



The Hi-Lites



The official publication of Milwaukee, WI Area Local APWU, AFL-CIO

(Proud Postal Press Association National Awards Winner)



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THANK A UNION

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AFL-CIO

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
Muskego Mukwonago New Berlin Oak Creek Oconomowoc Oakfield
Okauchee Pewaukee Plymouth Port Washington Salem Slinger S. Milwaukee
Sussex Wales Walworth Waterford Watertown Waukesha Whitewater



**Paul McKenna
President**

The union has seen a rise in disciplinary action over the past several months. One of the problems that we keep seeing is management consistently failing to give employees a copy of the PS Form 3971 when employees return from an absence.

Many employees may not think that this is a big deal, but this makes a huge difference when management tries to discipline you.

We see this mostly play out in the following scenario; Management calls an employee in for a day-in-court concerning attendance. At that day-in-court you are asked why you haven't been at work. Then you are informed that your attendance is unacceptable and you are put in for discipline.

In the day-in-court, you try to remember back two, three or even five months ago why you missed a day or two of work. You know that some or all of it should have been a covered FMLA condition, leave approved in advance or a result of an extenuating circumstance.

The union steward in the meeting with you states that we can look on the PS Form 3971's to prove it was an FMLA condition or it was scheduled in advance, because that is what

Better Safe Than Sorry

"Every time you call in for an absence insist that you get an accurate copy of the 3971 back from your supervisor the day you return to work."

you called in for at the time of the call-in. The steward asks you if you have copies of the 3971's, and you state you never received the copies back after returning to work (after any of the call-ins). However, you are sure that some or all of them shouldn't be used for discipline.

Management disputes this and states that all of your calls-ins were unscheduled and can be used for discipline and later issues you a Letter of Warning.

Through the grievance process, the steward requests copies of your 3971's from your supervisor, and when they are provided, there is no mention of any of the absences being a covered FMLA condition or scheduled in advance. Now what do you do? If you still have a confirmation number from when you called in those days, the steward may be able to prove that it was a FMLA covered condition, but without it, your discipline is going to stick.

How can this be avoided? It's easy.. Every time you call in for an absence insist that you get an accurate copy of the 3971 back from your supervisor the day you return to work. Don't let your supervisor tell you they will get it for you later or tomorrow, and then you both forget about it.

Keep asking for it and if they won't give you a copy, fill out the 3971 yourself and have the supervisor

sign it on the spot, or go see a union steward and have them insist that your boss gets you a copy of it. Keep those copies for at least six months. Now you will have the proof needed not to be disciplined.

Don't think that if you don't get a copy of it back that maybe the boss will forget about the call in. Management has a very good record system when it comes to call-ins. They won't forget about it! If you are disciplined for any reason, that discipline stays on your record for two years if you don't file a grievance within fourteen days of receiving it. In most cases, if you file a grievance, the union can negotiate a much shorter period for that discipline to remain on your record.

It's up to you, the employee, that we represent, to prove that the absence was either an FMLA condition, approved in advance or was the result of some extenuating circumstances that should be considered. Without accurate documentation like a 3971, instances like this are difficult for the union to get a decent settlement. If the employee does their part in providing the documentation, the union will do their job to achieve a good resolution.



White House Budget for 2019 Continues Attacks on Postal and Federal Workers

APWU Web News 2/21/2018

The White House introduced its proposed Fiscal Year 2019 budget to Congress last week. This non-binding proposal begins an annual, months-long government funding process and also showcases the Administration's funding priorities, setting the tone for budget negotiations. For postal and federal workers, this budget is largely a reintroduction of last year's failed attacks on our pay and benefits, but takes them even further. It:

- Increases employee FERS contributions 1% a year for each of the next six years;
- Eliminates FERS Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), and reduces CSRS COLAs by 0.5%;
- Eliminates the special retirement supplement;
- Reduces retirement benefits by using a "high five" salary average formula, rather than the current "high three" average;
- Lowers the G-fund interest rate to provide worse returns on Thrift Savings Plan investments;
- Increases the share postal and federal workers pay for care under the FEHBP;
- Slashes Postal Service personnel costs and reduces mail service to the American people to achieve \$44 billion dollars in postal-specific savings;
- Decrease FECA compensation for injured workers and institute a new waiting period before they can receive benefits;
- Cuts \$237 billion from Medicare.

Each of these proposals would be severe cuts to dedicated postal employees, both active and retired. "We've been down this road before, and once again we cannot allow the budget to be balanced on the backs of working people," said President Mark Dimondstein. As justification for attacking our paychecks and retirement security, the White House cites the need to reduce the federal deficit; however, the White House and its allies seemed unconcerned with the deficit when they passed a \$1.5 trillion bill to finance tax cuts for the wealthy elite. "Just as we feared when we fought against the disastrous tax proposal, the White House is coming after our hard-earned pay and benefits to 'fix' the deficit they are growing," said Legislative and Political Director Judy Beard.

