



The Hi-Lites



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Johnathan Smith Takes Office As APWU National President, Promises Bold Leadership

Jonathan Smith officially assumed the role of national president of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) on Wednesday, delivering a passionate video message to members that signaled an aggressive stance against privatization and a commitment to transformational change.

“Buckle up because this ride is going to be one of the greatest rides that you have ever gotten on,” Smith declared in his inaugural address to the APWU family, emphasizing his readiness to fight for postal workers’ rights. Smith, who thanked members for their support and votes, immediately outlined the challenges ahead, including combating privatization efforts and resisting Post Office closings and consolidations.

The new president stressed that success would require collective action, stating, “I cannot do this alone. This has to be a ‘we’ and not a ‘me.’” He pledged to lead with integrity while fighting with everything he has to protect postal workers and the services they provide to the American people.

Smith paid tribute to his predecessor, Mark Dimondstein, who served 12 years as national president. “Twelve years of blood, sweat, and tears that he gave the American Postal Workers Union. And we want to honor him for that,” Smith said, while noting that “the battle continues.”

Invoking the words of legendary APWU President Moe Biller, Smith emphasized that “the struggle continues” and committed to fighting “to the very end.” He expressed pride in leading the union and maintaining its tradition of service to the American people.

The new president also invited members to share their concerns and ideas for improvement, promising a “transformation of organization” and expressing barely contained excitement about the union’s future direction under his leadership.

Milwaukee Wisconsin Area Local

Big Bend Brookfield Burlington Butler Cedarburg Cudahy Darien
Delafield Delavan East Troy Elkhorn Elm Grove Franklin Fredonia
Germantown Grafton Greendale Hales Corners Hartford Hartland
Jackson Kewaskum Lomira Milwaukee Menomonee Falls Mequon-Thiensville
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Okauchee Pewaukee Plymouth Port Washington Salem Slinger S. Milwaukee



**Glenn Griggs
President**

The Time To Get Involved Is Now!

"...with your participation we are willing and ready to fight."

Hello to all my Union Brothers and Sisters. I hope everyone is staying safe and enjoying their holidays. We have made some significant progress but the challenging times we face as postal employees continue. Some of the challenges we continue to face are management trying to revert jobs even though we are already short staffed in a lot of areas.

Protecting all APWU bargaining unit work from being outsourced or taken over by other unions.

I continue to hear about carriers and supervisors doing bargaining unit clerk work throughout the city stations and Associate Offices. Although we are filing grievances and are successful in most cases when notified, it is very important for all our members to not turn down any work that you are asked to perform unless you have some safety concerns. The APWU has always declared that all work is clerk, APWU work.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. These challenges can be met with force.

It's called members' participation. For your union reps to put together the best defense possible as to why

we think it's ridiculous to cut jobs, change start times, not staff the stations properly, fight against 204-b's on higher level, we are going to need all our union brothers and sisters to get involved.

You may ask! What does that mean? Let me tell you. Make sure you make all your basic punches. When you move from one section to another, take the time out to move into the correct operation so you can get credit for that work.

Notify your union reps when anyone besides clerks is doing clerk work. When other crafts/supervisors do our work, and if it goes unreported, we are not getting credit for that work performed. If we are not getting the credit, it makes it seem like to upper management that the work is getting done with already a short staff.

We believe that the data that management uses for calculating staffing is flawed. Why cut our own throats and help cut jobs by not making our basic punches?

The side deals must stop. I believe the system works better for everyone when the contract is followed by management and union members. In fact, the JCIM which stands for (Joint Contract Interpretation Manual) mandates the contract to be followed and any issues or disputes that are listed in the JCIM to be resolved. This is not the game

show deal or no deal. We have a negotiated contract that we all must follow.

These steps alone won't guarantee that we will be successful at stopping all the changes and challenges we face, but it will give us a great start.

Some of these challenges we are going to face won't be won in the grievance procedure. These challenges will have to be won by contacting your state and federal representatives. We also must start voting for politicians who have our best interest at heart. Our job is our livelihood and should be at the top of the list when deciding on a candidate to vote for whether it's a state or a federal official.

Although we face these challenges, with your participation we are willing and ready to fight. We will not sit idly by and watch the destruction of the postal service, and the continuous delays in mail. We are hoping every one of you joins the good fight. Divided we fall, together we stand strong. Like what the title of this article says. The time to get involved is now.

We have an upcoming general membership meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026 @ 6pm.

I hope to see new faces and new members that are looking to get involved with your union. Even if you

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are not ready to step up and get involved. I hope more new faces along with the current ones that show up on a regular basis and continue to come to meetings to be informed. This is your union, and you should know what goes on in it. It is very important that our younger members start getting more involved. You are and can be the future reps for the American Postal Workers Union. We look forward to more young members' involvement.

A Friendly Reminder

Maintenance craft at the Oak Creek Annex, and the Milwaukee P&DC:

- 1.) In instances where there is less than 1.5 hours' notice for overtime given to an employee in the maintenance craft prior to their end tour and they are unable to stay, no "strike" will be given to them.
- 2.) For the summer months of May through August, the annual leave slots will increase by 1% from 19.5% to 20.5%, which will more than likely increase the number of slots allowed off for several areas in the maintenance craft.
- 3.) Maintenance craft strike rule "to be brought from 6 to 5 in the LMOU.

