from our active members and retirees for the seventh year in a row. COPA donations are used to support candidates for public office who stand up for postal workers. The COPA fund has the potential to affect the outcome of important congressional races.

Many locals, including ours, host different COPA events or fund-raising efforts to raise money for this important cause, as it affects our members and their families directly. We purchase health insurance to protect ourselves and our families. Whether you own your home



The Philadelphia PA Area Local delegation to the 20th Biennial National APWU Convention.

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Bold Is How We Roll

Local Wins 78 New Jobs for Clerk Craft



Gene Chieffo,
Director of
Industrial
Relations

On August 10, 2010, the Local advanced the installation wide “Unencumbered Employee” grievance to the top of the arbitration docket for the month. On August 31, 2010, the Arbitrator rendered

a decision to sustain the union’s grievance and ordered the employer to immediately create and post 78 newly established full-time regular clerk-craft duty assignments for bid. This is a major victory for the Local.

The Philadelphia PA Area Local has been taking an aggressive approach to having some of our biggest issues addressed in arbitration. The Local has been exercising their option to advance a case to the top of the arbitration scheduling docket. This was made possible thanks to a provision negotiated into our National Collective Bargaining Agreement that gives a Local the right to move a case to the top of the arbitration docket each month. Because of this, the Local has been able to force management to address issues that, in the past they would have been able to bury, sometimes for many years, in the grievance/arbitration scheduling process.

The Big Issues

On March 10, 2010, the union advanced the lead case for 73 “Improper Job Abolishment” grievances to the top of docket for that month’s scheduled arbitration cases. By doing this it would result in the decision of that arbitration being applied to all 73 individual grievances.

The grievances were the result of management improperly abolishing jobs it should have reposted because of changes in start time and/or drop days.

Over the objection of the union, management’s advocate sent the case to Step 4 for a National Interpretive Decision because they felt the issue was not about job abolishment but was instead about the Two Tour Initiative. Personally I think management’s advocate was either not prepared to put on the case or was prepared to lose.

On September 16, 2010, the Local advanced the lead case of the “Improper Job Reversions” issue that resulted from the postal service’s “Optimization Program.” We are currently awaiting the decision of the Arbitrator.

The Local will advance a “Failure to Comply” grievance to the top of the arbitration schedule for December, 2010. This grievance revolves around the postal service’s failure to comply with the parties’ settlement of an ‘Unfair Labor Practice’ law suit filed back in 1997. It is the position of the Local that the postal service has reneged on the agreement that they entered into with the Local that allows a designated number of union representatives, named by the Local, a specific amount of time on the postal clock to process grievances every day. □

President’s Report

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encouraged to contact their Congressional Representatives and ask them to cosponsor House Resolution 173, which supports six-day mail delivery. The resolution was introduced by Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO) and currently has 217 cosponsors – a total of 218 votes are needed for a ‘sense of the House resolution.’ Although adoption would not create a new law, it would send a powerful message that lawmakers want to keep six-day delivery.

Labor Day

I want to thank all of our members who marched in the Labor Day Parade. A special thanks to the NALC members who marched in solidarity with us to support six-day delivery. It does my heart good to see and know there is much brother and sisterhood in the Labor movement in Philadelphia.

In closing I just want to remind everyone that we must stand together because union is about unity. Everyone must get involved and we have to work together and support each other. Do not turn a blind eye just because you think the violations you see around you don’t directly affect you. You might think you are just minding your own business but the fact is it is your business to stop any violation of our contract. Get involved, stay involved! United we stand; divided we fall. □

Stand Up For Your Right to Sit Down

Richard P. Weiss,
Assistant
Editor

A poor Mystery Shopper score has apparently left management on the edge of their seats and Retail Associates without them. Management removed stools and chairs from every retail service counter in

Area A on August 19. By August 26, 2010, management ordered the removal of stools and chairs from every customer service counter in the city.

Following a poor mystery shopper score, an in-house internal mystery shopper returned to the same employee. After her visit, she stated that the Retail Associate failed to follow some of the components mandated by the Mystery Shopper program. She also complained that the Retail Associate sat on a stool during the transaction, and was distracted when another Retail Associate asked her a question pertaining to a zip code. However, there are no requirements within the Mystery Shopper program that prohibit distractions by questions posed by other employees. There are no elements within this initiative that prevent the use of stools or chairs around customer service counters.

Within a day of the shopper visit Philadelphia offices received a memo from the Postmaster's Office stating that "sitting on a stool while conducting retail transactions is not only unprofessional but contributes to WTIL (waiting time in line) issues. Make sure there are no stools/ chairs at the retail counters of your station." During the same timeframe the employee who failed the audit received a Letter of Warning, despite a prior agreement between labor and management not to issue discipline based upon 'Mystery Shopper' performance. A memorandum from Labor Relations, Headquarters, says, "As stated in previous correspondence from the Chief Operations Officer, dated April 30, 2003, the Mystery Shopper evaluations are not to be used as a source for disciplinary action... discipline should not be the focus of these programs and they should not be used as a method of intimidation."