Many of the Administration's disastrous proposals were incorporated into last year's House budget, as part of a \$32 billion dollar cut targeted at federal and postal worker pay and benefits. Postal workers, active and retired alike, rallied last year against the budget attacks and stood arm-in-arm with our sisters and brothers in the Federal-Postal Coalition to defend our livelihoods. We flooded Congress with tens of thousands of calls on our coordinated Day of Action against the budget, and thanks to our activism, we were victorious. Congress ultimately abandoned the House budget and instead adopted the Senate budget which excluded these terrible provisions. As this year's budget process begins anew, we will bring that same vigilance and action to succeed.





Mark Ferrari
Local Business Agent
& Health Plan Rep.

Sally gets up for work in the morning. She drives to work and parks in the employee parking lot at the postal facility she works at. She wears her uniform to work and is appreciative that the APWU has negotiated that she be given a uniform allowance to help with the cost. This is nice because at the job she held prior to being hired by the USPS she had to purchase her own work clothes and pay the full cost.

Sally completes her 8 hour day at work. She is grateful that she is guaranteed 8 hours of work and 40 hours per week thanks to the union contract. Her friends and family are surprised to hear that she gets a guarantee like that as they have never heard of such a rule. She tells them her union negotiated it.

Some of Sally's co-workers mention that a pay raise for all employees is coming soon. Sally is glad that she doesn't have to beg her boss for a raise as she had to do at her previous employer. She remembers her former employer constantly promising she would get a raise but never receiving one. She knows that the contract between APWU and management has provided her a pay raise, a step increase and even COLAs over the years. All guaranteed under the con-

Sally Knows Best

“Special thanks to the overwhelming majority of Clerks, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Services employees who belong to the APWU.
Your membership is greatly appreciated by ALL!”

tract. Thanks to her union negotiated salary, she has also been able to buy a home, make her car payments and help put her son through college.

Sally signed the quarterly overtime desired list and noticed she is on the overtime call to work her scheduled day off. The union negotiated a fair rotation for the employees to work overtime and it is her turn. At her previous employer, people would be called randomly for overtime based on who the boss liked or didn't like. Sally works her overtime the next day and appreciates the fact that it is at 150%. At her previous employer, she wouldn't get overtime pay until she went over 40 hours for the week. She knows and appreciates that the union has negotiated that career postal employees get 150% or even 200% of her base rate depending on when she works the overtime.

It's time to make annual leave picks for next year. Sally makes her picks with the other employees based on seniority. Sally and the employees appreciate how the union negotiated that there is a guaranteed number of employees allowed off on annual leave on any given day of the year. They also like how the annual leave picks are done fairly and not awarded by management based on who they like or don't like. Sally gets her annual leave slip back approved and she makes plans knowing she will have the time off thanks to the union negotiated rules.

The USPS decides it must reduce the staffing in the facility where Sally works. However, unlike most companies, Sally and her co-workers know that thanks to the union negotiated contract, as a career employee she cannot be laid off. Her friends and family can't believe she gets this guarantee as they have never heard of any employer with such a rule. Not having to worry about being laid off is a huge relief for Sally as she had been laid off at a previous employer and had problems making ends meet while unemployed. Sally knows she now will still be able to make her house payment, pay her bills and provide for her family with no worries thanks to the union.

Sally notices that there is additional money for an adjustment on her paycheck. She hears that the union settled a grievance over management violating the contract. She is glad the union is there to help protect the worker's rights and appreciates the additional money that she will use on her vacation. She never had to call the union much over the years but is grateful for the time the union steward filed a grievance for her when management attempted to discipline her for something that was not her fault. She knows that thanks to the union the discipline was rescinded.

The job bids are posted and there is a job that Sally wants where the schedule is better for her and her family. She appreciates that the awarding of

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the jobs will be based on either seniority or qualifications that the union helped negotiate and not awarded to whoever the boss likes or to the biggest butt kisser. She knows that the union will make sure the jobs are awarded fairly in accordance with the contract.

Years go by and Sally has had a long career at the post office and decides it is time to retire. She is grateful that she gets a retirement package that allows her to retire comfortably. She knows that some forces (including many in Congress) think that postal workers get too much in regards to employee pay, benefits and retirement. Thankfully, the union has successfully fought against those forces over the years. Sally can retire knowing she has financial security in large part because the union believes workers should have a decent retirement.

Sally knows that thanks to the union she has all of the previously mentioned pay and benefits in addition to many other things postal employees enjoy and sometimes take for granted. She understands that the union has fought and won these things for her and which she is grateful for.

