

The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

VERA Approved

VERA stands for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority, and the Postal Service has received approval on its request for a VERA for Clerks, Mail Handlers, and some supervisory employees. The Postal Service plans to make additional requests to the Office of Personnel Management for approval of early outs for Letter Carriers, Rural Carriers, and some members of the Maintenance Craft.

Burrus Says Wait...

"Economic stagnation has had a significant impact on mail volume: The union has been informed that the Postal Service expects a deficit of \$1.4 billion in the current fiscal year. We can also expect that if a sufficient number of employees do not accept the early-out offer, the Postal Service will still face a significant deficit, and will still be forced to find ways to reduce the workforce. In light of these factors, it would be foolish for employees to retire early without achieving all of their personal objectives.

The Union will continue to discuss the details of the early-out offer and will report the results of those discussions.

Among the subjects to be addressed are whether all APWU-represented employees will be included and whether eligible employees will receive an incentive bonus for retiring. I ask that eligible employees delay making a final decision until the union concludes discussions at the national level. If we are not successful, we will announce that we have reached an impasse, and individual decisions can then be made."

USPS in Trouble...

"The Postal Service is experiencing serious revenue shortfall as a result of the slumping economy. Mail volume is down significantly, and revenue is not keeping pace with inflation. What was touted as "a new business plan in the Postal Accountability Act of 2006 serves only to place a cap on rate increases in response to mail-volume loss.

Excessive work-share discounts and the increased focus on contracting out-postal activities generate budgetary losses that cannot be recovered through internal efficiencies. It is within this environment that the postal monopoly and six-day delivery are being re-evaluated, which guarantees we will be seeing proposals for revolutionary change. APWU is demanding bargaining on any proposal to offer "early outs". We believe that all APWU-represented employees should be eligible, and that there should be monetary incentives for interested employees."

"The Perfect Storm"

In the July/August edition of "Postal Worker" magazine, President Burrus talks about a "Postal Perfect Storm" confronting us. Several major factors are combining to reduce mail volume. He cites a stagnant economy, energy costs, the housing crisis and its impact on capital, globalization, and electronic communications. These factors have created the perfect postal storm.

Floor Edition

July 14, 2008
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Washington DC & the USPS

2008 Elections Key

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Drawing

Washington DC & the USPS

APWU Legislative Director Mike Reid testified on behalf of APWU in May on the Postal Service' obligation to provide universal service. He said the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2006 did not eliminate the mission of the Postal Service to provide service to all Americans, and should not be used as a reason to privatize. He testified that the Postal Regulatory Commission is using private consultants who are biased in favor of privatization to conduct a study on the universal service obligation and the postal monopoly, including the monopoly on the delivery of mail and on access to mailboxes. The Postal Rate Commission is required to submit a report to Congress in December of 2008 on these issues, per the 2006 Accountability Act.

2008 Elections are Key

The future of the Postal Service, like the future of America is tied to the outcome of the 2008 national elections. The choice is between those who support big business and those who support the worker. The business community continues to push for privatization and the elimination of the Postal Service. Its often hard to tell which side senior management is on when they call the Service "the Company" and try to contract out as much work as they possibly can. If big business wins in this election there will be a major push to eliminate the Postal Service and contract postal work to the lowest bidder. Postal management will continue cutting jobs while spending billions to deploy FSS while mail volume is plummeting. The big decision makers did not anticipate or plan for a sharp drop in mail volume.

Protect your Job..

The Postal Service has been downsizing for years by not hiring and in some cases excessing employees from one office to another and/or from one craft to another. They call this right-sizing and it will continue. With an early-out goal of reducing the work force by 40,000 employees you can be sure they will be looking for ways to get rid of us. They know they will not get 40,000 employees to go, so they will have to look for other ways to reduce the payroll. Do not give them an excuse to get rid of you by having poor attendance or by not following rules and regulations. Do not look for ways to get fired.

Injured Employees

Management of the Northern IL District states they have identified "necessary work" for those employees who reached Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI) within 1 year. They say those employees have the first priority over employees who reached MMI in more than 1 year. APWU and most of the postal unions believe job offers should be given on a seniority basis and a national level grievance has been filed on that issue. Management has identified 31 employees in the plants and 45 in Customer Service (Associate Offices) as reaching MMI within 1 year. Many of those in Customer Service are injured Carriers and may be accommodated in the plants if they are unable to perform "necessary work" in the carrier craft. Management has identified 139 employees in the plants as reaching MMI after one year and 151 in Customer Service. We have requested from management a list of all necessary work identified but they have yet to provide it. When limited duty employees are told "no work available" we predict there will be no work for light duty either.

The Good of the Service...

We hear that phrase from management often when they want us to do something such as agree to a settlement or withdraw a grievance. They say we all work for the same "company", etc. We agree that all postal employees have an interest in the success of the Postal Service. The difference is we see success as keeping postal work for postal employees and not contracting this work to low-wage, no benefit competitors. We understand a fair days work for a fair day's pay, coming to work on time ready to work, and following instructions, etc. We have a problem when management refuses to take employee and union concerns seriously. Management does not communicate on major changes affecting employees, and refuses to bargain with the union on most of these issues.

Labor Relations Problems

Labor Relations in most districts is understaffed and has little authority. There is a revolving door at the Northern Il District as the experienced reps leave for Area jobs and are replaced by inexperienced supervisors on details to Labor Relations. Labor is buried at Palatine because management refuses to resolve issues and one Labor Rep is responsible for over 1500 grievances appealed to Step 2 in 08.

NWIAL Picnic on August 10.

The deadline for submitting a form is July 18th, so if you are interested in attending please fill out the form soon.

NWIAL Scholarship Drawing

The drawing for the two NWIAL scholarships will be held at the picnic on August 10.