Clerk Craft @ the Oak Creek Annex and the Milwaukee P&DC:

- 1.) The current holiday pecking order in the clerk craft to be changed to have Holiday Volunteers called ahead of non-career employees.
- 2.) Same day annual leave for requests for 4hrs or more
- 3.) Request for 8hrs for same day annual must be in writing and in person. If the slot is open, it will be granted if you have the leave to cover your absence. 3971 can be given to any supervisor. If for some reason, a supervisor is not available. 3971 requests for same day annual can be given to the general clerks to verify a slot is available. (This process is for 8hrs same day annual leave) If so and you have the leave, your leave request can be left with the general clerks, and they will notify your supervisor.
- 4.) Lunch requests for maintenance and clerk employees will be done daily on a 3189 or modified version for multiple employees to request at management discretion. Management has stated in our discussions that they have no desire to have a blanket policy of not granting no lunch request. They went on to say they still plan on offering no lunches on a day-by-day basis. If any member does experience blatant and continuous denials of no lunches, please write a statement and give it to a steward or send it to me@ ggriggspwumke@yahoo.com

If any member has any questions or concerns about any of this feel free to call me or stop in at the hall

I want to thank all our union brothers and sisters for being such dedicated union members, and those that take the time out to write us statements to process possible grievance violations. Keep doing what you are doing. That has helped us more than you know.

Lastly, always remember, our members involvement is the key to whether we will have a fighting chance and stopping or minimizing whatever changes we may face. No more sitting on the sidelines.

The future for our customers, our livelihood, and our family livelihood are at stake.

You cannot get much higher stakes than that.

Let's get to work!



Chris Czubakowski
Local Business Agent

Thom Hartmann

Nothing Is Ours Anymore: Is the "Rental Economy" the Most Destructive Scam in US Capitalism?

Yesterday, both Trump and his Secretary of Housing and Urban Development told us that 50-year home mortgages may soon be a thing. While seemingly insane (you could end up paying more than three times the cost of the house and never escape the burden of debt before you die), this is just the latest iteration of one of American businesses' most profitable scams: the rental economy.

It's a growing threat to the American middle class that rarely gets named, even as it reshapes our lives every day. Over the past two decades, it's snuck in quietly, disguised as convenience, efficiency, and "innovation." As a result, nothing is "ours" any more. Instead, we're renting our lives away.

There was a time when you bought things. You bought a house, a book, a record, a car, a word processing program. You paid once, took it home or lived in it, and it was yours. If the company went out of business, your stereo still worked.

Nothing Is Ours Anymore

"social media and even our news, increasingly doesn't just reflect reality."

If the manufacturer didn't get their annual payment, your computer didn't lock you out of your own words. You could read books on your phone or pad without an internet connection to "confirm your purchase."

That America is disappearing. Today, almost everything that used to be a purchase has become a rental. Take Microsoft Word. Decades ago, you bought it once and used it for years. Now it's a monthly fee. Stop paying, and you may not even be able to open documents you wrote yourself.

Adobe did the same thing. So did music, movies, and television. At first, it felt like convenience; a few dollars a month didn't seem like a big deal. Even the latest versions of the two major computer operating systems are essentially spyware, constantly tracking everything you do while demanding that you put all your personal information on their "cloud" servers.

Instead of buying homes, people are renting because, in part, massive New York hedge funds and foreign investors are purchasing as many as half of all the homes that come available for sale in some communities, and then flipping them into rentals. Renters can end up on the hook for their entire lives. Even the means to get a good job — a college education

— has become something you must pay for over a period of decades or even a lifetime instead of the pay-as-you-go model my generation had before Reagan gutted federal aid to higher ed. We now have almost \$2 trillion in student debt — the only developed nation in the world that does this to its students — and I regularly get calls into my radio program from people in their 70s still paying off their student debt.

But this change was never really just about money. It has morphed over the past decades into a new form of corporate control over our lives and our wealth. It's become a never-ending extraction of money and personal data from each of us, every month, every year, time after time, over and over again until we're financially exhausted.

When you own something, you decide how it's used. When you rent, someone else makes that choice. They can raise prices, change terms, remove features, track everything you do with it, or shut it off entirely. Your "choice" becomes compliance.

That same model has spread everywhere. Cars used to be machines you owned. Now they're rolling computers with features like heated seats, remote start, or performance upgrades locked behind monthly fees. Similarly, cars are increasingly leased instead of purchased.

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Miss your payment this month and the lender will remotely disable “your” vehicle. Your car doesn’t just take you places anymore: it reports on you.

Phones are even worse. They’re not just devices; they’re gatekeepers. Apps can be removed. Accounts can be banned. Services can disappear overnight. And because so much of modern life runs through that phone — banking, work, navigation, healthcare — being cut off isn’t an inconvenience. It’s a functional exclusion from society.

This extends from major things like our cars and homes to simple things like apps. Louise loves to play Scrabble on her phone, and would gladly pay a one-time fee for an app that doesn’t throw ads at her, track and sell her information, or demand constant interaction. Instead, since the old Scrabble app she’s used for years went to a rental model, she’s gone through a half-dozen apps, each worse than the last at demanding her interactions or throwing ads.