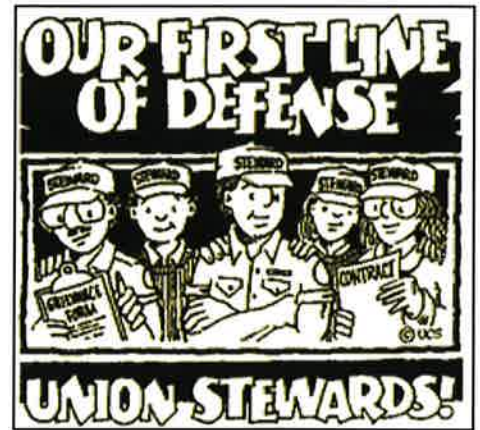
Special thanks to the overwhelming majority of Clerks, Maintenance and Motor Vehicle Services employees who belong to the APWU. Your membership is greatly appreciated by ALL!

Finally, we are advertising the next Stewards Training Class on May 2nd. Chris Czubakowski will be assisting me this year. If you know of any members who have good attendance, good communication skills and a willingness to learn and lead, please let them know... The local needs good young people to get involved!

APWU Stewards Training

**Wednesday, May 2nd
10am-2:30pm**

**APWU Union Hall
417 N. 3rd St.
Milwaukee**



APWU Members Only

- Please notify the local prior to May 1st if you wish to attend.
414-273-7838
- Pay parking available on northeast corner of 3rd and St. Paul.
- Meter parking on 3rd street in front of Union Hall.

Lunch Provided





Chris Czubakowski
North Sectional Director

Under the terms of the Transfer Memo located within our National Agreement "full consideration" must be given to all reassignment requests with both gaining and losing installation heads being "fair in their evaluations."

Significantly, also, the memo prescribes that requests from qualified employees shall not be "unreasonably denied" and it sets forth standards for judging transfer applicants' records. Transferees merely must meet minimum qualifications for positions to which they seek reassignment and have acceptable work, safety and attendance records. Moreover, supervisor evaluations must be "valid" and "to the point" with "unsatisfactory work records accurately documented."

In seeking a transfer, requests should be made via E-Reassign, which is the Postal Service's online reassignment opportunity and transfer request system, or by submitting a written request to the installation head. The request should contain a list of all positions for which the individual is qualified and the location for which he/she desires to transfer. If using E-Reassign, each request for transfer can be for one specific district and up to five offices and crafts per request.

Looking For A Transfer? Look Here First

"The transfer memo also sets forth the minimum service requirements before reassignments can be initiated."

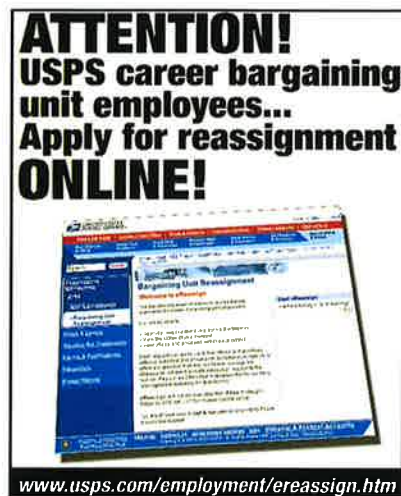
Also, multiple requests can be made so as to cover other districts.

The Transfer Memo prescribes that transfer requests be considered by installation heads "in the order they are received consistent with the vacancies being filled and the type of positions requested." E-Reassign procedures also require that active requests be processed on a first come first served basis. The system records the time that the request is submitted by the hour, minute and hundredths of a second. Requests that are made prior to the active request window on E-Reassign take preference.

If both installation heads agree that the employee should be reassigned they must arrange for mutually agreeable reassignment and reporting dates. Mutual agreement means a consensus must be reached between postmasters on a reporting date. Except in an event of unusual circumstances this time should not exceed 90 days.

The memo also sets up a ratio that must be achieved in filling vacancies when there are qualified applicants for reassignment. This threshold must be met except in unusual circumstances. The Postal Service must fill at least one out of every four vacancies by a transfer request in all offices of 100 or more man-years if sufficient requests from

qualified applicants have been received. In cases of offices of less than 100 man-years, a ratio of one out of six vacancies is required.



Example: During the life of our current contract, the Germantown office was required to fill 1 out of 4 vacancies by transfer. Last year, management exercised that right and accepted a transfer from another office. This, however, now means that Germantown must convert PSEs to career for any more residual vacancies (up to 3) that happen within that office prior to a new national agreement being signed.

The transfer memo also sets forth the minimum service requirements before reassignments can be initiated.

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When an individual is seeking reassignment with the same district OR to an installation in an adjacent district, he/she must have served 18 months in his/her present installation. The employee is also required to remain with the new installation to which he/she is reassigned for a period of 18 months, unless released by the installation head earlier, before seeking another transfer.