This spiteful knee-jerk reaction to penalize every Retail Associate in the city is an excellent example of why we need our union to help protect our well being. What message does this send to those who have consistently scored high marks on the program? What substantiated documentation does management bring to the table to prove that sitting at a counter increases waiting times in line? Significant staff reductions, sometimes to the point where one associate waits on a line of customers that goes out the door, play a far greater role in extending waiting times.

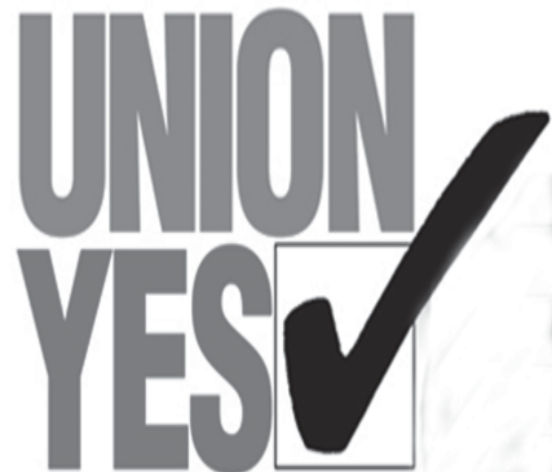
Union members concur with management that Retail Associates should stand while waiting on customers. However, the complete removal of chairs and stools from customer service areas prevents employees from getting off

their feet from time to time, during down times or during U.S. Passport transactions. Prolonged standing without ergonomic relief subjects employees to the increased risk of back and leg problems due to stress and strain. According to OSHA, "Employers have the primary responsibility for protecting the safety and health of their workers. Employees are responsible for following the safe work practices of their employers. Consider implementing recommended safe work practices, including: provide stools or a foot rest bar at workstations. This provides employees an opportunity to shift weight from the feet while still maintaining reach and accessibility." Source: www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/drivethru_standing.html.

According to Oregon OSHA, <http://www.orosha.org/educate/training/pages/201xm5.html>, "Surfaces on which people stand for long periods should be designed to prevent slipping and provide adequate traction and comfort. Anti-fatigue floor mats, sit-stand stools, and footrests can help make workers more comfortable."

Our union has already begun to address this issue, including a potential addition to our National Agreement requiring the availability of chairs and stools at customer service counters nationwide.

Address your concerns regarding this issue with your union steward or contact the Philadelphia APWU office at 610-522-4520. You may also report your complaints regarding safety issues to OSHA, anonymously if necessary, by calling 1-800-321-OSHA or filing a report online at OSHA.gov. □



Convention Report

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or rent, you purchase insurance to protect your investment and assets. When you purchase an automobile, you purchase insurance to protect your investment. Donating to COPA can be compared to purchasing job insurance, because these funds directly support the continuation of your current or improved standard of living. For many of us, without this form of job insurance, homeowners, rental, automobile, or health insurance would be irrelevant, because without your job you would be unable to afford the assets that need insuring. You can make a lump sum donation or donate as little as \$1 a pay period through PostalEASE automatic payroll deductions. We encourage you to donate to COPA to protect your investment, your job, and for as little as \$26 a calendar year this is probably the least expensive insurance that you will probably ever purchase. For more information about how to donate to COPA please contact the union hall or talk to the union representative in your area.

Organizing

Currently, there are 187,500 full-dues paying members and 37,576 non-members. Nationally, we are about 83% organized and our Local is about 87% organized. For the 13% of Philadelphia's APWU represented craft employees that fall into the non-members' category, it's time to join! We are in crucial times fighting many ominous changes that the USPS has embarked upon that jeopardize our jobs and every APWU craft employee should be doing their part to contribute to stabilizing and improving of our livelihood.

We are about to begin the start of contract negotiations and it is going to be a tough fight to maintain our existing rights and gain new rights. Our national and local officers fight tirelessly to ensure our members' rights are protected. Members, if you are aware of non-members in your work area encourage them to join so that we all stand together. If you recommend a non member and that employee becomes a member, you will receive \$50 for your organizing efforts. To receive new member sign-up forms please contact the treasurer's office or talk to the union steward in your area.

Finances

Our National Secretary-Treasurer, Elizabeth Powell, reported that our national union ended the 2009 fiscal year in the black. The Voluntary Early Retirement with incentives placed a financial strain on not just the individual locals, but nationally as well. However, national experienced an increase of 4,238 new retiree memberships, which partially offset the impact along with the 1.2% pay increase which oc-

curred in the latter part of 2009. National, as well as our Local, has made cuts in various areas to improve our financial stability.