And to add insult to injury, layered on top of this rental business model is a vast, multi-billion-dollar industry harvesting our personal information. Every website you visit. Every app you download. Every product you register just to make it work. Your location, habits, preferences, relationships, and even emotional responses are tracked, analyzed, packaged, and sold. Most often without meaningful consent, and almost always without real alternatives.

This is not how American capitalism worked for over 250 years.

The question business leaders used to ask was simple: “What unmet needs do people have that our company can satisfy with a new product or service?” You built something useful, people bought it, and that was the deal.

Today, the question has changed: “How do we make our product so essential that people can’t function without it, then crush or buy out our competitors so there’s no real consumer choice, then charge a monthly fee forever, all while extracting user data we can sell for even more profit?”

That’s not innovation. It’s parasitism.

In this model, the product is often just bait. The real commodity, the real profit center, the real source of unending corporate cash flow is you. And because the billionaire “Tech Bros” and Wall Street oligarchs control the products, the data, and increasingly our nation’s news and social media, they also control the content and algorithms that shape public opinion.

As a result, social media and even our news (think CBS, The Washington Post, The LA Times, Fox “News”) increasingly doesn’t just reflect reality, they engineer it to get us to think of this new rental economy as normal, as innovative, as The Way Things Should Be.

In addition to profitably amplifying outrage, profitably distorting truth, and polishing the public image of this new rental economy — all to create billions in ongoing month-after-month profits — America’s billionaire tech lords and the right-wing politicians they bankroll (thanks to five corrupt Republicans on the Supreme Court) are manufacturing our consent (to apply Noam Chomsky’s phrase).

Thomas Jefferson warned that people are inclined to suffer evils while they are sufferable rather than abolish the forms to which they’ve grown accustomed. The billionaire Tech Bros and Wall Street are hoping we’ll all just roll over, sign up, and let them ding our credit cards until our dying day. It’s gotten so bad that apps — which also acquire and then sell our data — have emerged that track our “subscriptions” so we can try to get it all under control. They’re advertising them on TV every day: get this app to find out what apps are secretly extracting your cash because you long ago forgot you clicked on that link.

None of this was inevitable.

The solution is not to smash technology or retreat into the past. It’s for government to once again work for the 99% instead of the 1%. That means once again regulating money in politics, private equity, social media, data harvest-

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Nothing Is Ours Anymore

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ing, and the out-of-control rental economy that has replaced ownership. It means breaking monopolies, restoring regulatory independence, making education affordable, supporting home and car ownership, and reaffirming that democracy — not billionaires — sets the rules of the road.

Technology should serve human freedom, not manage it. Markets should reward service and quality of content, not extraction. People should be able to choose to pay or not to pay for things from apps to the functionality of your car or home's HVAC system. Nothing is ours any more. Not the road, not the floor. If everything we touch is leased, freedom is just another fee.

If we don't act to regulate this out-of-control rental economy, we may one day realize we didn't lose our wealth and even our democracy all at once: we simply rented our way out of it.

Celebrating Our Postal Workers This Peak Season

Peak season is the busiest time of year for postal workers across the country. From November through December, and even into the New Year, processing returns, postal workers are working tirelessly to ensure packages, letters, and holiday greetings reach their destinations on time.

This year, APWU wanted to do something special to recognize the extraordinary effort our postal workers put in during this demanding season.

We reached out to the public—the families, businesses, and communities who depend on our services every day—and asked them to share messages of appreciation and support.

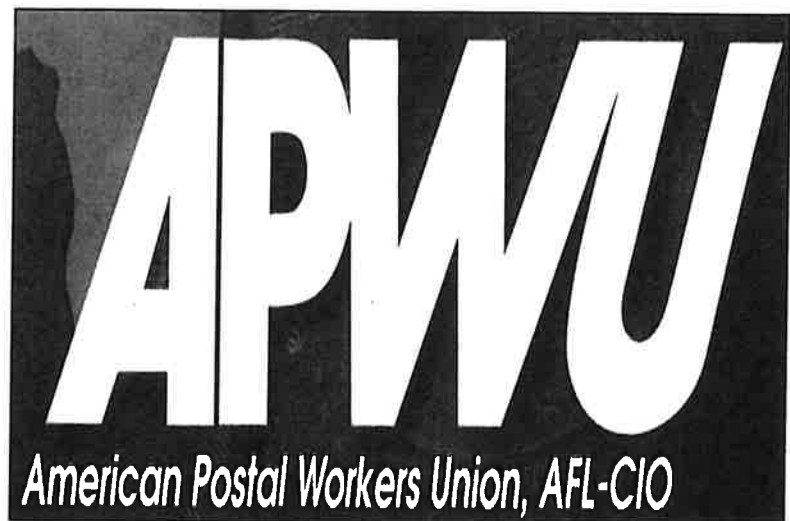
The response has been overwhelming. People from all over the country have expressed their thanks for the postal workers who make the holidays happen, delivering everything from time-sensitive packages to heartfelt cards connecting loved ones across the miles.

These messages serve as a reminder of why our work matters and the vital role postal workers play in keeping communities connected, especially during the most wonderful time of the year.

If you're a postal worker, you can receive a personal message of thanks from a member of the public by simply texting "PEAK" to 91990 on your cell phone.