Exceptions to the 18 month lock-in period requirement are:

- In the case of an employee who requests to return to the installation he/she previously worked or,
- Where an employee can substantially increase his or her number of hours (eight or more per week) by transferring to another installation as long as he/she meets other criteria, in which case, the lock-in period will be 12 months

* * *





Marvin Rivera
West Sectional Director

Some Supervisors and Managers are harassing and intimidating certain postal employees by improper implementation of the Restricted Sick Leave policy.

Management can place an employee on restricted sick leave, if there is reasonable proof that the employee is ABUSING their sick leave. Here, however, is what section 513 in the ELM (Employee Labor relations Manual) states.

513.39 Restricted Sick Leave

513.391 Reasons for Restriction

Supervisors or installation heads who have evidence indicating that an employee is abusing sick leave privileges may place the employee on the restricted sick leave list.

Restricted Sick Leave

"If you feel that your supervisor has improperly placed you on Restricted sick leave contact your Union Steward."

In addition, employees may be placed on the restricted sick leave list after their sick leave use has been reviewed on an individual basis and the following actions have been taken.

Establishment of an absence file.

Review of the absences file by the immediate supervisor and higher levels of management.

Review of the absences during the past quarter of LWOP and sick leave used by employees. (No minimum sick leave balance is established below which the employee's sick leave record is automatically considered unsatisfactory.)

Supervisor's discussion of the absence record with the employee.

Review of the subsequent quarterly absences. If the absences logs indicate no improvement, the supervisor is to discuss the matter with the

employee to include advice that if there is no improvement during the next quarter, the employee will be placed on restricted sick leave.

513.392 Notice and Listing

Supervisors provide written notice to employees that their names have been added to the restricted sick leave listing. The notice also explains that, until further notice, the employees must support *all* requests for sick leave by medical documentation or other acceptable evidence (see 513.346).

All that being said...management must sit down with the employees on a quarterly basis to discuss the use of LWOP or sick leave usage. Notes of this quarterly review should be taken by both the employee and management.

If you feel that your supervisor has improperly placed you on Restricted sick leave contact your Union Steward.

First COLA Increase Of 2018

APWU News 2/16/2018

In accordance with the 2015-2018 Collective Bargaining Agreement, career employees represented by the APWU will receive a 25 cent per hour cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), effective March 3. The increase is the result of a rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-W). It will appear in paychecks dated March 23, 2018 (Pay Period 06-2018), and will total \$520.00 per year. The COLAs are in addition to general wage increases. This is the sixth cost-of-living increase under the 2015-2018 contract. The COLAs received so-far during the 2015-2018 CBA will total \$1,144 per year. Postal Support Employees (PSEs) do not receive cost-of-living increases, but have five general wage increases under the 2015-2018 contract. On Nov. 25, 2017, PSEs received a pay increase of 2.3 percent and will receive a 21-cent raise on May 26, 2018. Updated pay scales are available at apwu.org.



Jeff Worden
Vice President

From Feb 28th through March 3rd officers of your APWU Milwaukee Area Local attended the Four State Caucus in La Crosse, WI.

At this caucus the representatives from the four states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin) got together to share ideas/discuss the changes that the members would like to see for the upcoming National Agreement.

These ideas are then sent to the APWU National Union. The national looks over ALL of the proposals from all of the APWU represented locals throughout the entire country.

These proposals go to the various crafts of interest such as; Clerk Craft, MVS Craft, Maintenance Craft etc. The APWU National Union then establishes committees to meet on these and to discuss each of the proposed resolutions and then list ALL of the APWU locals who have submitted these proposals.

At the APWU National Convention the entire APWU delegation will then discuss (in length) on each of the proposed resolutions. There will be a vote taken and if the majority is in favor with a proposed resolution then the APWU National Union will at-

It All Begins With An Idea

"...only UNION MEMBERS will have a say on what ideas they may have for the Local Agreement."

tempt (during negotiations) to change to that particular article of the National Agreement.

Of course there is NO GUARANTEE that the proposals submitted or discussed will become part of the National Agreement.

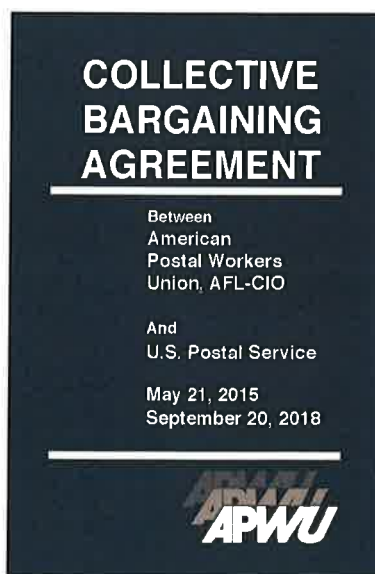
Remember only APWU members can submit proposals. That means only YOU ... the dues paying member! Sure, there may be some non-members that have ideas for the National Agreement but, too bad!

