

# The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the  
Northwest Illinois Area Local

Floor Edition

November 27, 2008

Update by: Jackie Engelhart

## APWU Files National Charge on Tour 2 Plan

"The APWU has filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge alleging that management failed to bargain over a nationwide plan to consolidate mail processing into two tours, a plan that would eliminate or greatly reduce the number of assignments on tour 2. The charge, filed on 11-25-08 with the National Labor Relations Board, also asserts that the Postal Service failed to provide information to the union regarding this initiative. The union contends that "it can show that the Postal Service answered the request for information dishonestly," which constitutes an independent violation of management's obligation to bargain in good faith. The APWU has requested immediate injunctive relief, asserting that without such relief the initiative would be completed before the board would be able to address the change. "Injunctive relief requiring the

Postal Service to provide information and to bargain is needed now."

The union's national headquarters learned of the plan to consolidate mail processing operations into two tours (and to eliminate tour 2) from information provided by state and local presidents in October. APWU President William Burrus wrote to the Postal Service on 10-17-08, noting that the union had not been informed of the program and that it would violate the Collective Bargaining Agreement. He asked the USPS to provide documentation detailing the specifics of the program, and requested a meeting with postal managers. In a response dated 11-14-08 the Postal Service denied that it is "considering or is in the process of implementing a nationwide program establishing a two-tour operation, which is intended to eliminate or greatly reduce Tour 2 assignments, operations, and staffing." Management wrote "While the Postal Service

is reviewing various options designed to improve operational efficiencies, in light of decreased mail volume the Postal Service has not implemented the nationwide program you suggest. Rather, operations will be reviewed on a site-by-site basis and any action taken to improve operational efficiencies will be based on local circumstances." The letter also said "Regarding your request to produce documentation regarding any nationwide or region or district-wide program, plans or initiatives to eliminate or reduce Tour 2 operations and/or Tour 2 staffing, "no such documentation exists." Burrus called the Postal Service's response "**fundamentally dishonest.**" The union will do everything in our power to rectify this violation of our members' rights, he said"

## Dishonest...

Contrary to what John Dockins wrote in his response to President Burrus, the USPS has issued instructions through the Area and the Districts levels to eliminate mail processing on tour 2.

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### Area Locals Meet with Congressman Danny Davis...

On 11-25-08 five large APWU Area Locals met with Congressman Davis at his office in Chicago. The purpose of the meeting was to inform him of the unprecedented attacks against the craft by the USPS in regards to "Tour 2 Compression" and the "National Reassessment Process" which are both national plans to get rid of career employees who cannot be laid off due under the contract. These five Locals have come together to work together against threats to our combined memberships. The Locals in attendance were Chicago, South Suburban, Fox Valley, O'Hare, and NWIAL (represented by myself and 601 CCD Calvin Taylor). Also present were National Business Agents Linda Turney (Clerk), and Merlie Bell (MVS). Merlie also raised the issue of the USPS drive to reduce career MVS jobs by subcontracting work that keep companies like Eagle in business. The meeting lasted from 3 to 4:30 pm and Congressman Davis ended by promising that he would request a meeting with Great Lakes Area Vice President JoAnn Feindt, himself and the Local Presidents, before Christmas. Congressman Davis chairs the congressional subcommittee on Postal Affairs and he said Potter calls him to inform of changes within USPS before they happen. He told us the USPS has been especially hard hit by e-commerce and the poor economy, but the law requires the USPS to be financially self-sustaining. His message was the USPS and postal unions cannot expect a financial bail-out like those being given to private sector institutions.

### "Stakeholders" Urge Congress to Give USPS Legislative Relief

"The APWU is part of a group of 50 postal unions, management associations, and mailers that have asked Congress to help the agency during the current nationwide financial difficulties by giving legislative relief to its retiree health insurance liability. In an 11-18-08 letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, the group said that the \$900 billion mailing industry, millions of jobs, continued efficient postal services, and the long-term survival of the Postal Service are at stake. The 2006 postal reform law required the Postal Service to pay off over the next ten years its actuarial unfunded liability for retiree health insurance coverage. In today's economic climate the ten year payment schedule has become unrealistic. The USPS has proposed an adjustment to that payment schedule which would preserve the law's requirement for full funding of retiree health benefits, but lessen the financial demand on the USPS for several years. It does not relieve the USPS of any existing financial obligation. Employee and retiree benefits are fully protected. Swift legislative enactment of the proposal is critical to the USPS, its employees, and the mailing industry. The letter was signed by representatives of the major postal unions, several management associations and industry groups including the Magazine Publishers of America and the Newspaper Association of America. The government has loaned billions to Wall Street, insurance giant AIG, and Citi-Group to bail them out of the financial disaster created by reckless greed. Unlike these, the USPS request is not a bailout.

### USPS Plan: Disrupt Lives

The brunt of the USPS efforts to disrupt the lives of career employees has fallen on Clerks but will soon (2010) affect Carriers. Clerks are the primary craft affected by Associate Office cuts (15 minute or more wait-time at Carol Stream Post Office) and by the "Tour 2 Compression Plan" that does not exist. Clerks will also be the primary target of the National Reassessment Process, as management has identified approximately 90 injured Clerks among the 159 (number changes) that are not needed at Palatine. The clear message is that those 90 or so will not be affected by excessing out of the craft as they intend to excess them out of the Postal Service (to OWCP). Carol Stream is making a good faith effort to find work for injured employees but all indications I see point to Palatine being much more ruthless in their version of NRP. Our District Manager (Robert Hart) talks about treating our employees "like royalty" with his mantra of "vision, passion, and purpose." These sentiments contradict what is planned for 2009 with the massive disruptions about to be inflicted on Clerks across the district. No one in management wants to admit that they know anything about the NRP or take any responsibility for it. Some NRP team members will have a hard time not breaking down when they start walking people they know out the door. We cannot over-emphasize that postal employees are their own worst enemy by not working smart and not working safe. \*Management pushes employees to run 30,000 pieces in automation when I was told 100% BPI = 25,000 pieces.

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