It's a small gesture, but we hope these words of encouragement bring extra cheer and joy during the busiest days of the season.

To all our postal workers: thank you for your dedication, hard work, and the heart you bring to the job every single day. The holidays happen because of you!





John Miceli
Treasurer

How to Make Extra Money Easy

Whether you're trying to get out of debt, save more for retirement or just boost your monthly income, there has never been a better time to figure out some ways to make extra money on the side. No longer do you have to settle for a part-time job with a set schedule. Today's gig economy is all about flexibility.

Look for Bogus Billing Charges:

Set aside some time to review your monthly statements and make sure you understand each charge. It's possible that you're paying for services you aren't using through your TV provider, internet provider, cell phone service provider and more.

While you're looking at your bills, consider if you can lower them in any other ways. Perhaps you're ready to cut the cable cord or you aren't using quite as much mobile data as you thought you needed. Here are more ways to cut your cell phone bill. Take the time to contact your providers and reduce any services you can spare to get more money back in your pocket every month.

Stop Paying for Things You Don't Need:

Along the same lines as lowering your phone bill or eliminating your

cable TV bill, consider anything you're currently paying for that you may not need. Canceling recurring services or monthly memberships is a quick way to add more money to your budget.

Here are a few things you may be overpaying for:

Insurance: People will sell insurance on anything these days, but you only really need it on your home and car. If you're paying for insurance on something like your cell phone, cancel it and consider one of these alternatives.

Entertainment: Consider canceling Netflix or Disney+ and opting for a free streaming service for money back in your pocket. Similarly, you may be able to swap Spotify or Apple Music for free music online.

Also, be sure to take advantage of your local library for more free entertainment.

Gym Memberships: Monthly fitness memberships can get expensive fast. You can pay yourself that membership fee instead and opt for a free workout/fitness app. There are more tips for saving on your gym membership. Look at your spending over the last few months to figure out how much money you'll save by canceling services you don't really need.

Get Your Money, It's There To Take

"Making extra money is just one path to improving your financial picture."

Swagbucks: Watch Videos, Take surveys and surf the Web. Swagbucks is a way to earn free gift cards. it is legitimate. Like some of the cash back apps that we previously mentioned, Swagbucks awards users points for online shopping. But it's different because you can also get rewards for searching the web, watching videos and taking surveys.

You can then redeem those points for cash back from PayPal or gift cards. Retailers such as Amazon, Walmart & Target. Swagbucks often offers a \$10 welcome bonus and also rewards you for referring family and friends.

Final Thought:

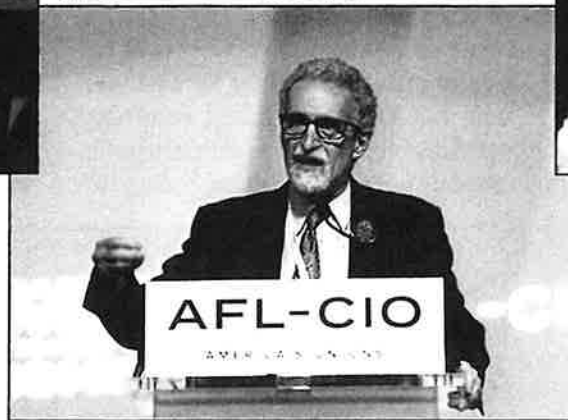
Making extra money is just one path to improving your financial picture. You'll be able to reach your goals faster if you increase your income and reduce your expenses at the same time. Your mission is to help you save more and spend less every day — and we also want you to avoid scams.

When you're researching any of the ways to make extra cash be 100% sure that you're visiting the company's official website.

These side hustles won't make you rich, so anyone promising that you'll earn \$500 a day working from home is a scammer. If you're unsure about whether a job opportunity is real or fake, contact a free Consumer Action Center.



Onward
Postal
Workers!



Forward
APWU!

It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as your president for the last 12 years. For me, the presidency was never about holding a title but rather advancing our cause. It was about building a stronger APWU and labor movement, uplifting and empowering our members, fighting for justice, and building workers' power. It was about standing with the people in defense of our national treasure — the public Postal Service.

While I am proud of the APWU's many accomplishments under my leadership, I recognize that no individual makes history by themselves. Our progress has been the work of many dedicated national, local, and state officials, thousands of activists, capable union staff, and every member who forms the strong foundation of our union. It has been a privilege to work with so many union fighters, and I appreciate their many contributions. The record of any union leader should be judged not by personalities or talk, but by results.

In 2013, members voted for needed change, and that change was quickly reflected in our fight against management's Staples privatization plan – a big step toward subcontracting all retail services. Left unchallenged by the previous union leadership, we mobilized our members and allies, took to the streets, and waged a groundbreaking and victorious campaign!

Facing ever-present threats of privatization, we built "A Grand Alliance to Save Our Public Postal Service" consisting of 80 national organizations. It proved critical over the years. With countrywide mobilizations between 2018-2020, we defeated Trump's privatization plans and saved Vote-by-Mail for the 2020 election.

The memo I negotiated in 2014 led to over 100,000 life-changing career conversions for Postal Support Employees (PSEs). We also resolved the ongoing PostPlan grievances, resulting in 8,000 new clerk jobs.