The only way to make your voice heard and to have the union look over your ideas/suggestions for the National Agreement is to BE A DUES PAYING APWU MEMBER!

The National Agreement goes through September 20, 2018. We keep following that agreement until a NEW agreement is reached. After THE National Agreement is settled we will start LOCAL NEGOTIATIONS.

Again, only UNION MEMBERS will have a say on what ideas they may have for the Local Agreement. So, if you have any ideas for change to a particular article of the National Agreement or Local Agreement (and are a UNION MEMBER) go ahead and submit those ideas to an APWU officer/steward.

Remember, since you are a member, it's time for you to decide. Take Care



What is guaranteed, however, is that YOUR proposal will always be brought up/discussed at the caucus and/or National Convention.

Thank A Shop Steward

Shop stewards are the leadership of their workplace. Stewards work long hours to make sure the members have a voice and an advocate on the job.

Cheers to all our shop stewards who dedicate their time and energy to keep things moving and are not afraid to speak up to management. You make unity happen and you never let anyone forget there's a union at your worksite.
Thank you!



Greg Becker
South Sectional Director

I have become aware of some "practices", or should I say, contractual violations occurring at select Associate offices. I have mentioned some of these "practices" at our General Membership and Executive Board Meetings and they are included in the minutes for these meetings. I encourage all members to read the minutes in order to get the latest information from all of the Executive Board officers.

Unfortunately, many of the same violations of the contract run consistent through most of the associate offices and remote post offices. My fellow sectional directors no doubt will attest to this. One of the most common violations throughout the associate offices involves Article 8 of the contract. Article 8 is the article which outlines the overtime rules.

Each office may have its own LMOU (Local Memorandum of Understanding) and these may vary from office to office. All associate office Article 8 LMOU's must comply with Article 8 of the National Agreement. Article 8 basically says that the Overtime Desired List Clerks with the Necessary Skills must be worked to the maximum extent prior to the utilization of Non-O.T.D. L at the overtime rate (up to the maximum overtime caps of 12/60 hours).

Article 8: Protect Your Rights

"Unfortunately, many of the same violations of the contract run consistent through most of the associate offices and remote post offices."

Furthermore, Overtime Desired List clerks will be scheduled at the overtime rate prior to PSE Clerks working in excess of eight hours in the service day. Keep in mind that PSE's only get compensated overtime after 40 hours. What I have observed is that management directs PSE's to frequently work in excess of 8 hrs in a day. Each Article 8 violation is based on the facts and circumstances of each case.

At some offices, management has chosen to post non-traditional Full-time duty assignments (NTFT) in lieu of a 5-day, 8-hour duty assignment of the same BT and ET. Because management has chosen to post NTFT duty assignments, they are prohibited from utilizing Non-OTDL Clerks at the overtime rate except in an emergency.

I know what everyone is thinking...management will just claim that heavy mail volume is an emergency. Unfortunately, for management, the term "emergency" is defined in Article 3 to mean exactly what a clerk believes it should mean. Emergency is defined as..."an unforeseen circumstance or a combination of circumstances which calls for immediate action in a situation which is not expected to be of a recurring nature." A lot of mail or delayed mail by itself does not meet the definition of "emergency".

Additionally, management cannot utilize these NTFT clerks at the

overtime rate anytime before tour or after tour if their daily schedule is less than 8 hours...except in an emergency! Again, while management may have many definitions for "emergency", there is only one in the contract. Furthermore, a NTFT Clerk with a daily schedule less than 8 hours must be paid "out-of-schedule" premium if utilized past his/her daily schedule for the remainder of his/her tour up to 8 hours.

The contract defines how each category of Clerks can be utilized (Less than 40 hour NTFT Clerks can sign the O.T.D.L for his/her SDO). These contractual rules allow clerks to schedule their lives or to earn extra money when overtime is called by signing the O.T.D.L.

Remember that management has the right to determine when overtime is called, even when there is delayed mail. Management may forget about their emergencies then.

Management may hope that Clerks' will forget to notify their steward when their rights are violated according to the language of Article 8 and the NTFT Memorandum. Now that you know some of your Article 8 rights, will management may be less likely to violate your rights? NOT likely!

Remember to request or contact your steward if you have any questions about Article 8 or if you believe any of your rights are being violated. I can be reached at (414) 530-3449.

OSC Issues Hatch Act Social Media Guidance in User-friendly Format

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) today issued Hatch Act social media guidance for federal employees in a clear, easy-to-understand format with real world examples and a new quick reference tool. OSC also announced a 50-day suspension without pay of a U.S. Postal Service (USPS) employee for partisan political Facebook postings while on duty, conduct that occurred shortly after the employee received Hatch Act training.

