

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

Floor Edition

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Rolando (RO) Silva
It is with sadness that we acknowledge the untimely passing of our beloved Union brother, Rolando Silva. Ro passed on January 9, 2007 after a long and courageous battle with illness. Ro has been fighting ill health for over ten years, but I never heard him complain. He never gave up, and I'm sure that his strong will to live is what allowed him to see his children grow to young adulthood. Ro served the Union for many years (dating back to the days of Fred Parker) and he was a smart and savvy steward. He served as a trustee and as a Chief Steward on tour 1 at North Suburban and Palatine. Ro was a good steward, but more than that, he was a person who enjoyed life and made the most of every day he was given. Throughout many years of illness, he continued to enjoy life, by taking family vacations and spending time with the guys. Adios Señor, we will miss you.

Contract is Ratified.
APWU members ratified a four year contract by a vote of 84,486 to 12,016 in ballots counted on Jan. 12. The contract is retroactive to Nov 21, 2006 and expires on Nov. 20, 2010. Pres. Burrus sent out letters and ballots to all non members, asking them to sign an enclosed application for membership that would allow them to vote. 700 non-members did sign up. Shame on the rest of the scabs among us.
APWU Still Largest Postal Union
In spite of the concerted efforts of the USPS to downsize APWU represented crafts, by subcontracting work in all our crafts, and assigning all new automated mail processing to the mail handler craft, we are still the largest postal union, with over 260,000 craft employees. The NALC is second with 224,000, the Rural Carriers have 66,000 and the Mail Handlers have 57,000. We will continue to fight to preserve every job that rightfully belongs to an APWU represented craft.

Anti-Consolidation Resolution Introduced
In a demonstration of the growing level of concern over USPS consolidation plans, U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R MO) introduced a non-binding resolution on Jan. 7 seeking to ensure a "maximum degree of effective and regular postal service to all communities." Emerson urges the USPS to take "all necessary steps to ensure that post offices are not closed or consolidated." The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which has jurisdiction over the USPS, and is now under the leadership of Henry Waxman (D CA).
Postal Reform Passed
After 11 years, a postal reform bill was passed by Congress on Dec. 9 and signed by the President on Dec 20. Provisions calling for reduced wages and benefits, elimination of no-layoff, outsourcing of jobs and reduced service to the public were rejected. A provision to prevent postage rates from increasing above the rate of inflation was included.

Special points of interest:

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Anti-Consolidation Resolution Introduced
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"Worksharing" Victory
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Impact is 32 Clerk Jobs!

Postal Reform continued

APWU and other USPS employee organizations were unable to block a provision in the bill that will force postal workers to use annual leave, sick leave or LWOP for the first three days of their absence from work due to a work-related injury. This will create an unprecedented disparity in the way postal workers are treated in comparison to other federal employees. (The leave will be restored or be paid if the absence exceeds 14 days). A provision that would have slashed OWCP benefits for those on total disability to 50 % of the employee's monthly pay was not included.

"Worksharing" Victory

The APWU convinced legislators to include a provision in the bill that severely restricts excessive "worksharing" discounts for major mailers that drain billions of dollars in revenue from the USPS. Working with allies in Congress, we gained the inclusion of a provision that will phase out these subsidies, with limited exceptions. The new law will require that whenever the USPS establishes a worksharing discount, it must get approval from the Postal Regulatory Commission. USPS must also provide a detailed report that explains the reason for and the data to justify the discount rate. It must also certify that the discount will not adversely affect rates or service provided to users of postal services who do not take advantage of the discounted rate.

Financial Relief

The new law returns to USPS millions of dollars held in escrow, of overpayments to the Civil Service Retirement System, and returns responsibility for 27 billion in military related retirement benefits

for postal workers to the Treasury. (No other federal agency has been required to pay these costs.) These financial burdens were imposed on the USPS in the Postal Civil Service Reform Act of 2003, in provisions that were supposed to be temporary. The Bush administration had wanted these provisions made permanent to make the deficit appeal smaller.

APWU Files Suit on Jurisdiction Disputes!

"The APWU has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, charging that the National Postal Mail Handlers Union and the USPS have violated a national-level three-party agreement that establishes procedures for resolving disputes over work assignments. In the 15 years since the agreement was signed, only two national arbitration awards have been issued. Five years elapsed before Arbitrator Dana Eishen was appointed in 1997, and he issued only one ruling before his term expired. It was not until 2003 that Eishen was replaced by Arbitrator Joseph Sharnoff, who issued a single ruling in 2006, after his term expired. Although the parties agreed to reappoint Sharnoff on June 28, 2006, the suit notes, the MHU has refused to finalize the appointment. The MHU has obstructed and delayed the appointment of a national arbitrator, as least in part, because 12 of the 14 pending disputes concern claims by the APWU that the USPS has erroneously assigned work to the MHU which should have been assigned to Clerks. The USPS and the MHU have acted in tandem to delay and deny justice to APWU members. The suit was absolutely necessary" per Burrus.

RI-399 is being held hostage.

Automatic Induction at C.S.

We met with management at Carol Stream on Jan. 12. On our side were myself, VP Baskin, CCD Taylor, Ray Wience, and Chief or Alternate Chiefs from each tour, Mike Cooley, Melanie Bellmon, and Danny Recinto. On their side was Sr. Plant Manager Ron Woodall, In-Plant Support Manager John Colao, Sr. MDO Mary Alexander and Labor Relations Manager Carol Dellutri.

Impact is 32 Clerk Jobs!

Carol Stream management has notified the Area that they plan on eliminating 32 Clerks and excessing 26 Clerks into the Mail Handler (MH) Craft within the facility. They state this is necessary to staff the AI, as the USPS has assigned work on the AFSM to MH's. They state the staffing will be 3 Clerks and 4 MH per machine. The data they handed out gave an anticipated 31% productivity increase for the flats prepping as a result of AI. I pointed out that this data contradicts their own staffing numbers for this unit. Currently, their own data shows 41 MH for the (035) Flat Prep Unit, but with AI (and the 31% increase in productivity) they show 67 MH's. I said that is because they never got the production called for in 035, and they consistently staffed with casuals and excessive overtime. They did not disagree. I also stated that it appears they will be reducing the number of MH casuals by forcing Clerks into the MH craft. The plan is the same as what was done at Palatine, excess Clerks to MH, get rid of any casuals, and then bring them back later, using one excuse after another. The contract calls for elimination of casuals and a reduction of PTF hours prior to excessing. Management in this district thinks it's ok to excess and then bring casuals right back. More on AI in next Local Line. *OK*