There have been some improvements made to the Hallbeck academic scholarships in 2010. The number of scholarship recipients increased from five to ten, and the amount received increased from \$1000 to \$2000. Additionally, a male and female winner was chosen from each region. Five vocational scholarships of \$1000 each for three years were also awarded. Currently there are 42 students receiving assistance from the APWU for their education. Secretary-Treasurer Powell stated that she is proud to continue this service to the members and their families.

At the convention, I had the opportunity to speak to several treasurers from different locals and we discussed how continuously declining membership is negatively affecting the finances of the majority of locals.

After learning of an upcoming Secretary-Treasurer training class, I immediately asked the Secretary-Treasurer's department if the training would consist of some type of brainstorming sessions where we could actively engage in discussion and open dialogue to help generate ideas to increase revenue for all locals and I was informed that revenue generating ideas would be discussed, which is great news.

As I have previously stated, the majority of the Local's revenue is derived from dues, and if union dues decrease so does revenue. We are, however, fortunate because some locals have no choice but to rely solely on dues revenue whereas we do generate rental income which has helped to offset our loss of revenue due to attrition. The officers are always engaging in discussion to reduce expenses and increase revenue. We have made many cuts reducing our expenses, including reducing two full time officer positions to part-time status effective September 25, 2010. There will be more cuts in the near future, however, there is only so much you can cut; eventually you will run out of rope so we are actively investigating other avenues to generate revenue to strengthen our Local's foundation. In Solidarity! □



Our delegates take to the streets to get the message out to keep six-day delivery while at the Convention.

Maintenance Craft Report

**Ken Lester,
Maintenance
Craft
Director**

Union Brothers and Sisters I was proud, as were the other delegates, to represent the Philadelphia Area Local at the 20th Biennial Convention in Detroit. Each of us was eager to learn of the contract

discussions, and of course any discussion of additional early retirement.

The occasion was bitter-sweet in that our National APWU President William Burrus would retire soon. A special dinner was held to honor President Burrus' 53 years service. This was a very special milestone in the history of our organization; and was his last occasion to address the delegates as the leader of our organization.

As many of you may know President Burrus extended an offer to some of our younger members, 35 and younger, to attend the convention as guests of the National. The convention was well attended although it was clear that the economy played a part in some locals' ability to remain for all five days of the convention.

Our fellow delegates from across this great country brought many contractual resolutions to the floor of the convention for discussion. Some were well thought out and prepared with all employees in mind. Other ideas were more local in nature and did not proceed well through the process. Many such issues were contentious and created angry dialogue. An attempt to raise dues was one such issue that was vigorously challenged. This matter was unanimously voted down as well as attempts to change seniority rights.

The maintenance issues were voted on in September 2009, at the Craft Convention. The Craft and Resolution Committee recommendations were accepted, and all of the resolutions were unanimously adopted.

We had an informational rally and picket that was attended by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who I was surprised to learn, was the son of a postal worker. His father was a full-time career custodian. One main concern that was raised again and again during the convention was the need to improve our organizing efforts. We've lost a lot of members due to attrition, and will undoubtedly lose more ground if we do not attempt to organize those employees who are not members. We must do better locally and nationally. This strain is evident already in our local with having to make two of our full-time officers part-time.

The time has come for us to be aware of just what our employer is capable of. There are a lot of rumors, finger pointing and dissension among us. We cannot allow it to overtake or consume us. My new tee-shirt, thanks to the Houston Local, says, "United We Bargain, Divided We Beg!" This is a true assessment of what may be if we do not gain control of our organization.

I respectfully ask that each of you remember to vote, and keep in mind that your decision will frame your future. I also ask that all members come out and participate in their union. I'm sure we have enough upcoming events that we could use your help with; informational picket events and Get Out the Vote to name a few.

We are under fire. Management has made this about the employee and not about the economy. They are pointing the fiscal canon at you and me. So, what are you going to do about it???? By the way, tip off your non-member coworkers that their survivability is directly connected to the longevity of this organization, so they should support it and join! □

OSHA Zaps Postal Service

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injury or death while working around, and on, electrical equipment. The complaint also seeks \$558,000 for the eight willful and four serious violations discovered in Rhode Island.

"Even though it was aware of the hazards, USPS failed to institute the necessary measures to protect its workers," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels. "The complaint filed July 6, 2010 seeks to put a stop to this irresponsible behavior." Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance.

The APWU, as the representative of the affected employees, has filed both nationally and locally, to assert our right to third party status in this complaint. Third party status carries with it; the rights to present evidence at the hearing and to cross examine witnesses produced by any other party.

To date citations and notifications of penalty issued to the US Postal Service for violations in postal facilities across the country have totaled a whopping \$4,697,100. I will continue to update this story as it develops. □

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The 2010 Labor Day Parade