“This office routinely receives questions from federal employees and the public about when social media use violates the Hatch Act,” Special Counsel Henry J. Kerner said. “With social media so accessible, employees want to know what political activity they can and can’t engage in on Facebook, Twitter, and other sites and stay clearly within the law. OSC’s new user-friendly guidance will help employees understand their obligations at a glance. It’s designed to improve compliance with the law. If employees know their legal obligations and still violate the law, OSC will bring cases accordingly, but first, employees have to be well-informed of their Hatch Act restrictions.”

OSC issued two documents today: “Hatch Act Guidance on Social Media” and the “Social Media Quick Guide.” The longer document in an easy-to-use format includes a number of real world examples to illustrate how social media and the Hatch Act intersect.

Here’s an example quoted in the guidance: “You stay at work during your lunch break and check Facebook on your personal cell phone. A Facebook friend posted a message about an upcoming event supporting a candidate in a partisan race. Even if you are not in a pay status during your lunch break, you may not like or share that post while you are in the workplace.”

The “Social Media Quick Guide” is the first of its kind from OSC. This quick reference tool has a checklist for allowed and disallowed social media activity for all federal employees and those who are further restricted from actively participating in partisan political management or campaigns under the Hatch Act.

In addition to the new materials, OSC’s website has comprehensive information on Hatch Act restrictions. OSC also is available by phone and email to answer questions and help federal employees adhere to the Hatch Act.

OSC educates the federal workforce about and pursues penalties for violations of the Hatch Act. The federal law, passed in 1939, limits certain political activities of federal employees, as well as some state, Washington, D.C., and local government employees who work in connection with federally funded programs. The law’s purposes are to ensure that federal programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion, to protect federal employees from political coercion in the workplace, and to ensure that federal employees are advanced based on merit and not based on political affiliation.



The Hatch Act restricts and limits
"certain political activities of Federal
employees both on and off duty"

Political Activity = something in active
support of or opposition to a political
party, a candidate for partisan
political office, or a partisan political
group



Postal-Service Workers Are Shouldering the Burden for Amazon

by: Jake Bittle, The Nation

The tech giant's rise has pushed mail clerks and carriers to the breaking point.

Every day postal trucks drop off about 4,000 packages at a US Postal Service station in central Tennessee, where they're unloaded by a team of around six USPS employees. Each person grabs a box, rushes to the only scanning machine, runs the bar code, and then places it in the proper gurney for its route. The process takes about 10 seconds, and it can be repeated as many as 200 times in an hour.

"You'll see all of us, management included, trying to get under the machine, scanning packages and then tossing them, trying to get through it," said Amanda, a USPS clerk who works there. "I'm pretty sure every one of us has at least one repetitive-motion injury." Around one-third of the packages Amanda handles are shipped by Amazon. As the Seattle-based tech giant commands an ever greater share of the retail market, the number of packages handled by the USPS keeps increasing. But employees say Postal Service management hasn't responded to the surge in heavy items by investing in staffing or infrastructure. Instead, its leadership has cut costs and resorted to what union leaders call "management by stress."

We absolutely don't have proper staffing for the amount of packages we get," said Amanda, who withheld her full name for fear of workplace repercussions. "Everyone in the office is overwhelmed by it, but the only way management's going to respond is if you file an incident report. People are just so busy that they'll say, 'It'll be fine tomorrow.' It's not."

Amazon was able to make a deal to ship its packages through USPS at cut-rate prices, because the company preemptively sorts and labels packages by postal route. But transporting and distributing these packages still takes clerks like Amanda much longer than sorting letters, which can be fed through a machine. If the clerks are delayed, the station's carriers will be delayed in starting routes, which are already longer than ever thanks to the packages filling up their satchels and trucks. Many won't deliver their final box until well after the sun has set. "If there's a lot of Amazon, it just gums up the works," Amanda said. "Things get backed up by two, three hours."

For decades Republicans have painted the USPS as a prime example of government inefficiency. Just last year Republican Congressman Darrell Issa of California, one of its most vicious critics, implied that the agency could be nearing its end. But there's no reason for the Post Office to be struggling. It sustains itself through postal revenue (receiving no taxpayer money), and was profitable through the early 2000s, even as e-mail became ubiquitous and the number of letters decreased.

In 2006, a Republican-led Congress passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (PAEA), a bill that set the USPS's pricing scheme for the next decade. Included almost as a footnote in this legislation was an ambitious requirement: The USPS would prepay decades of employee health-care benefits over only 10 years, at a rate of about \$5 billion a year. Some politicians voiced concerns at the time about the size of the payments, but USPS revenues were higher than ever, and the bill passed with bipartisan support. The USPS ponied up for the first few years, but then the Great Recession hit and mail volume from large companies dropped off. The annual \$5 billion obligation became too much, and the USPS stopped paying.