After inheriting a deeply concessionary 2010 Collective Bargaining Agreement that undermined career employment, established PSEs, created the divisive two-tier career pay scale, and gave up some wage increases and Cost-of-Living-

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Adjustments (COLAs), I was proud to be your lead negotiator in making significant gains over four national negotiations. With those national contracts, we: secured annual wage increases; protected full COLA; narrowed the gaps in the two-tiered wage structure; won an all-career workforce in Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Service; restored level 8 to the pre-2010 higher pay scale; increased Part-time Flexible (PTF) work-hour guarantees; and achieved automatic PSE conversions to career after two years. These contracts maintained and secured tremendous job security, including the “no-layoff” clause and 50-mile limits on excessing.

Working on a bipartisan basis, we passed historic legislation, including: \$10 billion in USPS Covid relief; pandemic-era Emergency Federal Employee Leave; the *Postal Service Reform Act* that eliminated the pre-funding debacle; funding for the new postal electric vehicles; and the *Social Security Fairness Act*.

Other important achievements include: negotiating comprehensive pandemic safety protocols; advancing internal and private-sector organizing; organizing Human Resources Shared Service Center (HRSSC) workers into the APWU; engaging in the critical, long running battle to unionize Amazon; strengthening our Retirees Department; promoting veterans’ rights; creating a Young Members’ Committee; improving injury compensation training; promoting our “Stand Up for Safe Jobs” campaign; building stronger relationships and solidarity with the other postal unions; growing the union’s media presence; bringing your voice to the AFL-CIO Council; opening an inspiring APWU history center; advocating for expanded services, including postal banking; improving communications with the members through our website, social media, and podcast; and investing in our future with the APWU Leadership Institute.

Guided by the APWU’s constitution and convention actions, our union helped lead the way on political issues that impact working people. We rightfully supported Bernie Sanders’ pro-worker presidential campaigns, demanded justice after the murder of George Floyd, and have been firm defenders of voting rights and pushed to expand Vote-by-Mail. We opposed our tax dollars being used to slaughter innocent people in Gaza. We promoted health care as a human right, raised the need for independent politics, fought for clean water and air, and opposed job-killing trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). We defended free speech and the right to protest, demanded war dollars be brought home, and encouraged vigilance and resistance to the rising tide of tyranny and fascism.

Of course, we have not won every battle. The struggle for better staffing and service, tackling the toxic work environments, forging one postal union, and addressing the slow grievance procedure must continue.

Some may wonder why I took on the stress, long hours, slander from some detractors, and personal sacrifice that came with the presidency. Like many of you, I was shaped by others and the times we live in. I was raised by a decorated anti-fascist World War II veteran father and peace activist mother. A cousin was a hero of the underground resistance in Nazi-occupied France and executed by the fascist barbarians. Much of my family perished in the concentration and death camps of the Holocaust. My great-uncle was an outstanding leader of the progressive Fur and Leather Workers Union.

Simply put, I deeply believe in justice and freedom and that the world will be better run by workers rather than billionaires enriched by their military, tech, and medical-industrial complexes.

There is a long list of people I am grateful to for shaping me into the leader I became. Unfortunately, with limited space, I can only single out a few: Former President William Burrus, whose support and confidence in me played a major role in my 2013 election.

Richard Koritz, my mentor, who over the years taught me to have great confidence in workers as the creators of wealth and makers of history. Stephen DeMatteo, my executive assistant, who greatly propelled our work forward. Melissa Dimondstein, a rock of support and an APWU activist in her own right, who volunteered countless hours for the national union.

I have been asked how I see my legacy – I will leave that up to others to determine. For me, it is enough to know I have

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given my very best, proudly stood on the shoulders of those leaders, activists (including the courageous 1970 postal strikers), and family members who came before me. That I have left the APWU stronger with more members involved. That I am a man of the people who recognizes that, while good leadership is vital, nothing can be accomplished without the members, whether in the Stop Staples fight, our legislative efforts, contract campaigns, or to protect the public Postal Service.