The result has been what Steve Hutkins, an NYU professor who runs the blog Save the Post Office, called a "manufactured crisis" that has fueled conservative arguments that the USPS should be privatized. Republicans like Issa have used the inability to pay as an excuse to make "the argument they've wanted to make all along," which is that government can't get anything right and that the Postal Service should therefore be hobbled or privatized.

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“No other company or government agency has funding obligations like that,” said Hutkins, “and beyond that, the Postal Service is essentially profitable.”

One big reason the USPS has remained solvent in the age of e-mail, though, is the growing demand for package delivery, mostly driven by online shopping. USPS revenue was just about the same in 2017 as it was in 2005, according to annual reports, but packages now play a much larger role. In 2005, 1.1 billion packages made up around 3 percent of the agency’s revenue; in 2017, 5.7 billion packages made up around 28 percent. And in 2017 alone, package volume grew by 589 million pieces, an increase attributable almost entirely to e-commerce.

Because the USPS guarantees universal service, its network of about 150 million addresses is far more extensive than that of private services like FedEx or UPS. Amazon takes advantage of this infrastructure and hires the USPS to perform what’s called “last-mile” delivery. Packages from Amazon’s local fulfillment warehouses are “injected” (as Amazon describes it) into postal stations and taken out along with letters, which saves Amazon the most expensive part of a cross-country delivery. According to one estimate, around 40 percent of Amazon’s packages pass through USPS hands. This has had a direct impact on workers in mailrooms and delivery trucks across the country. And union representatives and rank-and-file workers say that USPS management has pursued a profitable deal with Amazon without regard for conditions for clerks and carriers on the ground.

“We welcome the work from Amazon, but we want to make sure we can serve the public without too much stress or injury on our employees,” said Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, which represents USPS sorters and clerks. “And as of right now, we’re feeling it.” The result of this refusal to adapt to higher package loads, Amanda said, has been strain and injury. Clerks in her often short-staffed station frequently reach the breaking point of exhaustion, storming off a work floor piled high with packages as managers try to get employees to work overtime or call in help from other stations. “I’ve had to lift king-size headboards and gazebos by myself,” she said. “Fifty-pound bags of dog food are common.” She said that Amazon marks heavy packages “TEAM LIFT,” but that she and other clerks often have to lift them alone. “It’s lucky one of our clerks is a bodybuilder or else some of that stuff would never get moved,” she joked. Out of 10 clerks in her station, Amanda said she can only think of one or two who haven’t had a work-related injury, and multiple have had surgery.

The strain is just as great for the USPS employees who drive the mail trucks and walk mail carts up and down the streets. In 2013, Amazon and the USPS inked a Negotiated Service Agreement. Many of the details about this agreement remain secret (a mostly redacted version is available online), so it’s unclear exactly what USPS management promised Amazon, but the most visible consequence was that USPS carriers began delivering Amazon packages on Sundays and federal holidays.

Brian Renfroe, the executive vice president of the National Association of Letter Carriers, the union for Postal Service deliverypeople, expressed more comfort than Dimondstein about Amazon as a customer. He emphasized that the relationship between the two entities meant more business for the Post Office: “The more packages there are, the more revenue there is, so we obviously welcome that. But it does make the work more physical. You spend more time handling each delivery, the trucks fill up faster.” Where before there would be 10 packages on a route, Renfroe said carriers now often have between 40 and 70. But for Liam, a mailman in the Philadelphia area who asked that his full name not be used due to fears of retaliation from management, that increase makes a difference. He said having more packages on a route makes an already difficult job worse, slowing down each stage of the process. Packages fill up trucks and satchels quickly, meaning he has to make extra circuits and sometimes return to the station for a second load. He’s slowed down even more if he has to deliver a “TEAM LIFT” package by himself.

“Management just doesn’t give us enough time to finish our route and account for the packages,” he said, describing management’s attitude as “callous.” Rather than beefing up its career workforce, the USPS has leaned more heavily on low-paid carriers, called City Carrier Assistants (CCAs). CCAs are still unionized, but their starting salary is far lower, and they don’t get the same sick leave, scheduling flexibility, or retirement benefits afforded to career Postal Service em-

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Amazon

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ployees. It's these newer, less experienced workers who are often forced to do Sunday delivery or complete extra runs when Amazon packages overflow. But there's a contractually mandated cap, negotiated by the union, on the number of CCAs the Post Office can hire, and so even veteran carriers have felt the strain. To top it all off, all these deliveries happen in ancient trucks—"Long Life vehicles," in USPS parlance—that Liam described as "death traps." In addition to being prone to breakdowns, the trucks aren't designed to fit large package loads, which results in additional trips to refill the vehicle. The USPS has recently made investments in upgrading its fleet, purchasing new Ram ProMaster vans that Liam said are better-equipped for packages, but the rollout has been slow. In the meantime, mail trucks that burst into flames mid-route are frequent topics of discussion on postal forums and blogs; Liam said it's never happened at his office, but Hutkins said the flaming trucks are something of an inside joke among postal-service employees.

Labor relations at USPS have never been perfect, but the PAEA and the recession set the interests of workers and management further apart than ever. Philip Rubio, a professor of history at North Carolina A&T State University and a former letter carrier, said that, although USPS unions and management "have always clashed over service and labor issues," they were both historically "public advocates for the mission of the post office." But Rubio said that since 2006 management has doubled down on its cost-cutting practices—thinning out the workforce, closing postal facilities across the country, and dragging its feet in response to the influx of packages. Granted, USPS leaders don't have an easy job: Both management and unions have at various times considered raising postal rates, but large mailers usually lobby against the USPS when it tries. (Last year regulators raised the price of a stamp by one cent, which will help boost near-term revenue.) The current Republican-led Congress is unlikely to pass any bill that doesn't push the USPS toward privatization, but progressive postal reforms could ease the USPS's remaining PAEA obligations or forgive them altogether. Politicians like Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), meanwhile, have argued that the USPS should have the freedom to pursue postal banking, which would generate revenue while combating the influence of payday lenders.

Amazon, though, is proving to be an even more unreliable business partner for the USPS than Congress. It has hired independent contractors to deliver packages in more than 30 cities already, and recently announced that it would launch a full-scale delivery service, called Shipping with Amazon, that will compete with UPS and FedEx; the company also revealed plans for a Whole Foods delivery service a few months after blaming USPS carriers for the failure of an earlier Amazon Fresh delivery program. The company didn't comment on how the service would change its relationship with the USPS, but if Amazon pulls away from the USPS, mail volume will start to drop and revenue with it. Either way, the influence Amazon has over the USPS's future makes the urgent need for progressive postal reform and robust investment in the USPS's workforce.

For their part, the workers who deliver the packages aren't optimistic: Liam said he regrets that management's cost-cutting practices have created an "adversarial" relationship with rank-and-file employees. "I just want them to act like we're part of the same company," he said. "But they just have these caps and goals they want to meet, so you're treated almost like a robot. You're under a lot of pressure, and there's very little room for error."

Scholarship Programs

View the 2018 APWU Scholarship Brochure at apwu.org

The E.C. Hallbeck Memorial Scholarship will award \$8000 (\$2000 annually) to ten recipients (one male and one female from each of the five postal regions) to apply towards their four-year college tuition. Vocational Scholarship winners will receive up to \$3,000 for specialized training in such fields as culinary arts, medical or dental assistant, electrician, real estate, auto mechanic, certified IT/computer education, cosmetology, or massage therapy, etc. Eligible programs can be of a nine-month to three-year duration.

March 31, 2018 is the deadline for the APWU to receive completed applications. The scholarships are open only to high school seniors. Applicants may apply for only either Hallbeck or Vocational, not both.

VACATION

DO BUY

Most travelers plan their summer vacation in the month of February. The Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO, wants to help you plan your next union-made get away.



COCKTAILS

Celebrate the warm breezes by sharing a tropical union-made cocktail. In a large pitcher, stir together Dole pineapple juice, Captain Morgan spiced rum, and Del Monte fresh lime juice. Refrigerate until chilled. Serve over ice.



PACKING

Whether heading to the beach or having a stay-cation by the pool, be sure to pack your union-made Coppertone or Bain De Soleil sunscreen, some Chapstick for your lips and some Solarcaine, just in case.



ROUTES

Amtrak travels to 500 destinations around the U.S. And their trains are operated, staffed and maintained by union members. Rather Drive? Greyhound buses are operated and maintained by members of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) which also represents the operators, drivers and support workers for the Metro (Washington DC) transit system. As well, Avis and Budget Rental are union.



BOOK UNION 01



DESTINATIONS

Many family-friendly destinations from national and state parks and landmarks, American's favorite baseball stadiums, Disney World and most other theme parks are union staffed. Union members can find discount admissions tickets to select theme parks online at www.unionplus.com. Other union destinations include Broadway shows, Sporting events, Smithsonian galleries, museums, and zoos, and the Grand Ole Opry, just to name a few.

HOTEL

Find your union hotel by visiting the UNITE HERE Fair Hotels website: www.fairhotel.org



PLAY UNION 04

TICKETS

Book your flight on a union airline. Most U.S. airlines are union staffed from pilots and crew to mechanics and reservation call centers.



U.S. Passports are issued through your union staffed post offices.



STAY UNION 02

BUY UNION 03