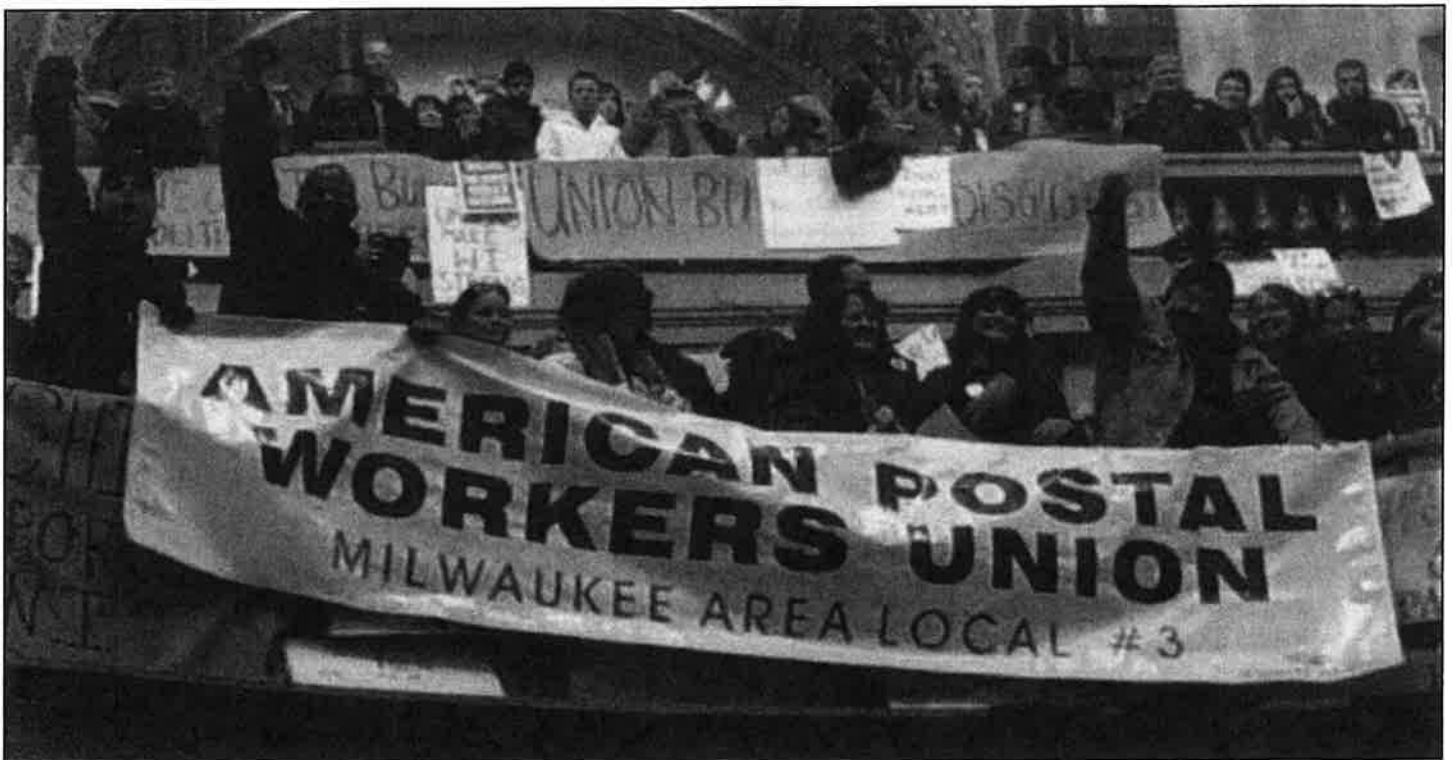
The union belongs to you, the members. Keep it strong! Attend union meetings and speak up. Join a union committee. Fight for safer workplaces, better staffing, and service. Stand up for each other on the workroom floor. Build maximum unity with the people in your community to save the public Postal Service in the face of ongoing serious threats. Stand in solidarity with all workers in struggle.

While no longer your president, I remain in the just struggle for strong and militant unions, living wages, shorter workweeks, health care as a human right, a healthy planet, affordable housing, a vibrant public Postal Service, defending and expanding hard-won democratic rights, strong public education, and an independent labor party accountable to and representing the interests of working people, not billionaires.

As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution against the British king, let us say “no” to new kings, “no” to tyranny. Don’t play the bosses’ game of divide and conquer, pitting native-born against immigrants and white folks against people of color. Unite around our common interests and build solidarity, equality, and unity of all working people at home and abroad, no matter where we come from, how we might worship, the languages we speak, or the color of our skin. That indeed is the union way!

Ours is a class struggle – the bosses versus the workers, Wall Street versus Main Street, and capital versus labor. I pass the torch! From the workplaces to the streets, from our communities to the halls of Congress, agitate, organize, and mobilize for power and justice!

Forward APWU! Solidarity Forever!



Why You Should Consider Becoming a Union Member

Unions have played a crucial role in shaping labor rights and improving working conditions for employees across various industries. If you're contemplating whether to join a union, here are some compelling reasons to consider:

1. Collective Bargaining Power

Unions provide workers with collective bargaining power. By joining forces, employees can negotiate better wages, benefits, and working conditions with their employers. When you're part of a union, your voice is amplified, and you have a say in shaping workplace policies.

2. Job Security

Union members often benefit from stronger job security. Unions advocate for fair treatment, protection against arbitrary layoffs, and due process in disciplinary matters. Having a union behind you can provide peace of mind, especially during economic downturns or organizational changes.

3. Fair Compensation

Unions fight for fair wages and benefits. They help establish minimum pay standards, ensure overtime compensation, and advocate for equitable distribution of wealth within companies. As a union member, you're more likely to receive competitive compensation for your work.

4. Health and Safety

Unions prioritize workplace safety. They push for better safety protocols, training, and protective measures. When accidents occur, unions support injured workers and hold employers accountable. Being part of a union means having an advocate for your well-being.

5. Solidarity and Support

Unions foster a sense of solidarity among workers. You become part of a community that supports each other during challenging times. Whether it's legal assistance, emotional support, or financial aid, unions stand by their members.

6. Training and Skill Development

Many unions invest in training programs. Whether you're a construction worker, teacher, nurse, or artist, unions offer opportunities to enhance your skills. Continuous learning improves your employability and contributes to your professional growth.

*Kenni Liggan,
Customer Service Director*

APWU Statement On Post Marking, Changes To Domestic Mail Manual

APWUNews

While the USPS has updated the DMM to clarify its practices, it is important to note that nothing about its postmarking procedures has changed.

Nonetheless, the changes to the DMM underscore a major concern of the APWU's — the Postal Service has slowed the transportation and delivery of First Class Mail significantly, with two extensions of service standards since 2021. This is likely to have a negative impact on Election Mail in federal and state elections.

The most recent service standard reduction in April 2025 was largely driven by an operational initiative called Regional Transportation Optimization (RTO). For much of the country, RTO ends the Postal Service's practice of picking up all mail collected at post offices, blue boxes and by letter carriers at the end of each day. Before RTO, this mail was transported to a processing facility just hours after leaving a customer's hands, where it would be postmarked and moved along the processing network.

Since RTO, much of the country's mail is not processed until the morning after, or as in the case of mail dropped off at the end of the week or before a holiday, several days after, it was first dropped off by customers.

This gap between when a customer drops off mail and when the USPS postmarks an item is cause for concern for time-sensitive correspondence, especially Election Mail. Additionally, with the elimination of the afternoon pickup, much of the country's First Class Mail now takes a day longer to transport and deliver than before.

The APWU opposed the service standard reductions in 2021 and 2025, and has urged the Postal Service to rethink RTO and communicate clearly to the public, and election officials in particular, its process and timeline for postmarking mail. And, in an effort to ensure the continued success of Election Mail, the APWU urges the Postal Service to fully engage its "extraordinary measures" this election year, and to work proactively with the APWU and other postal unions in the Election Mail Task Force.

Understanding Tariff Changes: Impact on Mail Volume

International mail volume into the United States collapsed by 80% on Aug. 29 when the Trump administration imposed tariffs on low-cost imports previously exempt under the "de minimis" rule. This exemption allowed packages valued under \$800 to enter the U.S. duty-free. The decline in international package volume is affecting millions of daily shipments that postal workers would normally process.

Additionally, airlines and shippers were unable to rapidly cal-

culate duties on millions of small packages, bringing international mail to a near standstill. While the Universal Postal Union has introduced a digital tool to help, 88 global postal operators have suspended or restricted U.S. services, directly impacting our members' work.

The administration claims this policy curtails drug shipments and counterfeit goods, but it is keeping millions of packages from reaching American small businesses, working families,

and those who rely on home delivery each day. The policy may also undermine the projected \$10 billion in tariff revenue the administration promised, and is affecting revenue for the Postal Service.

**IT IS KEEPING MILLIONS OF
PACKAGES FROM REACHING
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Leading Publication on Federal Workforce, Government Executive, Interviews New APWU President Jonathan Smith

'I am what I am':

American Postal Workers Union's new president talks leadership during inflection point for U.S. Postal Service

Jonathan Smith said that he is opposed to the ongoing postal modernization plan called Delivering for America, but believes the Postal Service should expand the services that it provides to the public. Jonathan Smith took the helm of the American Postal Workers Union in November after prevailing in the 200,000-member organization's election the previous month.

Formerly president of the New York Metro Area Postal Union, APWU's largest local, since 2012, and a member of the union since 1988, Smith assumes leadership at a time when the Postal Service both celebrates its 250th anniversary and faces a contentious debate over its future and how it will modernize.

In this interview with Government Executive, Smith discusses his personal connection to postal work, how he plans to fight any effort to privatize the Postal Service and his views on Delivering for America, the 10-year overhaul plan started by former Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and being continued by current PG David Steiner.

What made you want to become the national president of APWU?

Well, I've been working in the Postal Service for 38 years, and I am the proud grandson of a postal worker. My grandfather was a custodian in the Postal Service, and he worked in the Postal Service for 25 years. I can remember when I first came to the post office, my grandfather told me to go find that union.

My grandfather said that because [he] was originally from Macon, Georgia, and he worked on the tobacco fields. He left the bigotry, the racism and the hatred of the South to come up North to give his family a better opportunity. So I grew up under the umbrella of the Postal Service, because when he came up North, he got a job in the Postal Service, and he got introduced to rights that he never knew existed when he worked out on the tobacco fields.

He got introduced to the principle of "We are only as great as our unity." And he instilled those principles in me. With an eighth grade education, through the Postal Service, he got an opportunity to bring his family and introduce them to a piece of the American dream. That's what the Postal Service means to me, and that's why I ran for national president.

Before that, I was the local president in New York for well over a decade, and I just like helping people that sometimes have difficulty fighting for themselves. I think God just put it on my spirit, and my grandfather put it in my heart, that this was my mission in life.

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In your first video message to APWU members, you made it clear that one of your top priorities is going to be fighting any effort to privatize the Postal Service. How do you plan to lead that fight? The Postal Service has greatly changed since I first came into [it]. As the union, I realize that we do a great job of putting out information, but we also do a lousy job of putting out education.

I plan to first start by educating the members on the greatness of APWU and the sacrifices that were made for them to have the opportunities that they have today, because you have no reason to fight for what you have until you first realize what it took to get there.

I happen to be lucky that I was educated on the great 1970s strike of the Postal Service, and it was an illegal strike. I can remember watching the video of this great postal strike, and there was a woman on there that left a lasting impression on me. I can't really remember her name, but I can remember her words. They asked her "Why would you go on strike and take a chance on losing everything because of the illegal strike and they can fire you?" And she said "This is not about me. This is about the next generation."

Well I am that next generation, and I owe her a debt of gratitude by starting to educate the postal employees to take their power back by standing up. We're the last blue collar bastion left in America where we hire veterans, where we have people coming from all walks of life. What is a better example of what America should look like than the Postal Service?

But we need to educate them that it was hard to get these rights that we have within our contract, but it's very easy to lose these rights. So my first priority is a campaign on educating the members on what it took for us to get to where we are, in order to encourage them to have the courage to stand up to fight for where we need to go.

What are your other priorities as president?

We got to stop the closing and consolidation and the privatization of the Postal Service. The Postal Service belongs to the American people, and it's been around for 250 years. I'm here to fight for it to be here 250 more years. This is an essential institution, like I said earlier for veterans, but also the elderly. We serve the communities, and my goal is to talk to the Postal Service about doing more, offering more to the community of things we could do. Postal banking was a great idea.

With the Postal Service being one of the most trusted government services that we have, wouldn't it be great if you were able to bring your bank account to the Postal Service? Wouldn't you feel so much more secure? What about charging stations and fishing licenses? We already do passports and stuff like that.

I'm here to enlighten the American people that we are written into the Constitution as a service for a reason, even though the government keeps trying to make us a business, we are not a business. I am a registered Independent, meaning I don't affiliate myself with one party or the other. I affiliate myself with issues that best benefit the working class, and I'm proud of that. So these are some of the priorities.

We have to bring knowledge back, and knowledge is powerful. An informed membership is a powerful membership. An informed America is a powerful America, and I plan to lead a vigorous campaign on education and information in order for us to take our rightful place in America as a working class of this country. Because it is the working class that created the middle class, which ultimately created the greatness of this country.

When you refer to the closing and consolidation of the Postal Service, is that a reference to Delivering for America? It's an absolute reference to the 10-year plan.

I should say 10 years of really being unclear, because even to this day, I still have no idea about what the intent is of the 10-year plan. How does it benefit the American people? Notice, I say, how does it benefit the American people? We are

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I Am What I AM...

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proud of the service that we offer the American people. It boggles my mind, especially with these politicians, that they have a convenient memory. When Hurricane Sandy was around, when anthrax was around, when COVID-19 was around, we were heroes and we were essential. Now, when there's nothing going on, all of a sudden, we're not heroes and we're not essential.

We want people to be able to participate fully in this democracy, and that starts with things like vote by mail. Vote by mail is very important to the American people, so they can make sure that their vote is not only cast and their voice heard, but it's secure. There is no organization that is better on delivering that than the Postal Service.

We have been doing it in places like Oregon and Utah where they have vote by mail initiatives, and they've had it for many years with no problems. But all of a sudden, when you want to politicize the Postal Service, it's a problem with the Postal Service making people have easier access to the doors of democracy.

(Oregon and Utah are two states that allow elections to be conducted entirely by mail, but there have been recent efforts in both states to limit the practice.)

What has been your impression so far of the new Postmaster General David Steiner?

Well, I've been trying to get a meeting with Mr. Steiner. I know that he was on the executive board of FedEx, and his claim to fame with Waste Management [where he was CEO] was he took the union population down from 32-33% to 20%, and he liked to brag on that. So I surmise from what my grandfather taught me: "If it looks like a duck, sounds like a duck, walks like a duck, it must be a duck."

But I can't tell you that I have any personal impressions, because I have not met the man yet, but your record says who you are. And looking at his record, it says that he is a privatizer and that he would be for possibly privatizing the Postal Service. I hope that my first impressions based on the information that I gathered are not true, but I remain open minded and ready to openly negotiate, as long as he comes to the table with an open mind and with understanding of what fairness and justice looks like. I'm willing to work with anyone.

(After his tenure began in July, Steiner said in a video message to postal employees that he is against privatizing the agency.)

Is there anything else you'd like to add? I am what I am. Let me say this, I am a labor leader under the tutelage of [former APWU presidents] Moe Biller and Bill Burrus as well as [APWU Secretary-Treasurer] Elizabeth Powell. The reason that I say that is because what has hurt labor is that we have too many labor leaders that have become politicians.

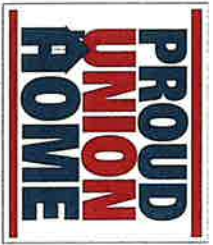
What do I mean by that? When you go out and you try to gauge what other people's opinion is and to formulate your own opinion, then you're a politician. But when you go and see what's wrong and realize it's your job to convince the people this is what we must do to make things better for all of us, then you are a labor leader.

I am proud to say that I am 100% labor leader, and that's what I will remain to be. I am what I am. I fight hard because I care, and I believe in the greatness of my members and the working class, because this is bigger than just the APWU.

This is about working people all over America realizing that there is a place for us in this country, if we only believe.



**Friday, 7:00 am
November 21, 2026**



2026 GMM Meetings

- January 26 - 6pm
- March 25 - 7pm
- May 29 - 7am
- July 20 - 6pm
- September 23 - 7pm
- November 20 - 7am

Time Dated



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